

## ***The new threat to societal freedoms: A Return to the persecution of Christians?***

D F M Strauss  
(Translation by Author)

This Article appeared in Afrikaans in: *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*  
[Journal of Humanities], Year 55 No. 3:  
September 2015 doi.10.17159/2224-7912/2015/v55n3a7 (pp.278-292)

### **Abstract**

Societal freedoms need to be understood both in terms of *structural pluralism* and *directional pluralism*. The former concerns personal freedom as well as the plurality of societal entities present in a differentiated society while the latter accounts for the freedom allowing diverging life- and worldviews to live to the full their deepest convictions in all walks of life, liberated from any form of unlawful interference. Acknowledging this distinction exceeds the limitations of the underlying atomistic (individual-centric) underpinnings of modern social contract theories (such as is found in Locke's view: "for all being kings as much as he, every man his equal"). This spirit is breathed by the so-called "conscience clause" almost hundred years ago introduced in the Private Law of South African universities (it started with the University of South Africa and the University of Stellenbosch, respectively in 1916 and 1917). The University of Potchefstroom as well as the Homeland universities did not inherit this clause. It is striking that universities, as *academic* institutions, were confronted with a *religious* clause, as if a university is a *faith community*. The conscience clause is still at home within the positivist idea of an unprejudiced, objective and neutral science mediated by factual *sense data*. This positivist view was thoroughly criticised by the philosophy of science of the previous century (Kuhn, Popper, Lakatos, Toulmin, Stegmüller and many others). The idea of an *autonomous individual* gave way to the collective identity of supra-individual institutions, which had to account for their directional orientation by formulating mission and vision statements. It falls outside the sphere of competence of the government to interfere with the directional choice of a citizen in non-political contexts – and the same applies to the domain of the *public opinion*. In the Netherlands it is still possible, for example, to promote the ideals of a specific trend of thought in scholarly pursuits by establishing *special chairs* at public universities. During the third decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century this was done by the Bolland Foundation which established in Leiden a special chair in *Hegelian Philosophy*. At the moment there are still special chairs in *Reformational Philosophy* at six public universities in the Netherlands. Academic freedom, individually and collectively, entails *directional freedom*. Currently the Darwinian orthodoxy in the USA controls the teaching of biology to such an extent that no biology

teacher is even allowed to raise *scientific* criticism against Darwinism. It contains a threat to various freedoms, amongst which are freedom of speech, freedom of thought, academic freedom, and religious freedom. This is amply demonstrated by Jerry Bergman in his work, *Slaughter of the Dissidents* (2008). Similar to what was required in the Soviet Union of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, biology teachers in the USA now have to be *atheists*. The “in-between-position” of theistic evolutionists, which holds that God directed evolution (a process which is actually, according to Darwinism, *undirected*) is even worse in the eyes of Darwinian orthodoxy, because it violates the church-state division by smuggling God back into the classroom. In his *Review* of Bergman’s book, Brian Thomas remarks that all “Darwin Doubters” are seen as “creationists.” Although highly qualified, these scientists were threatened, while losing opportunities, jobs and even whole careers because of their doubts about the standard evolutionary story. Bergman remarks that this situation already “claimed many thousands of victims.” This completes the circle, reminding us of what happened in early Christendom during the persecution of Christians. Fortunately, there is positive legislation in South Africa which avoids this extreme position. However, a recent experience of the author of this article apparently highlights the emergence of something similar to what is happening in the USA.

### **Introductory**

After the initial persecution of the early Christians it took centuries before the modern just state succeeded in securing societal freedoms. The Greek Medieval legacy as well as the first modern political theories (Machiavelli and Hobbes) did not succeed in safe-guarding societal freedoms (cf. Strauss 2015). This shortcoming is also present in the theories of Locke, Rousseau and Kant. It is therefore not surprising that during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century new threats to societal freedoms emerged in the so-called “liberal-democratic” states. Currently the struggle for personal and collective (non-political) freedoms within a differentiated society experiences a new attack launched now from the humanistic life view. Apart from the *structural* differentiation within a society a *directional* differentiation may also surface.

The question is how the government of a just state should respond to such a situation?

### **Structural pluralism and a pluralism of convictions**

Structural pluralism is an example of the outcome of a process of differentiation giving rise to diverse structural-typical social forms of life. Only within the context of a multiplicity of non-political forms of social life (with their typically distinct spheres of societal freedoms), as well as multiple forms of personal freedom, will it be possible to safe-guard freedom of faith in a juridical sense.

Remarkably enough the individual-centered atomistic inclination of the classical liberal

idea of the state did not sufficiently take into account the supra-individual (collective) connections.

The idea of equal kings indeed constitutes a core element in Locke's political philosophy: “for all being kings as much as he, every man his equal” (Chapter IX, §123; Locke 1966:179). Glendon points out that the “idea of the human person as a free self-determining individual” is shared by all Western legal systems (Glendon 1991:70). Since the Renaissance the assumed freedom and autonomy of human beings were consistently emphasized. Eventually, in the thought of Rousseau, this view acquired its modern humanistic conception of autonomy and freedom: “freedom is obedience to the law which we prescribe to ourselves” (Rousseau 1975:247). In passing we may note that this idea of autonomy eventually terminated in the abolishment of the conception of autonomous freedom altogether. Here we merely mention his view that the “disobedient minority” will be forced to be free by the almighty general will (Rousseau 1975:246)!

Skillen (1994:61 ff.) emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the nature of a differentiated society and warns against the negative effect of undifferentiated discourses. The possibility of entering into a serious discussion of rights is according to him dependent upon an openness “to the consideration of society’s differentiated structure” because only then will it be possible to break through the undifferentiated “moralisms” out of which reflections of rights proceed: “Our aim is to open a window on a distinctive approach to public-moral discourse that breaks through the undifferentiated moralisms and ‘rights talk’ that dominate political and legal arguments in the United States today” (Skillen 1994:68).

If we turn our focus to South Africa it is striking that almost a hundred years ago a clause was inscribed in the private law of the different South African universities which, among other, is directed at the protection of the personal freedom of lecturers and students. In most Western societies universities are independent institutions supported by the state, from which it follows that such universities dispose over their own (parliamentary approved) private law. Since 1916 the government inserted this clause, known as the “conscience clause” in the private law of universities. The University of South Africa, the University of Cape Town and the University of Stellenbosch (the former in 1916 and the latter two in 1917), all incorporated the conscience clause in their private laws. In 1950 the University of the Orange Free State (with the conscience clause) and the university of Potchefstroom for Christian Higher Education (without the conscience clause) obtained independence.

It is of course notable that universities – which are *academic* institutions – were subjected to a *religious stipulation*. The conscience clause after all forbids the Council of a university, regarding the appointment of personnel (academic and non-academic) or in connection with the admission of students and the awarding of degrees, to consider the religious orientation of any person, or to treat any person in a beneficial or harming way. One might have expected that an academic institution would apply an academic test as yardstick rather than a negative religious test. This stipulation is founded on the conviction (= *faith*) that science and faith are not related in any way.

### **An outdated positivistic view**

The underlying separation of “science” and “faith” intended by the conscience clause reflects a specific philosophical conception of what science is. The academic climate at the beginning of the previous century was indeed in the grip of the positivistic view which aimed at the ideal of an “objective” and “neutral” science. However, in the subsequent philosophy of science during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century this view faded. Popper claims that he “killed” positivism (Popper 1974:269).

From the angle of hermeneutical philosophy Gadamer points at the prejudice against prejudices which dates back to the Enlightenment of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Gadamer 1989:276).

From the perspective of the philosophy of science Stegmüller underscores that there is no single domain in which human thinking is self-assured for one first has to believe in something before something else could be justified (Stegmüller 1969:314).<sup>1</sup>

### **From individual autonomy to collective identity**

In spite of the classical liberal focus on *individual* autonomy the developments during the 20<sup>th</sup> century increasingly opted for a *collective* choice of societal institutions including universities. During the student revolts the reaction against the positivistic dogma of neutrality even surfaced in banners stating that “neutral science is under suspicion.”

As a consequence Western universities had to justify themselves vis-à-vis the broader society by choosing a *collective identity* – embodied in articulating a mission and vision statement. This development required from universities to provide an indication of their *orientation*, i.e. to give an account of their chosen *direction*. It created room for life views and for *directional pluralism*. Surely, when societal institutions like schools and universities pursue alternative directional choices the idea of neutrality is no longer feasible.

It is therefore significant that an authoritative neo-Darwinian, Stephen Gould (who eventually went his own way with critique on multiple key assumptions of neo-Darwinism) did take notice of the conceptual world of the philosophy of science, as it is clearly evident from his statement:

Facts have no independent existence in science, or in any human endeavor; theories grant differing weights, values, and descriptions, even to the most empirical and undeniable of observations (Gould 2002:759).

The philosophy of science of the 20<sup>th</sup> century not only acknowledged the inevitability of a theoretical framework (designated by Kuhn as a paradigm), for in addition it also pointed out that all scholars (natural and social scientists) proceed from one or another *ultimate commitment*. Popper (1966-II:231) speaks of an irrational faith in the rationality of reason –

---

<sup>1</sup> Lennox mentions the immunologist, George Klein, who holds that his “atheism is not based on science, but is an a priori faith commitment.” His response to the accusation agnosticism is: “I am not an agnostic. I am an atheist. My attitude is not based on science, but rather on faith... The absence of a Creator, the non-existence of God is my childhood faith, my adult belief, unshakable and holy” (Klein, 1990:203; see Lennox, 2007:34).

which in itself is not rational.<sup>2</sup> We noted that Stegmüller emphasized that one first has to believe something before something else could be justified.

### **Structural differentiation and directional differentiation**

The life of humans is a unity, which is equally true of the *perspective* of humans on the world. That is to say that their world perspective or life and world view is also supposed to constitute a unity, even though there are many instances of divided or dualistic life and world views.

The question what are the implications of the unity of being human and the unity of a life view for state, school and university?

It is first of all important to realize that this question can only obtain a meaningful answer from a differentiated perspective on human society. On the structural level this concerns the differentiation and crystallization of independent and unique societal forms of life. On the directional level it concerns the differentiation of *life views*. Both levels of differentiation represent societal freedoms that should not be usurped by the state. The freedom of non-political societal forms of life indeed constitute the condition for the existence of a just state, for apart from these freedoms the multiplicity of legal interests that ought to be united by the government in one public legal order would collapse.

Universities and schools participate in the structural differentiation of human society and therefore their existence creates space for directional differentiation. The latter does not merely appear within cultic (denominational) practices, for they come to expression within every structurally distinct societal entity. For this reason the support and funding provided by the state to public schools ought not to be transformed into *control* and *ownership*.

Skillen says it certainly belongs to the proper right of the government to earn tax that could partially be dedicated to free education for all. The current problem in the USA is nonetheless that all the tax money is used for secularized public schools while independent (explicitly) life-view-oriented schools receive *nothing* from these tax moneys. The argumentation at the basis of this view is that the government must not support “religion” and that whatever the state controls, including “public” schools, is by definition “secular” and therefore qualifies to be supported with tax money. In opposition to this approach Skillen then states:

My argument to the contrary is that equal protection of all religious ways of life should mean that all parents are equally free to choose education for their children (whether of a secularist, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, or some other variety) without penalty or discrimination from government. Government funding for the education of citizens should flow equitably to all children, and thus to the diverse schools they attend proportional to their numbers. Secularized schools (whether government-run or independent) should be neither privileged nor disadvantaged. And the same applies to Christian schools. Government’s support of the education of all children in this fashion does not establish religion in general or any particular

---

<sup>2</sup> On this page Popper presents his alternative of a critical rationalism which realized that an irrationalist approach proceeds from an act of faith, namely *faith in reason*: “the fundamental rationalist attitude results from an (at least tentative) act of faith – from faith in reason.”

religion; it merely promotes universal education without religious discrimination. An illegitimate practice does occur, however, when government privileges the secularist schools, as it does today. The only way to avoid the establishment of a religion and to protect the free exercise of everyone's faith is to treat all schools with equally (Skillen 1997:8).

This view of Skillen amongst others points to the "establishment of a religion" (which implicitly makes an appeal to the First Amendment) of the American constitution:

*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.*

Normally the first two parts of this first Amendment are designated as the "Establishment Clause" and the "Free Exercise Clause." The former is then interpreted from the perspective of the separation of "state and church" whereas the latter is connected to religious freedom in its relation to a few other civil rights, such as freedom of speech and academic freedom.

However, the critical question is what happens when there arises a clash between the idea of the separation of church and state on the one hand and the nature of personal freedom on the other?

In contrast it could be pointed out that during the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was an established practice in Communist countries to expect from their academics to be (practicing) atheists. The irony is indeed that the teaching of biology in the public schools of America today effectively sets the same requirement, namely that a biology teacher must be a (Darwinian) atheist.

This situation will be elucidated in the next paragraph.

### **Victims of scientific fascism**

Before we look at the current situation in American public schools the significant experience of Richard Milton, an English science journalist is worth mentioning.

Although prominent biological thinkers pretend to be scientific, the attitude of some neo-Darwinists displays everything but openness to scholarly communication. As a science journalist Richard Milton always was an inspired adherent of Darwinism until, after twenty years of studying and writing, he no longer felt at peace with the multiple lacunae of the theory. He explained his view in a book entitled, *Shattering the Myth of Darwinism* (2000).

The reaction to this work is significant. Van den Beukel quotes Milton: "I became the object of witch-hunt by the Darwinian police. Richard Dawkins described me as unsuitable and "seriously in need of psychiatric help" (Van den Beukel 2005:114).

As happens oftentimes, he is stigmatized as a creationist without entering into a confrontation with the substance of his arguments. Yet the *London Times Educational Supplement* invited Milton to articulate his criticism of Darwinism in an article. A week before this newspaper announced: "Next week: Darwinism. Richard Milton goes on the attack". Van den Beukel

remarks: “During this week Dawkins found a way, via his connections with the *Times*, to prevent the publication of this article” (Van den Beukel 2006:114).

Although the scientific “establishment” of the West as well as the mass media claim that they represent open forums for the public without prejudice, Milton points out that neither in America, nor in England was there ever a program broadcasted in which attention is sought for the weak points in Darwinism” (Van den Beukel 2006:114).

The current situation within the public schools of America breathes the same spirit. The factual evidence regarding the intolerance at stake is contained in a work by Jerry Bergman *Slaughter of the Dissidents* (2008). Here Kevin Wirth explains among other that no criticism on one or more facets of (neo-)Darwinism is allowed in public schools. Whoever is skeptical about or differs from Darwinism become victims of “a form of scientific fascism” which threatens various freedoms, among which freedom of speech, freedom of thought, academic freedom and religious freedom. It does not concern a few cases, but a practice which “claimed many thousands of victims” (Bergman 2008:22). This practice of intimidation prevails in spite of the fact that in the USA there is no *law* that forbids the presentation of “evidence” against neo-Darwinism (Bergman 2008:216).

A representative example is found in the case of LeVake, a biology teacher who told a colleague that he intends to discuss with his pupils some of the problems he has with Darwin's theory, among them Haeckel's embryos.<sup>3</sup> The effect was that the school administration asked him to write an article which he best reflects his orientation. Repeatedly he assured the headmaster that “he could and would teach the theory of evolution.” He also acknowledged that on the basis of his research came to the conclusion that “life’s complexity and the fossil record do not support the theory of macroevolution or biochemical evolution” and that in his discussion of evolution he would honestly highlight the problems and inconsistencies of the theory without altering his class

---

<sup>3</sup> Embryonal similarities brought Haeckel in 1868 to his biogenetic law: every individual human, from conception to maturity, passes through the (adult) phases to which the species was subjected in its phylogenetic development: “Ontogenesis recapitulates phylogenesis.” Just as it was initially generally accepted is it currently seen as invalid. The human embryo is *human* right from the beginning and it does not pass through successive phases in which the human is first a fish, then an amphibian, then a reptile and then a mammal. The claim that vertebrate embryos display in their earliest phases the largest likeness is also mistaken, since the first four phases were left out of the picture, apart from the fact that Haeckel omitted two fish classes and in the case of two other classes gave preference to “exemplars” that fitted his scheme better. Haeckel's contemporaries, the embryologist Wilhelm His (in 1874) and the anatomist Carl Semper (in 1875) accused him of *falsification*. For example, Haeckel *named* and *described* hypothetical ancestral mirco-organisms never found anywhere (because they don't exist). The embryologist and Nobel-Prize winner, Christiane Nüsslein-Volhard, is therefore justified in saying during an interview with the German weekly magazine *Die Zeit* that Haeckel is guilty of falsification [“Ernst Haeckel falsified (gefälscht).” “Ernst Haeckel falsified]. Many of his sketches of organisms are fantasies constructed to confirm his theories. The Germans do not assume a morally higher position.”<sup>3</sup> Many of his pictures are merely inventions to confirm his theory. Haeckel indeed “acknowledged” that “a small part of his illustrations of embryos (perhaps 6% or 8%) ‘are falsified’ (*gefälscht*)”! His “excuse” was that owing to the lack of observational material he had to fill the gaps hypothetically. See also *Betrug und Fälschung in der Wissenschaft*: 2003[http:// de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Betrug\\_und\\_F%C3%A4lschung\\_in\\_der\\_Wissenschaft](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Betrug_und_F%C3%A4lschung_in_der_Wissenschaft)) [visited on 01-12-2014].

into a religious one (Bergman 2008:207). He was the only biology teacher at the Faribault public school in Minnesota with a master's degree in biology.

LeVake's remark that he will not change the class into a religious class should be understood against the background of a characterization of a reviewer of the book of Bergman. In his assessment Brian Thomas refers to a remark by Bergman, namely that “evolutionary elitists incorrectly lump all ‘Darwin Doubters’ into one group, ‘creationists,’ who are then categorically ridiculed. Though highly qualified, these scientists and educators are verbally and physically threatened, lose privileges, lose opportunities for promotion, and lose jobs and whole careers, just for expressing some measure of doubt about the standard evolutionary story.”<sup>4</sup>

Transferring LeVake to Chemistry is not based upon what he taught the children, but directed against his personal religious convictions. In the subsequent court case it was never shown that he presented *creation* to his pupils. Judge Bernard Borene of the *Rice Country District Court* decided without going to court that LeVake “has no constitutional right to teach his proposed criticism of evolutionary theory, though they may be scientifically meritorious” (Bergman 2008:210)!

In the appeal court case the court decided on May 8, 2001 that “...the established curriculum and LeVake’s responsibility as a public school teacher to teach evolution in the manner prescribed by the curriculum, overrides his First Amendment rights as a private citizen”. The court even states that this decision does not restrict his freedom of speech by prohibiting him to criticize evolution!

Since 2002 there is a website, the so-called “Darwin Doubters,” which invites natural scientists experiencing problems with Darwinists, simply to sign the following statement:

We are skeptical of claims for the ability of random mutation and natural selection to account for the complexity of life. Careful examination of the evidence for Darwinian theory should be encouraged.<sup>5</sup>

Note in passing that since 1982 seventeen surveys in America have been conducted (always with the same question – creation or evolution?) showing that “creationists” fluctuated between 40% and 47%, while the orthodox (naturalistic) Darwinists varied between 9% and 19%. (Unfortunately these surveys did not include alternative diverging biological trends of thought.)

Bergman concludes from these events (and numberless similar ones) events that

---

<sup>4</sup> See Thomas 2014 - <http://www.icr.org/article/book-review-slaughter-dissidents/> - visited on 14-10-2014.  
<sup>5</sup> Up to and including April 24, 2014 963 natural scientists underwritten this statement (while probably ten thousands cannot dare to support it). Those who signed this statement of the *Scientific Dissent From Darwinism* hold doctor's degrees in the biological sciences, physics, chemistry, mathematics, the medical sciences, computer science and related disciplines, from institutions such as Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, Dartmouth, Rutgers, Universiteit of Chicago, Stanford and the University of California at Berkeley. Many of them are professors or researchers at large universities and research institutions such as Cambridge, Princeton, MIT, UCLA, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Georgia, Tulane, Moscow State university, the Chitose Institute for science and technology in Japan and the Ben-Gurion University in Israel. (See also Bergman 2008:8 en <http://www.discovery.org/scripts/viewDB/filesDB-download.php?id=660> – visited on 24-08-2014).

“Darwinism now has become state-supported orthodoxy. LeVake was branded guilty of ‘heresy’ ” (Bergman 2008:214).

A report on this issue in the World-Net-Daily (Tuesday 25 July, 2000) appeared with the following significant heading: “Evolution Critic Censored. Teacher Punished for Pointing Out Flaws in Darwin’s Theory.”

The reason why these examples are mentioned is to point out that the USA currently is burdened by a new form of Christian persecution. It threatens once more the societal freedoms which were obtained in an exasperating struggle over millennia. It portrays the completion of the circle of religious freedom in the history of Western civilization – as reflected in the title of this article. Religious freedom intimately coheres with freedom of thought, academic freedom and the freedom of a life view. Threatening these societal freedoms means threatening indeed one of the pillars of the Western democratic inheritance (preferably designated as the legacy of the *just state*).<sup>6</sup>

Just like in the communist public schools of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a biology teacher in the USA now first has to *confess* his/her atheistic naturalism *before* s/he will be allowed to teach an uncritical biology. A teacher with the slightest *doubt* about the truth of Darwinism will not be granted the right to teach biology in a public school. Bergman mentions the example of a court decision in the Webster case where the verdict “actually *requires* indoctrination of an anti-Christian viewpoint as the official state-approved educational approach, and ruled that deviations from this approach are illegal” (Bergman 2008:184).

Is it really possible that the curriculum of any subject requires that a teacher must *believe* everything contained in it? What about instances where the history of a discipline harbours clashing (mutually exclusive) points of view? The history of every special science its history underscores different standpoints (and this includes areas of study like mathematics, physics and biology). Does it mean that when opposing orientations in a discipline is discussed that such a teacher alternatingly must become an adherent of any standpoint under discussion?

In a broader context, in which academic freedom and religious freedom are observed, the statement of Evelyn Beatrice Hall could be mentioned: “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it” (quoted by Bergman 2008:20). Cindy Cain also realizes that the struggle *inter alia* concerns *freedom of speech*: “Even though I disagree with the philosophy [of evolution], I’d fight for your right to teach it” (quoted by Bergman 2008:177).

A similar orthodox attitude is found in the words of Ralph Boyd Junior (Assistant Attorney General for civil rights) after an investigation of the State-Department. A biology student may find it necessary to understand the theory of evolution and to explain it, but “a state-run

---

<sup>6</sup> Placed in historical perspective the just state (*rechtsstaat*) of the last two centuries is a fruit of Protestantism in Western Europe and its establishment of state elsewhere. Kuyper speaks of “Calvinism” when he points at the effects of Protestant Christendom in an article from the year 1874: “Calvinism: the origin and guarantee of our constitutional freedoms: a Dutch idea” (see Kuyper 1874).

university has no business telling students what they should or should not believe in” (Bergman 2008:123).<sup>7</sup>

Although there are many scholars (particularly theologians) who advocate what is known as *theistic evolutionism* (by believing that God “created through evolution” or that God “directed” evolution), it is striking that the Darwinian orthodoxy even reacts in a more vehement way to this orientation as against six day creationists: “theistic evolutionists are even *more* dangerous than those who accept six-day creation” for it is seen as a “more palatable approach to sneak God into the public schools” (Bergman 2008:157).

### **The “religious” basis of Darwinism**

The uncritical conviction of atheistic positivism lying at the basis of the idea of “religion-free” public schools is also challenged from a different angle. In no court case theistic evolution is defined – and the same applies to creationism. The most basic element of the idea of neutral private schools in the USA is brought to light when the question is raised how the nature of “religion” ought to be seen. In his work, *The Myth of Religious Neutrality* (2005) Roy Clouser defines a “religious belief” as follows:

A religious belief is a belief in something as divine per se no matter how that is further described, where “divine per se” means having unconditionally non-dependent existence (Clouser 2005:23).

According to this definition the physicalist materialism of our day is an example of a “religious belief”: whatever exists is dependent upon matter and it is unconditionally not dependent upon anything else. Every form of *rationalism* is uprooted by this circumscription. There can be no arguments for the reliability of human understanding which do not have to use the same understanding, thus being trapped in a circular argumentation. The dominant natural scientific world view of our day believes that matter is everything (that everything therefore is material). Paul Ziff, a prominent philosopher in his own right, defines his own materialism as follows: “If you ask me why I’m a materialist I’m not sure what to say. It’s not because of the arguments. I guess I’d just have to say that reality looks irresistibly physical to me” (quoted by Clouser 2005:38).<sup>8</sup>

Although the physical aspect of reality is merely one aspect alongside and distinct from many other, one can assign to anyone of them a divine status. For example the well-known romantic German author-poet-philosopher Goethe of the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century believed that “feeling is everything” [“Gefühl ist alles”]. The nature of living phenomena, such as birth, growth (evolution) maturation, ageing and passing away could also be clothed in a divine garb. This happens in the naturalistic world view of Darwinism. Julian Huxley, who is known as a “religious humanist,” in a presentation on *Thanksgiving Day* at the

---

<sup>7</sup> Kelly Schakelford, serving on the *Chief Council* of the *Liberty Legal Institute*, writes: “Students are being denied recommendations not because of their competence in understanding evolution, but solely because of their personal religious beliefs” (quoted by Bergman 2008:123).

<sup>8</sup> We leave the self-uprooting effect of this “all” claim aside and merely point out that the laws holding for matter (i.e., physical laws), are themselves *not* material and therefore refutes the claim everything is physical. For example, the law (condition) for a green thing is not green in itself.

“Convocation Ceremony” in 1959 said:

This is one of the first public occasions on which it has been frankly faced that all aspects of reality are subject to evolution, from atoms and stars to fish and flowers, from fish and flowers to human societies and values – indeed, that all reality is a single process of evolution (the presentation discussed “The Evolutionary Vision”).<sup>9</sup>

Within the naturalistic world view of Darwinism “evolution” displays the status of a “divinity belief” as it is defined by Clouser. At the same time it features as the conditioning origin and that which answers to it – that is to say at once as *law* and *subject* (to law): as LAW: “all aspects of reality are subject to evolution” (with “unconditionally non-dependent existence”) and as SUBJECT (which practically coincides with law): “all reality is a single process of evolution.”<sup>10</sup>

Given the way the American courts interpret the separation of church and state entailed in the “establishment clause” (*First Amendment*), the “religious humanism” of Huxley also ought to be prohibited in public schools. The positivistic neutrality postulate present in the standard view is founded upon the assumption that atheism is not based on a world and life view and therefore is not related to a faith conviction. In contrast we have remarked that the immunologist, George Klein indeed characterized his own atheism as a faith conviction (see note 1).

The apparent “opposition” of “science” and “faith” is not self-evident,<sup>11</sup> for implicitly or explicitly every (natural) scientist adheres to one or another academic *credo*, a scientific *faith confession*.

In this connecton a sharp critical assessment is found in a remark of Lyn Margulis (Massachusetts University). She is highly respected for her theory regarding the nature of *mitochondria* (a sub-cellular organ which apparently was an independent bacterium. She remarked that “history will ultimately judge neo-Darwinism as a minor twentieth-century religious sect within the sprawling religious persuasion of Anglo-Saxon biology” (quoted by Behe 2006:26).<sup>12</sup> Even someone like Sterelny, who belongs to the “inner circle” neo-Darwinism, writes without any hesitation about the differences between Dawkins and Gould. His characterization of the former is explicitly done in terms of faith: “Dawkins is an

---

<sup>9</sup> [http://people.biology.ufl.edu/bismocovi/Bettys\\_Website/Publications\\_I\\_files/Unity-of-Science-Unifying-Vision-\(Huxley\).pdf](http://people.biology.ufl.edu/bismocovi/Bettys_Website/Publications_I_files/Unity-of-Science-Unifying-Vision-(Huxley).pdf).

<sup>10</sup> That the conditions for the existence of something cannot coincide with that “something’ apparently was not noticed by Huxley.

<sup>11</sup> Immanuel Kant wanted to secure the sensory-bound sphere of cognitive knowledge in order to make room for faith. He writes: “I therefore had to delimit knowing [science] in order to make room for faith” (Kant 1787:xxx). The domain of the appearances of nature is governed by the law of causality, while the (freedom of the) human soul, as a “Thing-in-itself,” belongs to the domain of practical reason. Therefore, the stereotyped separation of science and faith is founded in the opposition of natural causality versus practical-ethical autonomy, the classical science-ideal (nature) versus the personality ideal, nature versus freedom.

<sup>12</sup> Equally harsh is her observation that proponents of the standard theory “wallow in their zoological, capitalistic, competitive, cost-benefit interpretation of Darwin—having mistaken him... Neo-Darwinism, which insists on (the slow accrual of mutations), is in a complete funk” quoted by Behe 2006:26). This criticism should be understood against the background of what Behe also mentions on this page: “At one of her many public talks she asks the molecular biologists in the audience to name a single, unambiguous example of the formation of a new species by the accumulation of mutations. Her challenge goes unmet.”

old-fashioned science worshipper” (Sterelny 2007:157).

Note that the exclusive issue at stake here is to point out that even authoritative biologists noticed the scientific faith convictions of Darwinists. More than hundred years ago Kuyper stated in his oration on “Evolution” (1899), with reference to the mechanistic-monistic-atheistic inclination of Darwinism, that evolution is advocated with the “enthusiasm of a new faith (Kuyper 1899:197). Seven years earlier he characterized the powerful grip which the evolution dogma has in confessional terms with his declaration that evolutionism is currently the “formula of unity” which unites all the priests of modern science in their secularized temple. According to him it developed into the “fashionable system” to which theologians, psychologists, linguists, jurists and moralists surrendered themselves blindly.

### **The distinctiveness of structure and direction**

A differentiated society provides room for differently natured societal forms of life and makes it possible to distinguish clearly between different spheres of competence within such a society. In addition a meaningful account is given of (personal and) societal freedoms. The background perspective is found in a long cultural-historical process which commenced with the persecution of Christians during the Roman empire and which eventually, via the rise of the modern idea of the state, led to the acknowledgment and juridical protection of personal and collective societal freedoms as well as public-legal freedom for the citizens of a state. Along this path Protestantism parted ways with the Roman Catholic doctrine of two realms, thus allowing the New Testament perspective assume its rightful place regarding the unity and goodness of creation.

This immediately made it possible to assume a position against dualistic world views which twisted the directional opposition between good and evil (the antithesis) by identifying them with distinct terrains within creation.

In the *Reformed Ecumenical Report (Testimony on Human Rights)* which was published by the *Reformed Ecumenical Synod* in 1983, it is succinctly captured:

Dualist world-views always misconstrue the biblical idea of antithesis. The antithesis gets defined, not in terms of a spiritual warfare which is being waged in every sector of life, but along structural lines. It places one set of societal structures off against another – for example, church against state, a mission station against a political party. Christians then end up fighting the wrong battles (Schrotenboer 1983:76).

If the government of a just state respects the distinction between *structure* and *direction* it may set a formal (structural) yardstick to which teaching on all levels must conform – the primary, secondary and tertiary level. Yet it exceeds the sphere of competence of the government to prescribe the directional orientation of a school or of an individual, as it currently took shape within the American public school system.

Within the educational sector, particularly on the level of public school in South Africa, there are at the moment a differentiation on the basis of gender (boys and girls schools), and language (Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, English and Afrikaans medium schools). However, the question is: Why is it not possible to leave room for differentiation on the basis of a world and life view, such as Roman Catholic, Humanistic, Protestant, Muslim and Atheistic schools? It stands to reason that there ought to be room for “directionally differentiated”

private schools.

Of course the question regarding private schools also displays an economic side. In the school system of the Netherlands the applicable laws and even constitutions underwent many changes since 1801 (in particular in the years 1806, 1848, 1857, 1878, 1889, 1920 and 1985). After the death of Groen Van Prinsterer, the young new leader of the “Anti-revolutionaries,” Alexander de Savornin Lohman, posited the demand of a “restitution of tax money to those parents who do not want their children to participate in public education.” The “extra-parliamentary leader of the movement” was Abraham Kuyper.

In 1889 Minister Heemskerk opened the way to a royal contribution for “particular” education. Through the intervention of Baron MacKay the educational law of Kappijne changed such that particular schools in the future will receive from the state the same amount that municipalities receive for public education, namely “the salaries of their teachers.” This entailed an acknowledgment of the juridical equality of public and particular education.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century Dutch universities implemented this principle of juridical equality by assigning to universities the right to create teaching space for specific philosophical trends of thought. After the death of G.P.J.P. Bolland in 1922 his students established the “Bolland- Genootschap voor zuivere rede” [Bolland Association for Pure Reason] as well as a “Bijzondere Leerstoel” [Special Chair] at the university of Leiden – oriented to the philosophy of Hegel. (In the “Nationale Library of the Netherlands” a collection of books is found donated by Jan Jacob van der Harst and G.J.P.J. Bolland (respectively 775 and 480 titles).

The *Foundation for Reformational Philosophy* supports since the middle of the previous century several *Special Chairs in Reformational Philosophy* at state universities in the Netherlands. Students have the option to complete a Ph.D. with these *Special Professors*. Currently there are six special chairs. In a similar fashion there are the *Radboud* chairs funded by the *Radboud Stigting* (Roman-Catholic Church).

### **What is the situation in South Africa?**

Partially as a result of the legacy of the conscience clause (mentioned earlier) the debate in South Africa is obscured by not distinguishing between certitudinal convictions and scientific convictions – apart from the fact that since the establishment of the conscience clause Christianity incorrectly was identified with cultic ecclesiastical activities (which we leave aside here). For example, any university that would have asked about the scientific convictions of a lecturer or pupil does not violate the conscience clause.

It is heart-warming that South Africa does leave room for the distinction between structure and direction. It is found in the “South African School Act 84 of 1996 (approved on 6 November 1996 – the date of taking effect: January 1 1997). Article 7 deals with “Freedom of conscience and religion in public schools” and it stipulates “By virtue of the constitution and applicable provincial laws, an exercise of religion at a public school may take place as an effect of the rules established by the board of control, if such a practice takes place in an equitable fashion and if attendance by pupils and personnel is free and voluntary. Article 45 provides for the

“[E]stablishment of independent schools: “By virtue of this law and any applicable provincial law every person, on his or her own expense, can establish and maintain an independent school.”

Yet the “rainbow nation” could serve the “diversity” of world and life views at best when it will be possible to provide space also within the existing public schools for “directional differentiation.” Of course this will depend upon feasibility – measured against the composition of the population within the catchment area of the schools concerned. Just like the history of the special sciences portrays a diversity of orientations, the subjects taught at school also reflect the influence of diverging schools of thought. Therefore it continues to be a part of the task of teachers, even within the alleged “neutral” public schools, to allow alternative points of view, such that the pupils from their early childhood could be trained to screen the study material in a solidary critical way.

When a school established on the basis of “directional differentiation” determines the shape of curricula, no learner who does not share the same world and life view is excluded, because the study material communicated in a specific curriculum in principle should always leave room for alternative perspectives.

In the Business Day of 11 September 2002 a report appeared regarding the curricula of private schools in South Africa: “Private schools may choose their own curriculums.” Minister Kader Asmal told the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee that the Department of National Education does not intend to prescribe the detail of the curricula taught in private schools. At the basis of this remark lies the implicit acknowledgment that also within public schools it is allowed to consider divergent approaches.

Nonetheless a disquieting report recently appeared in the daily press, under the heading: “Plan with textbooks borders upon censorship” (*Die Volksblad*, 13 November, 2014, page 12). It reports a proposal by the *Department of Education* to prescribe “just one textbook for each subject at each level.” Since the same curriculum could be structured from the perspective of diverging directional orientations, the restriction to “just one textbook” will result in a situation similar to the totalitarian present-day practice in the USA regarding the teaching of biology.

May the future of directional choices in the education of South Africa make a modest contribution to the continued protection of those societal freedoms which took shape in a long cultural-historical process of development and differentiation.

That the diverging schools of thought within the natural sciences and the humanities in the final analysis are determined by philosophical orientations and directed by “ultimate commitments” are extensively discussed in the work *Philosophy: Discipline of the Disciplines* (see Strauss 2009).

## Literature

- Bergman, J. 2008. *Slaughter of the Dissidents*. Southworth WA: Leafcutter Press.
- Chatterjee, Deen, K. Scheid, & Don, E. (eds). 2003. *Ethics and foreign intervention* Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Clouser, R.A. 2005. *The Myth of Religious Neutrality: An Essay on the Hidden Role of Religious Belief in Theories*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press (new revised edition; first edition 1991). Dekker, C., Meester, R. & Van Woudenberg, R. 2005. *Schitterend Ongeluk of Sporen van Ontwerp?* Kampen: Ten Have.
- Dumbauld, E. 1966: *Political writings of Thomas Jefferson*. New York: The Liberal Arts Press.
- Gadamer, H-G. 1989. *Truth and Method*, Second revised edition (first translated edition 1975). New York: The Continuum Publishing Company.
- Glendon, M.A. 1991. *Rights talk: The impoverishment of political discourse*. New York: Free Press. Habermas, J. 1996. *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, translated by William Rehg; 2nd print, Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Kant, I. 1787. *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, 2de Druk. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Uitgawe (1956).
- Kant, I. 1797. *Die Metaphysik der Sitten*, First Edition (A) 1797, Second edition (B) 1798, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- Kates, P. 1928. *The Two Swords*, Washington: D.C., St Anselm's Priory. Klein, G. 1990. *The Atheist in the Holy City*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press. Krabbe, H. 1919. *De moderne staatsidee*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Krüger, H. 1966. *Allgemeine Staatslehre*, Tweede Druk. Berlin: W. Kohlhammer Verlag.
- Kuyper, A. 1899. Evolutie. Rede bij de overdracht van het rectoraat aan de Vrije Universiteit op 20 Oktober 1899, repirnt in *Kuyper-Bibliografie*, Uitgegeve deur J.C. Rullmann. Kampen: J.H. Kok. Lennox, J.C. 2007. *God's Undertaker, Has Science Buried God?* Oxford: Lion.
- Locke, J. 1690. *Two Treatises of Civil Government*. London: Everyman's Library Edition (1966).
- Lucas, George R. Jr. 2003. From jus ad bellum to jus ad pacem: re-thinking just-war criteria for the use of military force for humanitarian ends. In: Chatterjee & Scheid (2003:72-96).
- Lucas, J.R. 1980. *On Justice: Peri Dikaiou*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Milton, L. *Shattering the Myth of Darwinism*. 2000. <http://www.amazon.com/Shattering-Myths-Darwinism-Richard-Milton/dp/0892818840> – besoek op 16-02-2015.

- Popper, K. 1966. *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Vol. I & II, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. Popper, K.R. 1974. Intellectual Autobiography, In: *The Library of Living Philosophers*, ed. A. Schilpp, Volume XIV, I. Lazalle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company, pp.259-284.
- Rousseau, J.J. 1975. *Du contrat social et autres oeuvres politiques*. Edition of Garnier Frères, Paris.
- Schrotenboer, P.G. 1983. *RES Testimony on Human Rights*. Grand Rapids: Reformed Ecumenical Synod. Skillen, J.W. 1994. *Recharging the American Experiment, Principles Pluralism for Genuine Civic Community*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.
- Skillen, J. 1997. *Is there a place for Christian Politics in America?* Available in Stencilled form (12 A4 pages).
- Stegmüller, W. 1969. *Metaphysik, Skepsis, Wissenschaft*, (first edition 1954). Berlin/New York: Springer. Sterelny, K. 2001. *Dawkins vs. Gould, Survival of the Fittest*. London: Icon Books (second edition, 2007).
- Strauss, D.F.M. 2009. *Philosophy: Discipline of the Disciplines*. Grand Rapids: Paideia Press.
- Strauss, D.F.M. 2015. Differensiasie: die basis van Samelewingsvryhede. *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, 55(2):304-318.
- Thomas, B. 2014. <http://www.icr.org/article/book-review-slaughter-dissidents/> [Besoeek op 06-10-2014]. Van den Beukel, A. 2005. Darwinisme: wetenskap en/of ideologie? In: Dekker, et al., (2005:101-116).