

## Is Secularism a Reality? : Theanthropocosmic Sense Making Principle

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### Abstract

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*This article consists of three parts. Firstly, the definition of faith will be traced briefly in order to give a better understand of faith. Secondly, this article will focus on the contribution of one-sided views and worldviews of God, human life or the world to the interfaith dialogue within the secularised world in opposition to the contribution of the Theanthropocosmic<sup>1</sup> principle. A case is made out for enriching interfaith dialogue by means of an African-Christian holistic sense-making model that replaces the classic dualist view of soul and body with a view on approaching interfaith engagement and involvement on secularised world. Thirdly, recommendations are made on the interfaith dialogue in secularised World to empower faith leaders and faith consultants to participate in different ecumenical movements that are engaged with interfaith issues that affect human beings and physical-organic environment.*

*The article argues that faith, belief and trust as fields of experience, and especially skills provided by faith and belief, are intrinsically part of each and every interfaith dialogue for human peaceful and successful live on the secularised world. The article furthermore argues that faith and belief do not belong to the realm of the "soul" as opposed to "the body"; the article evaluates and considers a faith, belief and trust-based dimension of interfaith within their overall collective and institutional context in terms of a dynamic approach carried forward by a theanthropocosmic view on human wellness on the secularised world.*

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**Keywords:** Secularism; Theanthropocosmic; Spirit; Matter; Soul; Godism; faith; anthropologies

### Introduction

The global authors investigated the complex relationship between religious institutions and society. While the modernisation of society has not meant the end of individual religiosity, it has meant the secularisation of many social sectors. Against this backdrop of social change, many churches have been forced to adapt or risk losing followers. People in African societies, who become modernised without obedience to the full Gospel, have become secular- as has also happened in the Western societies. Houtepen (2002:1) posits that, since 1965 until the end of the twentieth century there was a massive exodus from the church in Europe which at a deeper level can only be interpreted as a leave-taking of the traditional Western form of Belief in God. This proves that during that time secularisation take part in the West and is also happening in Africa. Secularisation provides a fertile breeding ground for an endless variety of worldviews. Because I view them negatively, I prefer calling them ideologies and in one section of this article I will illustrate you they are negative.

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<sup>1</sup> Theanthropocosmic principle comprising of God (=theos), human being (=anthropos) and the natural cosmic world (=cosmos). Theanthropocosmic principle is a principle that tries to balance relationship amongst God-human being and physical-organic environment. It opposes the view of theology as a study solely of God. It encourages a need for the study of people's sense making views, orientations and patterns of God, (human) life and the (natural) world in each field, mode and dimension of human experience and in each scientific discipline and philosophy (Van Niekerk, 2005:18-19).

Secularisation (leave-taking from God) of Christian tradition is not limited to a reduced involvement in church life but takes place above all in the forms of daily life that we call culture, all that forms of behaviour, views, rituals and symbols which give human life colour, up to and including human death, all of which human beings regard as valuable and therefore hand on to generation after generation in education and up-bringing Language, art-forms, scientific models, worldviews, religious forms of expression, patterns of relationship: all that together forms a culture, of both individuals and groups. It also stamps the collective institutions of peoples, nations and states (Houtepen, 2002:2). In modern Africa we have authoritarianism or totalitarianism (not only the head of the state, but also the civil servant wants to exercise power), tribalism, nepotism, sectarianism and many more (Van der Walt, 1995:44). All these “-isms” mentioned above requires ecumenical and interfaith dialogue in secularised world. In this article argument is made that faith, belief and trust as fields of experience, and especially skills provided by faith and belief, are intrinsically part of each and every interfaith dialogue for human peaceful and successful life on the secularised world. This paper furthermore argues that faith and belief do not belong to the realm of the “soul” as opposed to “the body”; the article evaluates and considers a faith, belief and trust-based dimension of interfaith within their overall collective and institutional context in terms of a dynamic approach carried forward by a theanthropocosmic view on human wellness on the secularised world.

### **Faith as Multiplicity Dimension within Theanthropocosmic Sense-Making**

In the Theanthropocosmic sense making approach perspective of faith - commonly known as a theological perspective - based and grounded in our everyday experience of faith two successive statements about faith (=belief, trust and confidence) and the topic of the paper based on interfaith dialogue.

First, that for someone engaged and involved in a faith profession the lack of the opening up and functioning of the dimension of faith, belief, trust and confidence - all belonging to the faith realm - in the secularised world is highly problematic.

Second, a lack of awareness is been detected amongst people of faith on the impact and contribution of their experience of faith, belief, trust and confidence has on their experience of secularisation and interfaith dialogue.

In the two statements I strongly allude to the fact that people’s experience of faith, belief, trust and confidence is in many instances plagued by an unawareness of the problematic role of religious and church-centred faith which steadfastly reckons God to be the only object of faith. The moment self-belief, belief in the neighbours and belief in the physical-organic environment is been left out of the experiential four-some rolling pattern of faith, the role and experience of faith is paradoxically neutralised and immunised in that sense the term Godism<sup>2</sup> is attached to that culture, likewise, when self-belief, belief in one’s neighbour and belief in the physical-organic environment faith is paradoxically neutralised and immunised in that sense term secularisation is attached to that culture. Religious faith and God is thereby been forced back into and locked up in spiritual spheres, churches and faith communities. Though churches and faith communities are an integral part of people’s lives, the important point here is that God’s presence is intrinsically part of every social structure, institution and community. God’s presence is not explicit in certain social institutions and less explicit in others. Landman (2007:139) indicates that, in search for dialogical space between an absolute transcendent God and helpless human being, the principle of non-competition is based on the idea of God’s immanent transcendence, which holds that what human beings do and what God does cannot be subtracted from one other. Thus, God does not cancel out the action of human beings, but rather inspires, intensifies and orients that action by placing it on the level of non-obligation and gratuity.

Faith, belief and confidence directed to oneself, other human beings and the physical-organic environment is in the traditional Protestant and Catholic approaches not viewed as religious belief and is thus of a lower order and less important.

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<sup>2</sup> Godism means over-emphasising God in all world-life phenomenon disregarding human experience and physical-organic environment. The mystery of how God, human beings and the natural world is closely connected and radically different at the same time is expressed in the theanthropocosmic principle which in turn carries the foursome experiential pattern of believing God, believing oneself, believing other human being and believing the physical-organic surrounding world.

The pointers of believing oneself, one's human neighbours and the physical-organic environment other than the traditional one of faith in God in the Protestant and Catholic worlds, were being named with terms such as 'human faith or belief', 'historical belief', 'ordinary belief', 'secular belief and trust' or 'worldly belief and trust'. On the other hand, faith as experience of God, directed exclusively to God has been termed 'religious or divine faith', 'belief in God', 'the spiritual belief dimension' or just plainly the spiritual dimension of a human being. In certain approaches when the single word 'faith' is exclusively reserved for experience of God, the words 'belief and trust' are reserved for human experience (Van Niekerk, 2008).

Brennan Hill, a modern American Catholic theologian (1990:32), represents many of the dualist theological and church-centred views in his classic description of the distinction of human faith and religious faith:

*Human faith is a trust attitude toward others and toward reality.*

*Similarly, religious faith is a trusting response to ultimate reality, to Mystery, to God.*

In the modern African Christian sense-making approach, I maintain that the four-some pattern of faith experience operates as faith, belief, trust and confidence towards God as well as faith, belief, trust and confidence towards oneself as a human being and faith, belief, trust and confidence towards other human beings including one's faith, belief, trust and confidence towards the surrounding physical-organic environment. Van Niekerk (2008:102) describes such a multifarious pattern of faith experience as follows:

*Just as people form patterns of thinking which shift from thought to thought, they enact and undergo different patterns of faith from belief to belief every day. In the field of faith one's beliefs or pointers of faith may move from self-confidence (a faith pointer) to trust in another person (another faith pointer), to believing God (a faith pointer), to the belief that your car will take you to your destination (a faith pointer), to trust that your stock market shares will rise (a faith pointer), to doubt (disbelief) (a faith pointer) that the approaching motorist will obey the traffic light (faith pointer). At the end of the day one can sit down and try to draw a pattern of all the beliefs or faith pointers that one underwent or enacted on a specific day. Disbelief or doubt pointers are part of the field of experience of faith. At least when one makes doubt and disbelief part of the field of faith, a theorist of faith is in good theological company, such as Martin Luther the sixteenth century Reformer, and Paul Tillich, the twentieth century American theologian.*

In this sense firstly, faith, belief or trust do not have a higher and more important embracing religious position and is not more religious or divine than thinking, feelings, producing, loving, speaking, inhaling etcetera. In terms of the views presented in this article there is no separate divine or religious dimension because God is directly involved in every field of experience as Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit (Van Niekerk 2008:69). Secondly, though God, oneself, other human beings and physical natural world are simultaneously closely connected and radically different, they are experienced as a four-some pattern of experience within each field, mode and dimension of experience within the sphere of human experience.

In terms of the aims of this paper African-Christian sense-making approach followed in this paper the four-some pattern of experience of God, oneself, other human beings and the physical-organic environment is being enacted and been in operation in each field, mode and dimension of experience. However, the emphasis is on a perspective of interfaith dialogue leading the enactment and operation of the four-some pattern of experience of faith, belief and trust the reflection and discussion of different aspects of this paper.

### **Secularism within the Theanthropocosmic Principle**

This section will focus on the contribution of one-sided views and worldviews of God, human life or the world to the interfaith dialogue within the secularised world in opposition to the contribution of the theanthropocosmic principle (Theo= God, anthropos= human and cosmos=physical-organic world) functioning and treating the notions of God, humanity and cosmic nature with equal weight in a comprehensive approach. These one-sided God, human or worldviews and ideologies have to be described concerning their operational value and meaning in the discussion about the secularisation. Is it true that one-sided views and ideologies create one-sided and lop-sided experiences of human thinking and acting in the society?

An ideology can be built around a fixed set of ideas or belief one-sidedly about God, humanity or the natural world. In fact any general notion such as liberty, freedom, science or any reductionist stance forms the substantial notion on which a fixed set of ideas or constellation of ideal stars is based as an idea-system or ideology.

An ideology as the structure of thinking that reflects the real power behind the more visible social structures in a society.<sup>3</sup> An ideology is the prismatic spectacles by which a society or individual views the experience of people in societies as well as the natural world. An ideology for short is the interpretive system according to which a society and people interpret life and their position in the world. In this paper when reference is made to secularism, humanism, materialism and socialism it means those “-isms” as reductionist ideologies excluding in a radical sense God, humanity or the natural world in some or other form. In this paper the focus is more on secularism and interfaith dialogue.

According to Dekker, Luidens and Rice (1997:14-15) secularization is used frequently in sociology of religion, but it is used very differently in empirical research and theoretical discussions. The result is that the term secularization often becomes a source of confusion and misunderstanding. Furthermore Dekker et al (1997) distinguished among three different secularizing processes.

- The first form of secularization involves the decline of religiosity among individuals. This is the process by which regularity and significance of religious actions and opinions diminish in people’s lives. This is the case when the number of church members or their activity within the church decreases, when people pray less frequently, or when the significance of prayer or religious concepts decreases.
- A second form of secularization occurs when there is a restriction of the range of influence that religion exerts on individual and collective life. This happens when segments of life that formerly appealed to religious paradigms for understanding and behaviour now come under other rubrics—such as scientific-rational ones. As a result, religious influence becomes more and more restricted to very small part of life, often referred to as the personal life of the individual.
- The third form of secularization that Dekker (1997) has identified involves the adaptation of religion to society’s values. In this process, religion accommodates itself to the developments taking place within the larger society. These are the developments that result in a more secular consciousness and a more secular life for society’s members.

Houtepen (2002:19) defines secularization as the withdrawal of all areas of life and thought from religious—and finally also metaphysical—control and attempt to understand and live in these areas in the terms which they alone offer.

From Theanthropocosmic sense making, the first, second and third forms of secularization according to Dekker (1997) involve the decline of religiosity, restriction of religious influence and adaptation of religion to society’s values. This approaches are more reductionistic in a way that God’s activities in a society is reduced from the interconnectedness of God-human-and-physical-organic environment and only two components (Human beings and Natural environment) of Theanthropocosmic principle is emphasized. The outstanding feature with the exclusion of God in the modernity/ secularisation is that a perennial struggle emerged between ‘what is human’ and ‘what is nature:

The unremitting struggle between ‘what is human?’ and ‘what is nature?’ works itself out in Modernity in the struggle between ‘human’ and ‘natural’ sciences. When the access point is the ‘absolute human agent’ we refer to the ‘human’ sciences. When the access point is the ‘absolute objectivity of nature’, we envisage the ‘natural’ sciences. Modernity has mainly two pointers, namely an unremitting struggle between what is really human and what is really nature or natural. God has been put on ice in this modern struggle, except in theological, religious and church circles in Modernity. In general terms God is no longer part of the triad or the threesome of God, humanity and nature (= cosmos) in the world of scientific people.<sup>4</sup>

In this sense from an African-Christian approach where God is involved in all dimensions of God-life-and-nature secularization becomes an imbalanced approach for African people’s life in society.

In fact, there is no special religious dimension, because God is directly involved in every field of experience as the Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit. Saying it metaphorically in terms of the engine of a motor car, every field of experience has its own sparkplug, the nucleus or core of the field of experience where the Spirit of God is continually sparking and fusing, connecting God, being human and the physical-organic environment in a pattern of experience (Van Niekerk 2008:69).

<sup>3</sup> Van Wyk (as quoted by Pretorius 1987) “Reflecting on mission in South African context”

<sup>4</sup> van Niekerk (2008:128). Faith, Philosophy and Science. TL 501/2008, Pretoria: Unisa

The idea of a religious dimension amongst various human dimensions of experience in human lives creates the impression that God hovers outside non-religious 'ordinary' human dimensions, and is allowed to enter human lives only through a so-called religious and supernatural faith dimension. In the traditional sense, religious faith plays a basic role among the multiplicity of fields and modes of experience of our created existence, but does not form intrinsically and initially part of human experience. One of the basic premises of this paper is that one can only speak of faith as faith-experience in a similar way as thought experience, experience of emotions and experiential apportioning of justness (Modise, 2009:23).

### **Secularism: Shift from the Dualism to Theanthropocosmic Sense Making For Interfaith Dialogue**

The concepts sacred and secular are the product of Greeco-Roman philosophical thinking, which is mainly dualistic thinking body and mind; spiritual and material; heavenly and earthly. In the whole thinking the interconnectedness of the twosome concepts were ignored or under-emphasized. In this section I attempt to investigate into how human thinking is shifting from the Twosome/ dualistic thinking to integrated thinking of life. In this sense it can be so difficult to draw a line of demarcation between spiritual and secular.

### **Modern continuation of the duality and tripartite schemes of human beings**

People's sense-making views about the cluster of God, human and nature shape their philosophies, sciences and anthropological schemes of human life. In the modern era three broad sense-making God-human-and-nature perspectives have been taking shape around the duality of mind and matter as the modern expression of the classical duality of soul/spirit and physical body that is still part of many modern people's jargon.

In reminiscence of the ancient sense-making notions of the dual and triadic views of 'spirit, soul and body' three broad trajectories emerged in the modern era. In the first trajectory of a dualism of 'matter plus mind or spirit/soul and body' the emphases are on both the matter and the mind sides of the dualism. In the second trajectory of a duality in which 'matter giving rise to mind or material bodiliness determining the spirit/soul' the emphasis is totally on the matter and material bodily side of the duality. In the third trajectory of a duality in which 'mind giving rise to matter or spirit/soul determining the body' the emphasis is reversed and is placed on the mind, spiritual and soul side of the duality.

### **Dualism of mind and matter; spirit/soul and body**

The first broad modern perspective of a dualism between mind and matter (soul and body) is best represented by the 17<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Descartes with a parallel structured biopic view of a thinking soul (mind) and a spatially extended body (matter) (Descartes 1967:42f). The only point where the two parallel substances meet is in the pineal gland (Van Peursen 1966:31). While Descartes' views were highly controversial amongst some, his new modern approach of viewing the soul as a thinking mind parallel to a spatially extended material body actually transformed the classical soul and body dualism of the majority of Christian churches.

In several sciences in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Descartes' parallel view of soul (psyche) and body (somatic) made way for a view in which soul and body are been brought into a very close overlapping relationship in which soul/spirit influences the body and the body in turn influences the soul/spirit. The latter two way direction of the soul/spirit and the body processes influencing each other from both sides is expressed in the literature with the very fashionable dual term of a human being as a psychosomatic being.

Nevid, Rathus and Greene (2006:137) indicate that present day scientists and clinicians are aware of the radical intertwinement of the body and the mind. Psychological factors are simultaneously influencing and are being influenced by functioning of the physical body. In the current scientific world, mental health and physical bodily health are inseparable. It is worth noting that a great deal of present day psychology is moving in the direction of an extreme emphasis of scientific reflection on the neuro-physiological fields and spheres of human life. An extreme form is seen in behaviourism which stops short of denying the human mind any operational functionality. Strangely, though Body theologians and behaviourists opt for anti-dualistic holistic approaches of human life both approaches struggle to get rid of a dualist tag.

One does not have to be a rocket scientist to know that the majority of Christian churches, their members and their accompanying theologies are still stuck in the anthropological dualism of an immortal soul/spirit and mortal body albeit sometimes in a modern transformed Cartesian framework.

**Matter giving rise to mind; material bodiliness determines the spirit/soul**

The second broad modern perspective expressed in the short sentences of matter giving rise to mind and material bodiliness determines the spirit/soul is the widest accepted view amongst scientists from various sciences.

The main assumption of this perspective regarding human life is that the basic stuff of a human life is body which means that the main access avenue for reflection about a human life is bodiliness. Similarly, in the scientific world the main assumption is expressed as that the basic stuff of the universe is matter-energy and the main access avenue for reflection about the universe is the material, evolving processes in the physical measurable world.

Anthropologically speaking, whatever the conscious mind is, it emerges out of matter (that is the brain) formed in a sufficiently progressed stage of the evolutionary process. Whatever we can learn about the conscious mind must ultimately be reconciled with the kind of knowledge we get from studying the physical brain, for the conscious mind apart from a living physical organism is not only unknown, it is inconceivable (Harman 1988:34).

In the world of Christian theology reflection of what human life is revolves around the body and the bodiliness of human beings created by God as the main assumption and access avenue for reflection on human beings. Isherwood and Stuart as proponents of a Body Theology take their main cue from a diversified but holistic perspective of the human body. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the notion of Body Theology especially took shape within feminist circles, mostly of Roman Catholic origin, as an attempt to access dimensions and aspects of human life in a holistic way from the body and the bodiliness existence of human beings.

The main contribution of body theologians revolves around a diversifying of the wholeness of the human body in roles and relationships towards others. Body theologians reckon by emphasising the wholeness of the human body with its accompanying gender-grid that the traditional and modern dualities, twosomes and binary schemes are satisfactorily tackled. The compilation of essays in the book “*The Good News of the Book*”. *Sexual Theology and Feminism* is informative in this regard. Their main reflective cue for various human domains and aspects is taken from the full encapsulation of humanness and being human from the human body and bodiliness. The following aspects drawn from the whole bodiliness of human beings are examples of such an approach: 1. a physical body, 2. a symbolic body, 3. a political body and 4. a spiritual body (Isherwood and Stuart 1998).

The problem body theologians are facing is that while they diversify different aspects and relationships from the totality of the human body as the main avenue of reflection about human beings, the total bodily existence of a human being expresses and determines the different aspects and relationships within the concrete everyday societal world. Moreover, the theological dimension as an intrinsic part of the twosome of Body Theology, or a theology of the body, is providing the theological reflection on the bodiliness of human beings set within a modern dual Catholic ecclesial perspective of ‘sacramental-sacred and secular-profane’ and a dual theological anthropological perspective of ‘immortal soul...mortal body’.

Isherwood and Stuart (1998:67-68) in their book *Introducing Body Theology* support the sentiments of various authors indicating that Thomas Aquinas, the late medieval Roman Catholic theologian, in his *Summa Theologiae* asserts that there is an intrinsic substantial unity between body and soul. Thomas Aquinas followed Aristotle to a large degree on the unity of soul and body, but where Aristotle viewed soul and body as one substantial unity of form and matter, Thomas viewed soul and body as two substances (van Peursen 1966:105). To Aristotle both soul and body in death come to an end, except the personal divine spirit which continues to exist after death (van Peursen 1966:104). Thomas under the influence of a neo-platonic dualist approach viewed the immortal soul and the mortal body as two substances. He emphasised the unity of body and soul: the soul being the substantial form or pattern of the human body which is that part of human nature which is everlasting and which is the ordering and forming agency of the material temporal body. Isherwood and Stuart (1998:68) align themselves in typical Thomistic fashion with the two substances approach of soul and body. In this scheme the soul is seen as the rational intellect (*anima rationalis*) which needs the senses of the bodily world to acquire abstract knowledge. In spite of Body theology’s strong emphasis on the wholesome character of the bodily existence of a human being, the primordial Thomistic scheme of immortal soul and mortal body caught up with the body theologians.

Concluding, one could state that as long as theological anthropologies, even with the vast improvement on the duality approaches brought by the holistic approach of Body theologians, still work with sense-making anthropological tools and components of the dual and tripartite schemes of human life that were immensely meaningful within the settings of Plato and Aristotle hundreds of years before the Common Era (BC), real diversification of human fields, modes and aspects of experience cannot be accessed and unlocked.

In this sense most theologians, faith leaders and faith consultants are still approaching the human life from dualistic sense making hence we still speak of secularised world, because of separating the spiritual from material world which is the farfetched concepts for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Mind giving rise to matter; conscious spirit/soul determines the body**

The third broad modern perspective expressed in the short sentences of mind giving rise to matter and the conscious spirit/soul determines the bodily existence is in an ever increasing sense accepted by different scientists from various sciences. The main assumption of this perspective regarding human life is that the basic stuff of a human life is consciousness which means that the main access avenue for reflection about a human life is conscious mind. Similarly, in the scientific world the main assumption finds the basic stuff of the universe to be consciousness. Mind or consciousness is primary, and matter-energy arises in some sense out of the conscious mind. The physical cosmic world is to the greater mind as a dream image is to the individual mind. In the final instance the collective mega consciousness behind the phenomenal world is contacted, not through the physical senses but through a deep conscious intuition (Harman 1988:34-35). Consciousness is not the end product of material evolution; rather, consciousness was here first in the millions year old universe before material energies.

Various approaches are attempting to view the mind, soul or spirit side of a human life as the access avenue of how a human life should be viewed and approached. Within the scheme of the classic duality of mind/soul/spirit and matter/body the emphasis for the diversification between different modes and aspects of a human being is totally on the mind/soul/spirit side. An example of how a human being is diversified from the mind, soul or spirit side could be presented in the following way: a human being is diversified into 1. a rational being; 2. a religious-metaphysical being; 3. a social being. 4. a physical-biological bodily being whose needs and conditions are driven and carried by the rational, religious-metaphysical and social dimensions (Ipe 1988:3-5).

By locating and emphasising the access avenue of what a human life is on the side of the mind, soul or spirit and not as is the case with proponents of Body Theology on the bodily side of the equation, some versions of this view contribute to greater insight in the whole nature of human life but demonstrate simultaneously as being still stuck in the classic dual or tripartite ground scheme of human life.

### **Dualist versus Wholesome anthropologies and the Bible**

One may ask whether the notions of duality and tripartite views attempting to access the whole human life from both the spiritual and soul side or the soul or bodily side have contributed to greater insight into the emergence of whole anthropologies that have been developed or are still under construction, especially where they claim to work from a Biblical background.

It has become increasingly clear that dualisms, dualities and binary schemes are not solved by stating over and over like a mantra that one is actually working with the notion of interconnectedness. Whether one tackles the anthropological question holistically from the mind, culture, spirit and soul side of the dualism or from the body, matter and physical nature side of the dualism, the dualism stays in place, albeit in the form of soft dualities that help us on the road to greater interconnectedness and comprehensiveness in the description of different fields, modes and dimensions of human experience (Modise, 2009).

As long as these anthropological attempts of diversifying all the fields, modes and dimensions in terms of one or both of the soul/spirit and body components of the classical dual or tripartite scheme, even in its ultra modern version of mind and matter, real diversification of human fields, modes and aspects of experience cannot be accessed and each of their qualitative basic foursome experiential patterns that revolve around God, the human self, other human beings and the physical natural world cannot be unlocked.

Where does the idea of a dual or triadic view of God, human beings and the natural world that plays such a central role in the Christian churches come from? One has to take into account that notions such as a 'spiritual body' and its counter position of a 'bodily spirit' are supposedly been derived from the Judaeo-Christian Bible in presenting us with various views of God, human beings and the physical-organic environment. Dual and triadic descriptions appear in different parts of the Bible. The main question is whether one can built a complete anthropology on these episodic descriptions in different contexts. They may be described in a dual or triadic way but a dualist or trichotomist approach of human life is unjustifiably read into the text of the Bible.

One has to be continuously aware that terms such as body, soul, spirit, mind or heart are being used in Biblical texts and contexts in different ways.

Sometimes the carrying sense-making approach is a mixed one with a wide range of fluctuating meanings and in other instances, some of the Biblical texts are very closely in the neighbourhood of a dualist soul and body or trichotomist spirit, soul and body approach. In the majority of instances, however these texts and contexts indicate clear sense-making trajectories for the accessing of correlative clues, cues and hues with our life-world.

In this regard the commonly used dual sets of clues in the Bible such as ‘spirit and body’, ‘rational and sensory’, ‘inner and outer’, ‘invisible and visible’, ‘incomprehensible and comprehensible’, ‘intelligible and empirical’ and even ‘heavenly and earthly’ emerge in the majority of Biblical texts as designations of holistic integrated and differentiated sense-making approaches. The reading into the Bible of dualist and triadic anthropological views is problematic. What is more sensible is to extract and to translate the seemingly dual and triadic schemes into our contextual frameworks by confronting them with a holistic, integral and differential view on human life. In other words, such a so-called duality is not viewed as two substantial domains, substances or components but as the designations of one integrated substantial domain of experience.

In some ways the modern notion of the broad view of connecting the spiritual and the bodily very closely is been presented as a holistic African-Christian approach of God, human beings and the physical-organic world. My idea is that the differential and integral role relationship of the 20<sup>th</sup> century idea of the ‘physical body’ is part of the so-called world of the ordinary world of experience (secular world). The notions of a ‘spiritual body’ or a ‘bodily spirit’ are presented in various circles as the mending of the gap between human ‘spirit’ and ‘material body’. The problem with someone operating with an approach of interconnectedness in terms of a dualist or trichotomist viewpoint in starting from the bodily-matter side or the spiritual-mind-culture-soul side is unaware that the rendered solution of interconnectedness is still couched in terms of the dual immortal spirit/soul and mortal body scheme.

In some of these hardcore dualist views the soul does not need the body, while in others there is an interaction between the soul and the body, for example when the soul needs to express its inward attributes it needs the bodily senses to communicate those attributes. According to the argument put forward by these authors, body and soul are inseparable substances of human existence that need to be treated equally and nourished equally for humankind to reach two states of equilibrium on two levels, that is, the eternal spiritual and the temporal mortal bodily levels of well-being and wellness. On the surface it appears good and well for hard dualists to emphasise the unity of soul and body but as long as they view soul and body as two substances (essences) of human life, the one heavenly eternal and the other earthly temporal, no unity is reached and no real and helpful states of contentment and equilibrium can be achieved in the earthly world which is our home and daily habitat (so-called secularised world).

Supporters of hard dualist and trichotomist schemes assert that some of the actions of the body are dependent on the conscious operations of the soul, while others are not. According to these hard dualists, the operations of the soul are connected with the body as its instrument in the present life but from the continued conscious existence and activity of the soul after death it appears that it can exist without a body. In a similar way as human life is more or less complete as a soul without a body in its immortal existence after death, the spiritual domain seems to be more crucial and important than its co-existent partner the body, which spells out only the physicality of the earthly existence.

In the modern era, simultaneous with the hardcore dualist schemes of the two substances of soul and body, broadly following Platonic and Neo-platonic philosophies, softer dual versions were propagated by people who worked more in line with Aristotle’s points of departure. In broad terms this view amounts to that of human life as one substance with two components of soul and body, which opened the way for the current view that human life has many fields, modes and dimensions of experience which though differentiated, are simultaneously operating on the same level of experience. The latter are not divided in eternal spiritual soul and temporal earthly bodily groups of fields and modes of experience.

Whatever talk there is about eternal and temporal, if there is such a distinction, then eternal and temporal should be intrinsically built into each of these fields, modes and dimensions of experience. In turning the whole scheme around into holistic network of fields of experience, it is incomprehensible why a snippet of the spiritual or the eternity cannot be intrinsically part of one’s feelings, talking, socialising or professional performances? It seems as if supporters are either admitting in a facile way that the spiritual world is also part of the world of the body, or they are steadfastly clinging to the chasm between eternally heavenly and temporally earthly experience.

### **Soft duality approaches of Protestant theologians**

The soft duality view has been taken up by Calvin (and Zwingli) and the whole Calvinist, Reformed and Presbyterian world. Though many authors in the Reformed/Presbyterian world regard modes, fields and dimensions of experience to be perceived as that of a whole human life, the duality still lingers on by dividing these modes fields and dimension in two groups: soul-type spiritual modes and body-type sensory bodily functions.

The Reformed Berkhof (1939) reviews the notion of a soft duality by asserting that body and soul are distinct components (not substances) which do interact, though their mode of interaction escapes human scrutiny and remains a mystery to us. The union between the two may be called a union of life in which the two are organically related as one substantial human life: the soul acting on the body and the body on the soul.

Hard-line dualist supporters who form the majority in spiritual groups, churches and religious communities in the global world, espouse the hardcore view that the soul can exist without the body, especially after death. They see such a state of affairs not only in correspondence with the Scriptural representations about soul and body but accept it as the only correct Biblical viewpoint. However, this hard dualist view is more in line with the views of Platonic and neo-Platonic philosophies and sense-making approaches, which operate in broad terms more with the immortal soul and mortal body dualism than the whole directed trajectory of Biblical views. Berkhof's views on the other hand, are more in line with the soft duality of Aristotle, Calvin and Barth in which soul and body comprise one substance or essence of being human.

Berkhof (1939:192) argues that every action of a human being is perceived as an action of the whole human being. The whole person has sinned as body and soul. It is not the soul that dies nor the physical body but the human being. It is body and soul that is redeemed in Christ. When God formed the body, He formed it so that by breath of his Spirit humankind at once became a living soul (Job 33:4). Berkhof also mentioned that materialism views its primary substance as matter while the spirit is a product of matter. Spiritualism on the other hand views its primary substance as spirit and this becomes objectified into what is called matter. Matter is a product of the spirit. Dualistic approaches hold the view that when a movement occurs in the body, a corresponding motion in the soul occurs according to the law of pre-established harmony. Though Berkhof emphasises the unity of soul and body in the footsteps of Aristotle, Calvin and Barth, asserting it is the whole human being that dies not only the body, he, similar to Barth, operates with the dual component scheme of soul and body. In addition both Berkhof and Barth do not work with the triadic scheme of spirit, soul and body. For both of them the notion of spirit is incorporated in the soul component of the human being. The duality schemes or for that matter the triadic schemes, offer unsatisfactory and insufficient solutions and answers about human problems to modern people who live their lives through a large number of fields of experience. In the grand scheme of things, the globalisation processes effectuate very similar levels of well-being and wellness in people's lives within the secularised world.

### **An equitable multiversity of fields of experience versus the classic duality and triadic schemes of human beings**

In the light of this paper, though the soft duality scheme of soul and body, and mind and matter and its more extended sister scheme of a soft spirit, soul and body triad present us with unsatisfactory and insufficient answers and solutions, they are a vast improvement on the strong dualist and trichotomist schemes that are still doing rounds in people's experience. In terms of the unitary scheme of spirit, soul and body, when processes of intellectual behavioural growth occur in the mind, corresponding activities and performances of spiritual and physical materiality occur in the conglomeration of the time duration of life and place of dwelling. These corresponding activities and performances must be displayed by a healthy, happy, satisfactory life environment which means in terms of the ambience of an African cum Christian sense-making approach, that the environment has to be people friendly, God friendly and friendly to the experience of individual human beings (Modise, 2009).

The question may be raised whether a 21<sup>st</sup> century sense-making view of African-Christian sense making is really corresponding with what Van Niekerk (2006:373-374) defines as the mystery of the simultaneous *at-one-ment* and *the at-other-ment* of God, human beings and the physical-organic environment as well as with the radical, integral and differential equity and multiversity of fields, modes and dimensions of human experience. The second leg of the statement espouses the idea that human life comprises a multiversity of experiential fields, modes and dimensions integrated and differentiated in one human life.

This mainly means that a human being comprises the largest possible number of fields, modes and dimensions of experience experientially discovered and constructed in the modern era. The main question of reflection is thus not which of a human life's fields, modes and dimensions is basic or the most important one, or which one is eternal and which one is temporally worldly but how each field is integrated and differentiated with its own radical characteristic nature in one interconnected human being simultaneously connected and different from God and the physical-organic environment.

### Conclusion

In the light of theanthropocosmic sense making approach it becomes more viable for ecumenical movements and interfaith to engage in dialogue about matters that affect human life (HIV/AIDS; Poverty; unemployment, National and international conflicts/wars and other social ills); physical-organic environment (Climate change; degradation of the land and nature conservation) in relation to God's involvement in human lives and natural environment. These should be matters of concern for ecumenical movements and interfaith movements within the secularized world because one cannot separate the foursome pattern (Oneself, other human being, physical-organic environment and God) of life from its interconnectedness by overemphasizing one or two components out of this foursome pattern of life.

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