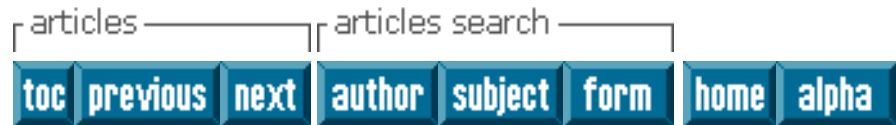


Theology in the flesh-a model for theological anthropology as embodied sensing.

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ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Theology in the flesh - a model for theological anthropology as embodied sensing

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ABSTRACT

The author proposes a model for theological anthropology as embodied sensing that is based on an exploration of the corporeal turn from a southern African perspective. The work of James B. Nelson is that body theology starts with the concrete, the bodily expressions of life and not with doctrines about theological anthropology of David H. Kelsey is evaluated as a theological anthropology with a sentimental clearings in the work of David Kelsey and an interdisciplinary research, the author proposes a model of anthropology as embodied sensing which functions within the intricate and complex connection of th

and experiencing in a concrete lifeworld with an openness to the 'more than'. The author considers this within narrative therapy as a way in which to uncover the intimate and intricate connection between thought and language, and implementing insights from theological anthropology as embodied sensing.

Introduction

Artists in the 18th century had an obsession with the flesh. The challenge was to capture the colour of flesh. French philosopher and art critic, Denis Diderot, writes in his *Essay on Painting* that the realism in a painting form and that life originates from colour, stating that:

[H]e who has acquired the feeling for flesh has progressed a lot; the rest is nothing in comparison. Many painters have died without knowing flesh; thousand others will die without feeling it. (Diderot [1765] Rabaté 1996:34)

This was paraphrased in the 2010 film, *Le sentiment de la chair* [The sentiment of the flesh], with the remark that many painters died not knowing the sentiment of the flesh. Many more will die not knowing' (Smells like science lies the challenge for theologians - to know the sentiment of the flesh.

The quest in my research is for a theological anthropology that can reflect a deeper understanding of the dimensions of bodily life; a theological anthropology that has a sentiment of the flesh. In proposing a theological anthropology as embodied sensing, I have explored the corporeal turn from a southern African perspective in an interdisciplinary conversation with other disciplines like sociology, philosophy, somatic psychology, cognitive science and molecular biology, weaving them together with the voices of Church Fathers, medieval Reformers, artists and novelists. A postfoundationalist theology opens the door very wide to an interdisciplinary conversation especially in the context of initiating deeper and deeper levels of inquiry into the body and the experiential specific and concrete lifeworld.

The body - a South African perspective

While the obsession in the 18th century was mostly with white skin, the morbid fascination in the 19th century was with the flesh; the beginning of an era of 'the new pseudo-science of ethnology' that went hand in hand with the economic exploitation of colonies, and scientific racism (Holmes 2007:70). The public exhibition on 'Pieter Hottentot Venus' was probably the most prominent body on display of a black woman (as colonial subject) and remained so till 1976 when her skeleton and body cast were removed from public display at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris (Holmes 2007:65). Lahoucine Ouzgane (2002), a scholar in postcolonial theories, writes that pathologising the black body through the process of 'othering' was done to elevate the European as superior to other races. White bodies were considered to be civilised and controlled, whereas black bodies were perceived as primitive and savage'. To maintain the 'truth' of the structures and institutions of these colonial empires, black bodies (including torture and death) and made docile. After the 19th century, 'this surveillance was an internalised mechanism of docility' that was used by white people to determine what was possible for black bodies and also for white bodies (Ouzgane 2002:244). It was a mission that was implemented also during apartheid through brutality, force, arrogance, humiliation, and deep insensitivity.

A well-known attempt to clear society of the monstrosities of apartheid was made in the form of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) under the chairmanship of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The 'descriptions, representations and images around bodies in various states of mutilation, dismemberment, and internment within the terror of the apartheid core' of the TRC (Bethlehem 2006:82). Family members repeatedly pleaded for the remains or body parts to be returned 'making their visibility, recovery and repossession a metaphor for the settlement of the past of apartheid'. The 'moral signature' of the TRC was the employment of two visual 'tools', namely the practice of exposing

held by another' (Bethlehem 2006:83). The focus on the body during the TRC hearings delivered a 'mnemonic site of memory' where the surface of the body became a site of memory. The sight of the violated body allowed the body to become a 'site of memory' (Bethlehem 2006:85). The pain of the body is shared.

The sociologist Didier Fassin (2007) writes that the body is not just a manifestation of a person's presence but also a site where the past has left its mark or as he puts it:

[T]he body is a presence unto oneself and unto the world, embedded in a history that is both individual and collective: the trajectory of a life and the experience of a group. (p. 175)

Any contemporary theological anthropology in South Africa should have a profound consideration for the experience of black people in their concrete life worlds throughout the heart-wrenching history in South Africa, from the arrival of explorers and missionaries in the 15th century, the colonial and apartheid periods and in post-apartheid South Africa. It is an implicit kind of bodily knowing in the continuous interaction of living bodies with their environment. In the year history, a bodily knowing where the black body has often been denied its dignity and humanity, and is often perceived as subhuman and uncivilised.

The corporeal turn in theology and theological anthropology

Was there really something like a 'corporeal turn', a conceptual shift that happened some time during the 20th century? In her book, *The corporeal turn* (2009), Maxime Sheets-Johnstone writes that the humanities and human sciences have been the ground of two fundamental conceptual shifts in the twentieth century: the earlier linguistic turn and the corporeal turn (Sheets-Johnstone 2009:2). The Austrian-born philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein set in motion a linguistic turn in the late 19th and several other linguistic turns in early 20th century, between the First and Second World Wars. Soon after the linguistic turn and the phenomenological movement laid the foundation for the corporeal turn. In the late 1940s and 1950s, phenomenologists, such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Gabriel Marcel and Michel Foucault put the body at the center of the problem and in this way, initiated the corporeal turn. The 1960s and 1970s were also the decades when there was a focus on the body in social life; in the 1980s, feminist theology, black theology, liberation theology, queer theology and the AIDS epidemic further impacted on the social regulation and construction of the bodies of women, black people, and of gay men and lesbian women. The application of bodymind therapies within somatic psychology was also influenced by the cultural changes of the 1960s.

My own argument would be that one could refer in broad terms to the corporeal turn (1940-1965), followed by a second wave (1976-1986), and a third wave (1990-2000). Perhaps it would also be feasible to speak of second and third generation corporeal turns. The second generation corporeal turn appears to be a tentative application of the insights from phenomenology and philosophers in other disciplines such as sociology, psychology and theology. It also seems that it has an interdisciplinary scope. From research conducted within cognitive science, I note a 3rd generation corporeal turn as a feature that points to a convergence of the linguistic and corporeal turn, also as a result of cognitive linguistics' emphasis on how language develops from the body, and the influence of metaphorical thinking. I would refer to the 3rd generation corporeal turn as a corporeal-linguistic turn. Once again, philosophy has set the pace with Wittgenstein, Eugene Gendlin, *Thinking beyond patterns: Body, language, and situations* (1991), George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors we live by* (1980), and Horst Ruthrof, *The body in language* (2000).

The question can also be asked whether one can truly talk about a corporeal turn in theology in the same way as it is done in other academic disciplines, or is there another dynamic at play? What is clear at this point is that the corporeal turn is a contentious topic in the church of the 20th and 21st centuries in the wake of the sexual revolution that began in the 1960s, and others, the work of Wilhelm Reich in the 1930s. This revolution reached its culmination in the 1960s, 1970s, when its momentum was stumped by social, economic and political factors - the HIV and AIDS epidemic. There is an indication of the far-reaching influence of the French phenomenological philosophers after World War II, also in theology, and especially in the development of a theology of the body within Roman Catholicism.

Pope John Paul II wrote the manuscript, *Man and woman He created them* in Polish in the 1970s when it formed the basis for the development of his theology of the body through his Wednesday catechism.

parallel, James Nelson formed his ideas for his book, *Embodiment: An approach to sexuality and Christ*. The Roman Catholic theologian, Benedict Ashley (1985) published his book, *Theologies of the body: Human* 1985. The pope's theology of the body had a continuous influence from its first publication.

Nelson's (1978) work was influential in my quest for a theological anthropology that takes the body seriously. His assertion in his 1978 book that 'body theology begins with the concrete' and not with doctrines or creeds is a departure from tradition. It begins with the concrete and 'the fleshly experience of life - with our hungers and our passions, our aliveness and deadness' (Nelson 1992:43). He considers 'lived experience' to be the most neglected in theology. For many, theology is a 'second moment' and that the first moment is 'life itself', that 'theology comes to understand and serve life' (Nelson 2004:12).

The notion of the body and embodiment - not in the format of body theology - appears again in the late 20th century theologians like Wentzel van Huyssteen's (2006) who explores human uniqueness and personhood; Victor Gollwitzer who advocates a religious naturalist anthropology; non-reductive physicalism in the work of Nancey Lee Lurie; the relational theological anthropology of F. LeRon Shults (2003); an African Christo-theological anthropology of theologian Andrea Ng'wesheni (2002) and Anthony Pinn in his book, *Embodiment and the new shape of Christian thought* (2010).

In his monumental book, *Eccentric existence: A theological anthropology*, David Kelsey (2009) wholeheartedly affirms the notion of the human body as a personal living body that can flourish to the glory of God. Kelsey (2009)

[T]he real you is none other than this living human body that has been born of particular parents, at a particular time and place in a particular society with its particular culture. (p. 285)

He does not believe in the Fall or in the existence of a historic couple such as Adam and Eve. Kelsey is critical of the overemphasis of 'the interior psychology of sin' as introduced into theology by Augustine through the Fall of man. Instead, he appeals to humans to be wise in their practices in the way they interact with other human beings, institutions and other non-human creatures.

Kelsey (2009:162) alludes to the 'textures of life' when he refers to the created proximate context as 'humanity in its concrete everydayness', and the dignity that is inherent to this everydayness, where the perfect, real person is the 'ordinary everyday human person.' He alludes to the 'textures of a fleshly world' when he sees the 'inherently ambiguous' - filled with 'the possibility of our well-being' as humans and at the same time with pain, loss and death (Kelsey 2009:202). He acknowledges this textured life when he anchors his theological anthropology in the doctrine of creation and in the practical wisdom of Job.

A model for theological anthropology as embodied sensing

Keeping in mind the limitations in the focus of body theology and theology of the body, as well as the theological anthropology of David Kelsey (a wider incorporation of the corporeal-linguistic turn from the traditional theological anthropologies, and the recognition of bodily experience as a source of revelation), we propose a model (see [Figure 1](#)) for theological anthropology as embodied sensing (Meiring 2014:283)

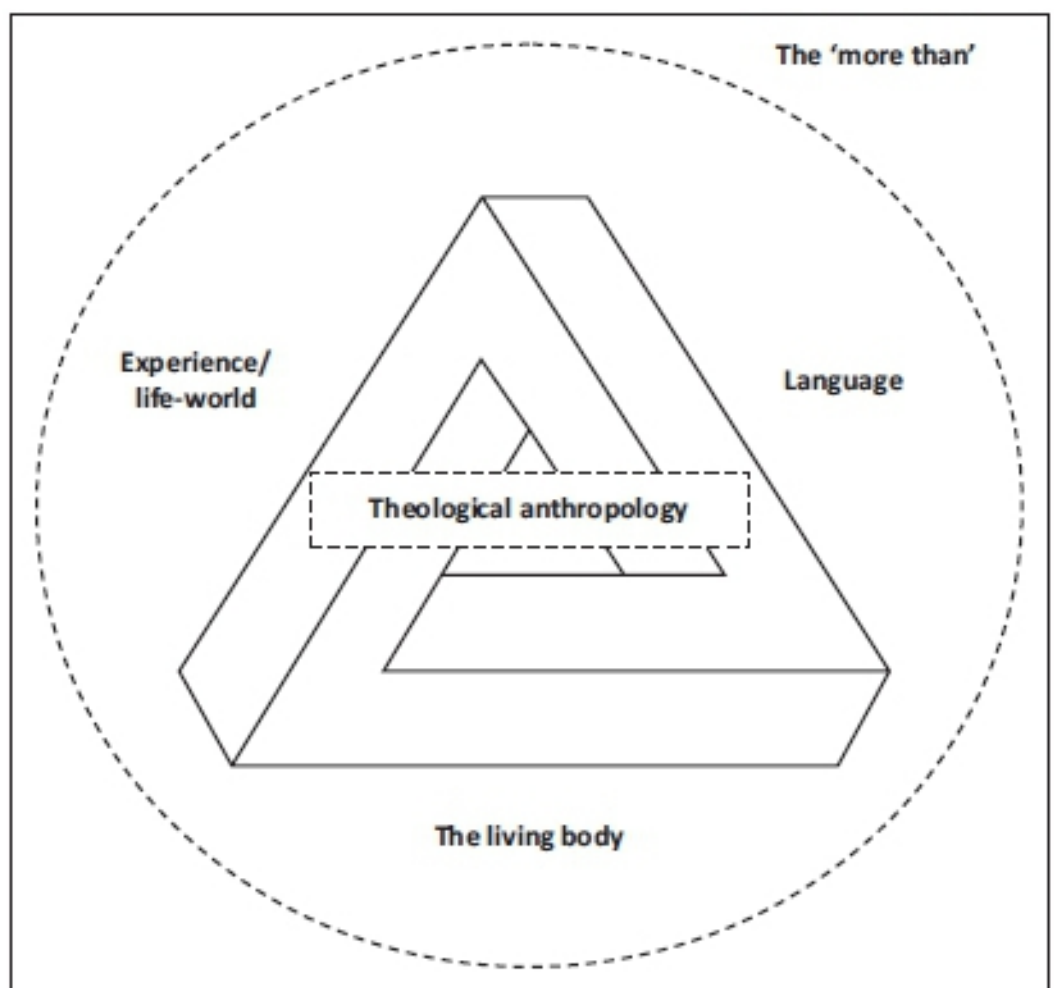


FIGURE 1: A model for theological anthropology as embodied sensing.

A contemporary theological anthropology with a sentiment of the flesh and a sensitivity to the textures of the intricate and complex connection of the living body, language, and experiencing in a concrete life-world, the model can express a variety of ideas and concepts, expressing amongst others the notion of eccentric Trinitarian theological anthropology of David Kelsey. The word 'sensing' is an effort to move away from objectification to a more participatory approach and, as Eugene Gendlin (1997:15) phrases it, 'to speak from within our situation'. It is, however, quite difficult to bypass the subject and object distinction altogether, so as not to objectify ourselves, other creatures and events in our concrete situation. The 'more than' is also an effort to move away from the obsessive objectifying of objects, events and each other. It is furthermore an effort to move away from a pure cognitive, object-oriented approach to a more embodied sensing, derived from the Latin word *sensus*, which expresses the faculty of thought, feeling and meaning.

The term 'sensing' endeavours to capture what Gendlin (1996) conveys with the word 'focusing' and the expression 'embodied understanding'. Todres (2011:2) defines 'embodied understanding' as 'a form of knowing that is sensitive to the possibility of living, bodily relevant textures and meanings.' He in turn builds upon Gendlin's (1996) notion of 'focusing', which is about paying attention to the words that work, responding to an experience where language is embodied in the body. It is a focus on texture where a phenomenon is not merely a theoretical description but a lived moment that was embodied by a person in a concrete situation.

The living body

A clearing exists in Kelsey's theological anthropology to incorporate insights from other academic disciplines into the notion of the living body. It also illustrates the necessity of continued interdisciplinary dialogue in the ongoing development and expanding the notion of the living body. It is therefore necessary to fill this clearing in theological anthropology with the insights gained from other academic disciplines. These insights include:

- An acknowledgement of the species-specific placement of humans in history, and our common primates.
- An understanding that the evolution of language is only possible within the context of a sensorimotor body.
- The notion that sexuality, imagination and morality are intimately linked to the embodied evolution of humans.
- The notion that our moral dimensions are linked to our prehistoric roots, and our moral concepts (compassion, justice, tolerance, and virtue) are structured metaphorically. These moral metaphors are embodied in our bodies and in our social interactions.
- The notion that mirror-neurons in the brain provide a strong explanation of how the perception of an individual activates neural mechanisms in an observer, allowing the observer to resonate with the emotions (empathy) of the individual being observed. Interpersonal neurobiology (IPNB) indicates how social attachments are shaped by the processes of neural systems and these attachments shape neuronal activity.
- The notion that the body can also be referred to as a system of 'meaning-seeking', which constantly seeks coherence in its environment in an effort to seek coherence.
- The notion that the body is always consciousness embodied, meaning that the embodied mind and human cognition is not only driven by the experiences of the body, but also the crucial role of the body as a resource for cognition.
- The notion that body image and body schema or the later concept of corporal-kinetic intentionality and motor patterning are aspects of the 'meaning-seeking body'.
- The notion that the whole body stores memory, including traumatic events, which research in neuroscience has found can be inherited from previous generations.
- An acknowledgement of the fundamental importance of touch for the physical, emotional, social and cognitive development of humans, that is, the expression of tactile interaction is essential for the developing brain.
- The notion that bodymind therapies can create an awareness of the intricate relationship between the body and the mind, and open us up to the wisdom of our embodiment, and a sense of belonging with other embodied bodies that we are. The body, therefore, can never merely be a vessel for the disembodied mind.

Kelsey further develops the notion of the living body into the 'personal body' and 'flourishing body'. These concepts include, for example, the notion of the vulnerable body when speaking of sin, and how people carry traumatic memories in their bodies, also from generation to generation. It is from this deeper interdisciplinary perspective that it is possible to reconstruct and reform certain doctrines (Meiring 2014:288).

Language

It is clear from the exploration of the corporeal-linguistic turn that there exists a very close relationship between the body and experiencing; it is sometimes a difficult and forced exercise to discuss these in isolation from each other. He is keenly aware of the importance of language in wisdom literature and the normative connection between language and complex practices. He views humans as the social, intentional, bodied enactors of complex practices and the use of language. Language is then an integral part of wise practices in which it is used in such a way that it responds to the nature and purpose of the relevant practice, and responds to the realities of the larger public context. (2009:199), it is very important that language is not in a way that is false or deceitful, since distorting the truth through the deceitful use of language is to deform the quotidian created by God. He also acknowledges the interconnection between the body and its capacity for language, and the way in which language is intimately connected to a culture and its images (Meiring 2014:288).

A contemporary theological anthropology that takes the body seriously should also incorporate the insights of paleoanthropology and linguistic philosophy with regard to the role of language and the intimate connection between language and experiencing. The ability to walk upright is the defining moment in hominid evolutionary history, and signals and language developed from this and, in turn, the human brain has been reorganised in response. Linguistic philosophy has focused the attention on the challenge in languaging human experiences, and to stay true to the truth of experiences through the use of language. The living body is part of language as Gendlin (1997:28) expresses in his assertion that 'speaking is a special case of bodily interaction.' Accordingly, the body has an implicit knowing function that includes knowing the language, and how it is relevant to a particular kind of bodily knowing (which includes language) is about a living body continuously interacting with the world. Gendlin (1997:27) also makes the assertion that the living body is its own next step, that 'a living body is a process' in the sense that it implies its next bit of life process. The challenge is to move beyond the dualistic distinction and to speak from how we interact bodily in a specific situation, trying to express the bodily experience in a concrete lifeworld, speaking from a 'sensed experience'.

Experiencing in a concrete lifeworld

A second clearing that exists in Kelsey's (2009) theological anthropology and in other contemporary theological anthropologies, is the lack of recognition of experience as a source of revelation and knowledge. The influence of liberation theology has brought this crucial aspect to the fore. Nelson (2004) views human experience as an important theological data in contemplating the reality of God, and describes it as the 'first moment' versus the 'second moment'. If theology or theological anthropology as 'second moment' should incorporate bodily experience in a concrete lifeworld (experiencing) as important theological data, the way in which we listen to the 'voice of the body' would be the challenge. It is not only about accumulating facts about the body, and what happens in certain circumstances, but also how to access these bodily experiences, and how to language these experiences in words or concepts or doctrines. It is easier to make theological statements on how to live in the body, and from there reflect about human existence and the reality of God. The challenge in the latter position is to set theological judgements and statements aside and to listen to interior dynamics of human bodily experience as part of the 'sense-making process' (Meiring 2014:290).

Theological anthropology as embodied sensing endeavours to capture this process of sense-making and to establish an authoritative source of revelation and knowledge on par with tradition and scripture. Eugene Gendlin (1997) states that 'experiencing is inherently sense-making', and that sense-making is implicitly symbolised in the interaction between human and non-human creatures. These events are then elaborated through language which Gendlin (1997) calls 'eventing'. His conclusion is that there can be no sense-making without experiencing and eventing, and in the context of theological argumentation there can be no sense-making of existence before God without experiencing and eventing (experience through language). And if all experiences are grounded in the body, the intimate and intricate relationship between the living body, experience, and language is uncovered and it is within this intimate relationship that a theological anthropology as 'second moment' develops its enquiries and articulations.

Theological anthropology as embodied sensing should also be aware that not all bodily experiences can be captured in the cognitive units of theological language, that some experiences could probably never be fully articulated through the use of language, and that they could only be 'sensed' through further living. Todres (2011:20) expresses the challenge of language all experiences by referring to the body in its lifeworld 'as the messenger of the unsaid'. Gendlin (1997) speaks of the 'felt sense' of bodily experiences, whereby he not only expresses the feeling of 'the stuff inside', but 'the sense of what is happening in one's living in the outside' (Gendlin 1997 cited in Todres 2011:23). The challenge for a contemporary theological anthropology as embodied sensing is to capture this embodied experiencing, the 'felt sense' of bodily experience, and to listen to the 'unsaid' of the body. Then theological anthropology as embodied sensing truly has a sensitivity to the textures of life (Meiring 2014:291).

The 'more than'

The 'more than' can refer to a variety of ideas or concepts, or theological thought experiments and art refers to the 'epistemic mysteriousness' of living human bodies, that not all manner of knowing of the exhausted, and that the Trinitarian formula of humans being created by 'the Father through the Son' g 'in the very life of God' (Kelsey 2009:268). Living human bodies are amazingly complex and in this ser 'inexhaustible objects of knowledge.' This ties in with what Todres describes as 'the unsaid' of the hur that not all human bodily experiences can be languaged. Todres (2011:185) also expresses the 'unsaid experiences of spirituality in everyday life 'are grounded by the palpable lived experience of meeting ; the excess of the known.' His concept of the living body is that it is not merely an object encapsulated | subjectivity that is 'intimately intertwined with what is there beyond the skin.'

There is a 'more than' to the eventing of human bodily experiences in a concrete lifeworld; there is a ' of textured bodily life that cannot easily be conveyed into theological articulations. Kelsey (2009:544) | in the notion of eccentric existence, and the continuity between physical human bodies and glorified b bodies', living in 'the sociality of community-in-communion' where they are recognisable as an indiv dignity and unqualified respect. Kelsey (2009:1009) describes Jesus Christ as 'uniquely God-related', a the image of God' that humans are finite living mysteries that image the triune living mystery.

Kelsey (2009:546) writes that there is a discontinuity in the 'mode of bodiliness' of the pre- and post-E Hans-Joachim Eckstein to point out that canonical narratives make it clear that:

[T]he living human personal body, identified with the pre-Easter Jesus, who is encountered pos transfigured or glorified body that is in important ways discontinuous with the pre-Easter Jesus

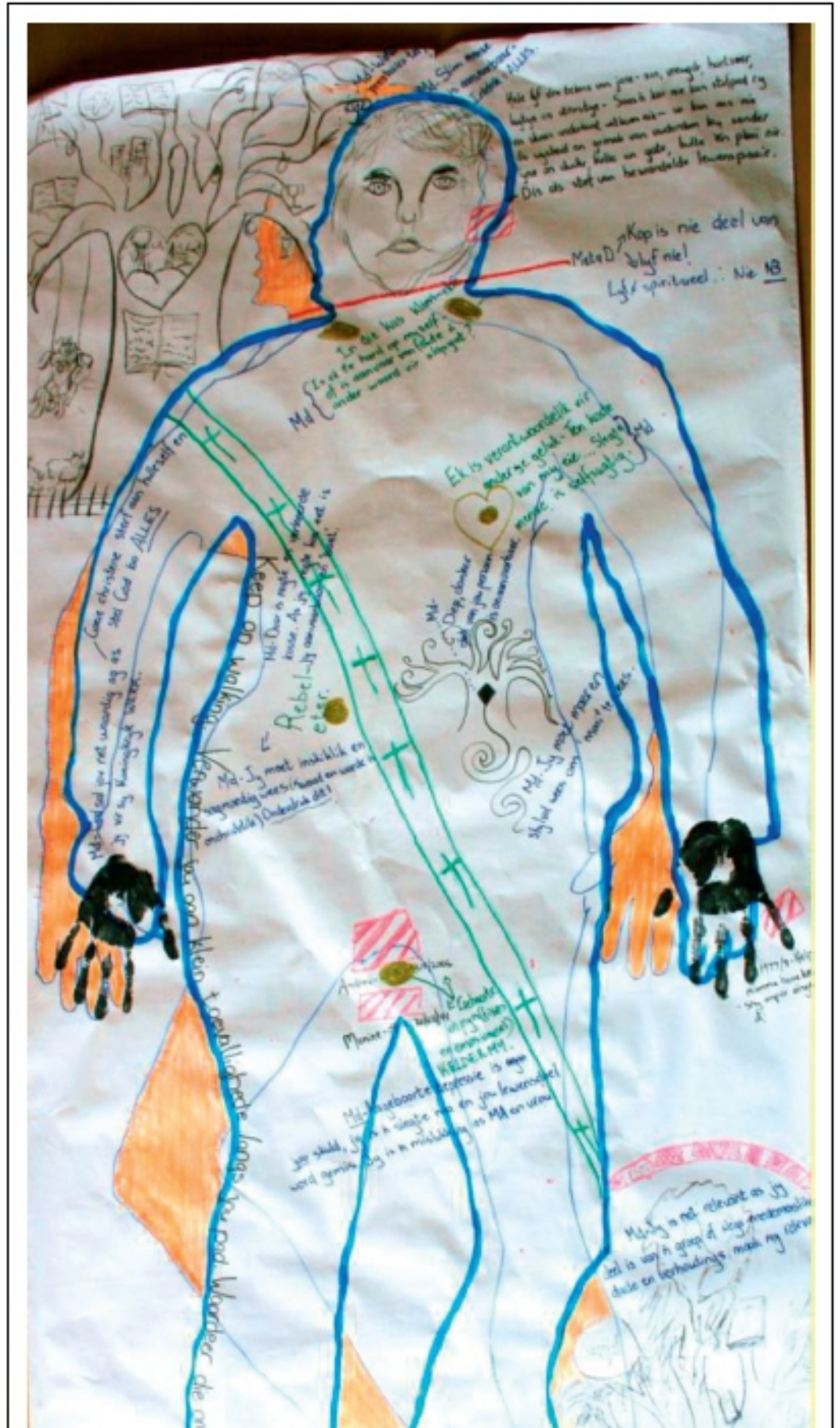
He continues that Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:50 that 'flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom (perishable inherit the imperishable', meaning that only a glorified body can inherit the kingdom of G resurrected into his previous, physical body 'tied to quotidian space, time and matter', but is raised 'in God's eschatological future' as a mark of 'the proleptic intrusion of the eschatological reign of God int quotidian proximate contexts' (Kelsey 2009:546). He continues to draw two implications for theologica is that the resurrected body of Jesus should not be confused with a resuscitated body (like those of Jai widow's son in Nain or Lazarus). They are considered as resuscitations and do not have 'the significar way in which God inaugurates fulfilment of eschatological blessing.' The second implication is that 'b eschatological transfigured or glorified bodies is social and communal. The adopted human brothers in the same eschatological consummation since the 'fulfilment of God's promise of eschatological ble inaugurated in the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Jesus is resurrected in and with community (Kelsey 20 Jesus is more than the pre-Easter life in his body. This 'more' lies in the proximate context of the bodil ours) which Kelsey (2009:550) describes as 'a new heaven and earth where they live as glorified huma context constituted by networks of interrelationships with fellow creatures.' He refers to John Polkingh 2009:550), who writes that there is sufficient discontinuity to ascertain that 'the new creation is not just the old.' Kelsey (2009:550) continues that the 'more' is also captured by the otherness of the new creat 'justice, peace and love that characterize the community-in-intimate-communion that constitutes the |

Even though Kelsey (2009:552) admits that there are 'virtually no grounds' for proposals with descript human personal bodily life and its proximate context' without bordering on 'fantasy pictures' of life in promoting various forms of piety, he nevertheless puts forth proposals about the 'fully actualized escl consummation of human personal bodies in community' (Kelsey 2009:553). He bases his concept on Christian beliefs with an effort to 'steer imaginative speculation away from the more misleading and c 553). He formulates his concept at the intersection of descriptions of an actual living human personal | minimal conditions that should be met according to evolutionary biology of what constitutes 'life', the among theological claims, and being guided by the 'dialectic between the continuity and discontinuity and pre-Easter Jesus.'

Exploring embodied sensing through bodymapping

One of the ways in which I have endeavoured to uncover the intimate and intricate connection between experience, and language as well as the 'more than' ('the mystery of unsaid'), is through the use of body therapy. The challenge lies in languaging human experiences, and the effort it takes to stay true to the through the use of language; to find the words that work.

The motivation for me as a narrative theologian and therapist is to listen to the stories of people as embodied. Jane Solomon (2007:2-3) describes bodymapping as a way of telling stories and making art about her life (Figure 2).





Source: Meiring, J.J.S., 2014, 'Theology in the flesh: Exploring the corporeal turn from a southern African perspective', PhD dissertation, Faculties of Theology, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, University of Pretoria, Pretoria.

FIGURE 2: Body map of a co-researcher.

The Memory Box Project at the University of Cape Town started running Memory Box workshops in K... (Bodymaps n.d.). Memory work is used with people with HIV and AIDS helping them to prepare for th... leaving their story behind for their children. In these workshops, facilitators discovered that people w... antiretroviral therapy (ART) treatment, were more future orientated than looking at the past. A large gr... to draw their life stories, hoping to live longer. Flowing from this discovery, Jonathan Morgan and Jan... bodymapping process which resulted in the writing of the 'Living with X' a bodymapping facilitator's 1... 2010:4 of 7).

The suggestion was made that the bodymapping process could have other applications for example, p... disorders or people living with chronic pain (Brett-MacLean 2009:741). It made me very curious to exp... using bodymapping in my work as narrative theologian. Another research project was centred on the c... make sense of physical trauma through their experience of bodymapping (Meyburgh 2006:6).

The notion of body memory refers to:

[A]ll the implicit knowledge, capacities and dispositions that structure and guide our everyday l... without the need to deliberately think of how we do something, to explicitly remember what we... anticipate what we want to do. (Koch, Caldwell & Fuchs 2013:82)

This kind of knowledge is accumulated 'in the course of our embodied experiences', especially in earl... knowledge is then transformed throughout our life. There are six forms of body memory, including ha... body memory (habitual memory which enables us to acquire sensorimotor skills); situational body m... atmospheric memory and the memory of interior and exterior spaces); inter-corporeal body memory... to deal with others); incorporative body memory (the adaption of poses, manners and gender roles b... cultural environments); pain memory (the impact on physical painful experiences on the present mor... memory (the impact of traumatic experiences on the present) which is stored in the body (Koch *et al.* 2...

In her work on bodymapping, Meyburgh (2006) cites the geneticist and professor in biophysics, Mae-1

There is no doubt that a body consciousness exists prior to the 'brain' consciousness associated... system. The body consciousness has also a memory. The relevant transmission system is calle... conduction which belongs to a form of semi-conduction in condensed matter, and is much fast... of electrical signals by the nerves. Thus the 'ground substance' of the entire body has a much b... intercommunication system than can be provided by the nervous system alone. (p. 13)

I have recently encountered the work of the neuroscientist Antonio Damasio, who also uses the term '... research. He employs it as a term to describe the process in which the body interacts with its environm... caused in the body by this interaction are mapped in the brain (Damasio 2012:91). He continues that '... world external to the body can come into the brain only via the body itself, namely via its surface' (Damas... original). The body employs a variety of signals (chemical and neural) to send messages to the brain.

communication can be mapped very simply for example, by the mapping of the position of a limb in space. Part of this signalling is initially channelled via the spinal cord and brain stem (Damasio 2012:92). Hence, the function and physical structure of the body are engraved in brain circuitry meaning that 'some version of the body is permanently re-created in brain activity' (Damasio 2012:93). It would be a fascinating topic for future research on body-to-body signalling (Damasio's bodymapping) with bodymapping as a narrative tool combined with theological anthropology as embodied sensing.

Impressions from the body maps of co-researchers and clients

Flowing from the use of bodymapping as a narrative tool during research and counselling, I have the following impressions:

- A dominant theme which surfaced was around acceptance and rejection, connected to concepts of self resulting in strong feelings of guilt, especially regarding sexuality and bodilyness. This in turn manifested in various ways of eating disorders, stress, sexually alienating behaviour and dissociation from the body.
- Experiences of rejection were also linked to extremely dominant metadiscourses of what it means to be a good mother, a pretty woman, an attractive man, the typical male. The language of these metadiscourses is that of a patriarchal heterosexism. My impression was that it causes a lot of anxiety and confusion regarding identity. These same patriarchal heterosexist metadiscourses had an almost unbreakable hold on clients' image of God as purely male.
- Isherwood and Stuart (1998:96) write about the epistemology of the flesh as body knowledge. I believe that bodymapping can give voice to, for example, stories of oppression. The bodymapping process uses metaphors and symbolism and ties in beautifully with the concept of externalisation in narrative.
- Bodymapping is a powerful medium to create awareness regarding dominant metadiscourses and can be used to facilitate a process of body integration, overcoming various forms of oppression.
- Bodymapping could assist in the body and spiritual integration (Meiring & Müller 2010:6 of 7).

Concluding remarks

The body matters. The history of South Africa and the African continent is rich in narratives of how bodies were used as a 'site of resistance' against various forms of oppression, discrimination and alienation. The relationship between the living body, language, experiencing in a concrete lifeworld and the 'more than body' notion of theological anthropology as 'embodied sensing', is more complex than the incorporation of secondary theology in the process of reformulating doctrines in a theoretical and cognitive fashion with primary theology, for example moral theology or Christian ethics. It is about the sensing (feeling, thinking) of words about God (scripture, doctrines and tradition), and how it resonates with a lived body in a concrete lifeworld. The experiencing of that body in its lifeworld in turn informs the speaking of words about God (interpreting tradition in doctrines). It is an ongoing process of embodying theology and theologising (from) the body. Making enquiries within theological anthropology about the embodied existence of human and non-human God (Meiring 2014:284).

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Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationships which may have inappropriately influenced the writing of this article.

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