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Cultural justice

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Cultural justice: A neglected task of business ethics in Africa?

Piet J Naudé

Abstract. This paper argues that an African business ethic should take the promotion of cultural justice as one of its major tasks. After an explanation of globalisation as homogenizing cultural force that shapes moral identity, the notion of cultural justice as “unselfconscious living” is explained. This is then set in the context of an agenda for business ethics in Africa that would require more work on how a narrative moral identity is constructed, and how trans-cultural business environments could be created and sustained.

Key words: African business ethics, cultural justice, globalisation, moral identity

The launch of the *African Journal of Business Ethics* provides an exciting opportunity to reflect on the shape and task of Business Ethics in the specific context of this continent. Only time will tell whether creative, new insights will emerge as we Africans engage with the issues facing us in a manner that does justice to both existing paradigms, and the interaction of those paradigms with our context.

Wherein might our contributions lie?

On **meta-ethical** level contributions could be made to conceptual debates on the preconditions of what could be called “ethical”. There are enough clues in emerging African philosophies, expressed in terms like communalism, vitalism, ubuntu and holism (see Richardson, 1998) to challenge the very assumptions of current Business Ethics reflections. On the level of **ethical theory** there is an urgent need to test, challenge and expand the utilitarian, deontological and virtue theories currently dominating the Business Ethics scene (see Rossouw, 2004:58ff). And on the level of **applied ethics**, there are very specific issues facing African societies like the challenge of HIV/AIDS, the so-called value-collapse in

transitional societies, and different perceptions on for example conflict of interest in contexts of perceived kinship responsibilities. (There is so much to do!)

This paper forms part of a larger research project into cultural justice and its implications for different spheres of society¹. In this case, I attempt to show the importance of this theme for business ethical reflection in our specific context.

The predominant focus of discussions on globalisation is on the ethical challenges related to the impact of the globalised market economy. An emerging theme is the issue of globalisation as powerful **cultural force**, shaping personal and national identities, social cohesion and human coherence “... at the intersection of transnational forces, cross-cutting the local and the global” (Chidester, 2003:vii).

Whereas the economic face of globalisation calls forth issues related to **distributive justice**, the cultural-technological face calls forth issues related to **cultural and aesthetic justice** and identity formation (see Kwenda 2003).

In this paper, an explanation of globalisation as cultural force (1) is followed by a discussion of two related ethical challenges: The issue of competing cosmological narratives that shape moral identities (2.1), and the more specific challenge of cultural and aesthetic justice (2.2). The paper ends with a short discussion of the implications for the agenda of Business Ethics in Africa (3).

1. Globalisation as cultural force of identity transformation

There are as many definitions of culture² as there are social scientists. For the sake of our discussion here, two notions of culture will be put forward:

The first is by Clifford Geertz who espouses a semiotic view based on his interpretation that “man (sic) is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun (and) I take culture to be those webs.” Culture is therefore an “interworked system of construable symbols” in which social events can be intelligibly described (Geertz, 1975:5,14). These symbols form – through their inter-relation – a cultural map within which people negotiate their identities.

Piet Naude holds a masters in Philosophy and doctoral degree in Theology from Stellenbosch University. He is former Dean of Arts at the University of Port Elizabeth and currently Professor of Ethics and Director of the Centre for Professional Ethics at the newly formed Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. He was elected President of BEN-Africa for the period 2004-2008.

¹ This project is housed in the Centre for Professional Ethics at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth. Some (to date unpublished) work, based on the core analysis presented here in sections one and two, has been done to gauge the implications of cultural justice for Higher Education, Christian Ethics, Medical Ethics and the Tourism Industry. ² I am not an expert in Anthropology or Cultural Studies, but have found the following sources very helpful (without fully integrating them into this paper): Simon During (ed): *The cultural studies reader* (1993) is an excellent collection of groundbreaking essays by authors like Adorno and Horkheimer, Barthes, Foucault, Lyotard, Cornel West and others. See specifically part IV in its relevance for this paper. The somewhat older collection, *Ideas of culture* (1976) by Gamst and Norbeck has a strong sociological focus with contributions by inter alia Durkheim, Parsons and Malinowski. Maartin J Gannon in his *Understanding global cultures* develops an interesting analytical instrument, namely significant social actions as metaphors for analysing local and global cultures. See chapter 16 on the Nigerian marketplace for an example from the African continent. I am deeply aware of my limitations in this exciting field of study.

In a recent publication on social cohesion, Chirevo Kwenda takes a shorter route and sees culture merely as “our way of life” and “what people take for granted”. In other words: “It is that comfort zone within, and out of which, we think, act and speak. If it is our ‘mother culture’, we do all these things without having to be self-conscious about what we are doing” (Kwenda, 2003:68, 69).

Both culture and identity are fluid and hybrid notions: On an individual level, we live in overlapping social territories and migrate amongst different social roles constructed on the basis of who we are and who we are becoming. On a group- or national level, this is equally true: cultures and identities are constantly negotiated between “what is taken for granted”; between what is an assumed network of significance, and a changing environment that might seek to disarrange our symbolic cultural maps.

In an ideal world, such identity negotiations may occur peacefully, in a symmetry of power, and over an extended period, so that natural assimilation and hybridisation enrich this “meeting of cultures” and evolving of identities. But we have ample examples in history and the contemporary world (including Africa) that such processes more than often derail. “We know that for these four words, ‘our way of life’, people are often prepared to kill or be killed. In such instances, it becomes clear that there is a very small step from ‘a way of life’ to life itself. Thus, a threat to a people’s culture tends to be perceived and experienced as a personal threat” (Kwenda, 2003:68).

The dichotomies represented in Jewish versus Palestinian, Hutsis versus Tutsis, Catholic versus Protestant; Serbian versus Croatian, Arab versus African (Sudan), America versus Islamic fundamentalists are the violent results of derailed identity negotiation coupled with cultural acts of threats and resistance. There are also less violent, but nevertheless intense processes of interchange by Nigerians in France, Turks in Germany, Mozambiquens in South Africa, Aborigines in Australia and Hispanics and Chinese in America (and the list can go on and one).

These regional cultural negotiations are both intensified and mondialised (*le monde*: French) by the Janus face of cultural globalization. Like all globalisation processes, this one is equally ambiguous and even contradictory: **The globalisation of culture is one the hand a huge homogenization process, whilst at the same time fostering a celebration of cultural difference and fragmentation.**

Related to the latter is the hybridization of culture as “a global phenomenon that happens locally” through interesting cultural mixes of music, art,

literature and architecture. For example, the post-colonial discourse on “creolization”, ambivalence and multiple identities, is a way of “writing-back” in response to a hegemonic global culture (see Gerle, 2000:159) and related to a process of identity transformation.

But the romantic idea of multi-culturalism is betrayed by a globalising process that creates a mirage of differentiation, but in fact is a encompassing force toward “Vereinheitlichung”³ (Raiser, 1999:37). This creates a depersonalised mass society typified by “mass communications, mass consumption, homogeneity of patterns of life, mass culture” (De Santa Ana, 1998:14). The process is driven by megacultural firms “... based on the commodification of Anglophone culture with the aid of the electronic highway” (Louw, 2002:79). Here the economic, technological and cultural intersect in a deadly asymmetrical negotiation: “You can survive, even thrive, among us, if you become like us; you can keep your life, if you give up your identity”. With reference to Levi-Strauss, “we can say that exclusion by assimilation rests on a deal: we will refrain from vomiting you out if you let us swallow you up” (Volf, 1996:75).

Globalisation – seen in this way – acquires an ideological nature as *la pensee unique*, aspiring to be the only valid view, “... imposing itself as the paradigm to which all other cultures should be adjusted” (De Santa Ana, 1998:16). Where previous forms of cultural subjugation were spatially confined and time-bound, the commercial homogeneity of a consumerist culture expands itself with the aid of the newest and fastest technological communication⁴.

2. The ethical issues

What is the ethical issue?, one might ask. In the ebb and flow of history, many cultures and civilizations have come and gone. Globalization is just a new and more potent cultural force that speeds up this process of assimilation, subjugation and eventual extinction. The museumization of “indigenous” cultures of yesteryear is but the same as fossils and mummies kept for the (possible?) attention and curiosity of future generations.

It is not that simple, though. Enough work has been done on the ethical issues related to the casino economy⁵ of digital capitalism. In this paper, I wish to argue the case for **cultural justice** and outline the ethical issues in the following two broad themes: First the moral significance of cosmological stories in shaping identity and values; second the unequal burden of suspending or surrendering “what is taken for granted”.

³ Konrad Raiser (1999:32ff), former secretary general of the WCC, points out three central challenges for humanity in the 21st millenium: a life-centered vision (*lebenszentrierte Vision*) to replace a destructive anthropocentrism; the acknowledgement of plurality, and facing the inner contradictions of globalisation. He verbalises one of these contradictions as the simultaneous. ⁴ See the insightful discussion on *Globalisation and Indigenous people: Threat or empowerment?* by Claire Smith (et al) 2000:1-26. They observe that with regard to social problems like “the increasing commodification of culture, the entrenchment of inequality, growing feelings of insecurity and a loss of identity, Indigenous people are seldom considered in discussions of the ‘globalisation juggernaut’” (2).

2.1 Cosmological stories and narrative moral identity

Let us accept with Peter Berger (1967:152ff), Ninian Smart (1973), and David Tracy (1981:159) that the role of religion is to construct a comprehensive view of the world by framing parts of reality in the context of that which transcends reality (i.e. ultimate reality). Let us accept with Larry Rasmussen that “we are incorribly storytellers” (Rasmussen, 1994:178) and concur with Thomas Berry that religious cosmologies are designed to answer identity questions like: Who am I? Who are we? Where are we going? “For peoples, generally, their story of the universe and the human role in the universe is their primary source of intelligibility and value” (Berry, 1998:xi).

In the African context local narratives are interwoven into an holistic (i.e. non-dualistic) view of the world where religion, culture, and community are shaping forces toward moral identities. One could argue that globalisation in its cultural garb – mostly carried by the mass media⁶ and capitalist ideals – usurps and misplaces the role of religion and local culture by constituting its own cosmological narrative. What is at stake is not merely the physics of our information age, but its metaphysics, “... its significance to individual and social morality ... and its consequences for the formation, maintenance and alteration of personal identity” (Arthur, 1998:3, see Smit, 2000:15). Homogenization takes on the proportions of an autonomous force governing the lives of individuals and communities (De Santa Ana, 1998:19).

To a certain extent globalisation as encompassing cosmology reflects the moral tendencies of both modernity and post-modernity. According to Zygmunt Bauman, globalisation – as autonomous force against which you apparently can do nothing but to be swept along – does “shift moral responsibilities away from the moral self, either toward a socially constructed and managed supra-individual agency, or through floating responsibility inside a bureaucratic ‘rule of nobody’” (Bauman, 1995:99, see Volf, 1996:21ff). But like post-modernity, globalisation creates a climate of evasion of moral responsibilities by rendering relationships “frag-mentary” and “discontinuous” (or should we say “virtual”?), resulting in disengagement and commitment-avoidance (Bauman, 1995:156).

We have learnt from various forms of narrative ethics (from Richard H Niebuhr to Stanley Hauerwas): *Agere*

sequiter esse. What we do, is a result of who we are. And who we are, is determined by the narrative communities in which we are formed. From a moral perspective “it is possible to argue that the real challenges embedded in globalisation concern not so much what we do, but who we are, who we are becoming ...” (Smit, 2000:15, emphasis original). The mass culture of a globalising world is a powerful narrative agent that contributes significantly to moral formation. Its values become the values, the way things are; the way everybody acts.

This analysis might provide some clue to the vexing question: Why do societies in rapid transition (e.g. from so-called non-Western cultures – be they Islamic, African or Eastern European – to being “Westernised”) so often exhibit a partial or total value-collapse? The answer might be that societies in transition **undergo a collective identity crisis as they move from the known to the “not yet”**. It is because they cannot yet adequately answer the question : **Who are we? that they are unable to exercise responsible and virtuous options**⁷. In a situation of transition a “contraction of time” appears that instinctively cuts off the past (nobody wants to return to an oppressive past), but cannot yet conceptualise the future (“a journey into uncharted territory without safety equipment”⁸). In this way life is a continual “collapsed present”, driven by emotional, physical and economic survival in which clear moral ideals and ethical visions are difficult to uphold.

It is into this situation of confusion and *anomie*⁹ where people find themselves “in between stories”¹⁰ and in a situation of *Heimatlosigkeit*¹¹, that the globalised consumer culture steps to provide a viable alternative; “the only answer”; the moral story. It works so well because consumerism exactly sustains itself by creating constantly changing demands that have to be satisfied instantly, thereby **creating an ever shifting “hedonistic presence”**, closed to both the past and the future.

The notion that what Africa (or Eastern Europe or Latin America or Irak and Afghanistan) need is more development aid and physical infrastructure – however important – is fatally flawed and may in practice result in the intensification of resistance and loss of hope in “democracy”. What needs to be restored and cultivated, is a culturally mediated reconstruction of the self in a personal and collective sense. In political terms, the African Renaissance for example is as much about

5 “Like any casino, this global game is rigged so that only the house wins.” Fidel Castro in a speech to the South African parliament. See Chidester 2003:10. 6 The “world according to CNN”, and soaps according to the big American dream, reflecting the values of hedonism, individualism and materialism. See the recent debate about Big Brother Africa in some African countries (like Malawi and Namibia). 7 Two distinguishing features of transitional societies are a marked increase in socio-economic inequality, and a massive rise in violence and criminality. This is true of countries as diverse as Russia and South Africa. In the latter case, the new government resorted to a moratorium on the release of police statistics in a desperate bid to restrain the images of a “violent” new democracy. See Addy and Silny 2001:505 who state that in some cases Eastern European areas experienced a 400% rise in criminality over a ten year period. 8 A quotation from Addy and Silny (2001:503) to describe the transitions in Eastern Europe. 9 This term stems from Emile Durkheim in his groundbreaking study on social cohesion and suicide: “When society is disturbed by some painful crisis or by beneficent but abrupt transitions, the collective conscience is momentarily incapable of exercising restraint. Time is required for the public conscience to reclassify men (sic) and things. So long as social forces thus freed have not regained equilibrium, their respective values are unknown and so all regulation is lacking for a time. The state of de-regulation or anomie is heightened by passions being less disciplined precisely when they need more disciplining (Suicide, 1897/1951:252-253). 10 “It’s all a question of story. We are in trouble just now because we do not have a good story. We are in between stories.” Previously, with the old story (whether my own or the clear story of an oppressive regime) “we awoke in the morning and knew where we were. We could answer the questions of our children. We could identify crime, punish transgressors. Everything was taken care of because the story was there...” (Berry 188:123). 11 This term literally means “without a homeland” but has a metaphorical meaning of “not being at home”. See Fischer’s discussion in a different context of how the mode of knowledge emanating from the Enlightenment enabled humankind to make the world so habitable, so transparent, that it exactly loses its character as *Heimat*. “Der ärgeste Feind der Verantwortung ist die Gleichgültigkeit. Gleichgültigkeit aber ist die Folge existentieller *Heimatlosigkeit*” (my emphasis). He then pleads for a process of *Beheimatung* (restoring home) to restore responsibility (Fischer 1992:124).

economic development as it is about a post-colonial restoration of cultural pride and selfhood "... to counter the excesses of European modes of being-in-the-world" (Comaroff, 2000:80).

The crucial insight – missed by most development agencies – is that restoration of being not only precedes economic restoration, but – at least in an African situation – is **the precondition** for economic survival. Being precedes bread (Balcomb, 1998:71). Why? Because in a situation of scarce resources, you need a view of identity that resists economic greed and self-referential individualism. **What you require is a notion of identity as identity-in-community which undergirds redistribution patterns that in turn guarantee physical and economic survival. You need the survival of (the) community in stead of the survival of the fittest.**

But then you need a cosmological story made up by cultural specifics and local narratives to exactly sustain such communities in which moral formation can take shape. If not, globalisation in the name of "development aid" and "quick transition to the market economy" will do the job for you.

Perhaps the following case study – based on actual events – conveys this journey of identity and life "in between stories" in a way that arguments are unable to do:

My brother Sipho and I grew up in a rural village in the Limpopo province of South Africa. My father was a farm labourer and my mother a domestic worker. They were both functionally illiterate, but had a keen sense that the education of their children was of paramount importance. By the time we reached high school age, the whole extended family contributed to send the two of us (one year apart) to a former model C school in Pretoria. After matriculation we both attended university – again with the material and emotional support of the family. This support was not so much a contractual than a familial, moral issue. It was is a form of "donation" that everybody tacitly knew would one day return – though in no exact manner like in written contracts – to assist parents in their old age and make the same possible for other siblings after us.

The eventual graduation festivals were huge family affairs with praise singers, pap and slaughtering of goats.

We both were excited to land our first jobs – I with my degree in humanities in the academic administration of the university in Port Elizabeth; Sipho with his B Comm at an international consulting firm in Johannesburg. We never openly spoke, but took it for granted that we send a monthly amount "back home", and visit at least once a year.

After about eighteen months Sipho's contributions dried up. The next year he did not return for his annual visit. What is more: When my grandfather passed away, he did not attend the funeral. I took the courage to talk this over with him and soon realised that he had embraced the yuppie life-style of Egoli, the City of Gold: designer clothes (from Carducci to Billabong and Man about Town), a red BMW 318i and a townhouse in Fourways.

He now traverses a different world. He has embraced different values. We feel not so much a sense of betrayal, but of sadness to have lost him. He has become a different person. Though, in the eyes of most, he is a highly successful person; a sign that the new South Africa is really opening opportunities to create a new black middle class.

And I am not sure that he would ever want to return to our village. Due to its location in the mountains, it is called Tshilapfene, "the place of the baboons".

2.2 Cultural and aesthetic justice: Surrendering what is taken for granted

In a perceptive essay referred to several times above, historian of religion, Chirevo Kwenda (2003:70), explains the notion of cultural (in)justice as follows:

Where people live by what they naturally take for granted, or where the details of everyday life coincide with what is taken for granted, we can say there is cultural justice – at least in this limited sense of freedom from constant self-consciousness about every little thing. Cultural injustice occurs when some people are forced, by coercion or persuasion, to submit to the burdensome condition of suspending – or more permanently surrendering – what they naturally take for granted, and then begin to depend on what someone else takes for granted. The reality is that substitution of what is taken for granted is seldom adequate. This means that, in reality, the subjugated person has no linguistic or cultural 'default drive', that critical minimum of ways, customs, manners, gestures and postures that facilitate uninhibited, unselfconscious action.

The injustice lies in the unequal burden and stress of constant self-consciousness that millions of people carry on behalf of others without gaining recognition or respect. In fact, they are objects of further subjugation and humiliation that vary from physical violence to subtle body language that clearly communicate that you are stupid and do not know "the ways things are done or said here".

On a regional and national level, these forms of exclusions (Miroslav Volf reminds us) range from domination and indifference to abandonment and ultimately elimination. From the "inside" this exclusion results from being "... uncomfortable with anything that blurs accepted boundaries, disturbs our identities, and disarranges our symbolic cultural maps"¹²

The "fall of the Berlin wall" or "end of the apartheid regime" are designations of many societies that moved from oppressive political systems to greater civil liberties after 1989. What is sometimes underestimated, is the massive identity renegotiation processes in the "post-liberation" period, often leading to an upsurge in ethnic violence and loss of social stability. Like we saw in the previous section, questions of culture and life-in-community then arise with great urgency. Because it takes tremendous

¹² Volf 1996: 78, and note the interesting debate about the wearing of Muslim head scarfs in European schools, as well as the heated debate about "European identity" in the light of Turkey's possible entrance into the EU. Talk about disarranging cultural maps!

courage and political wisdom to (for the first time?) assert “what we take for granted” and to act unselfconsciously after decades of identity-suspension and -suppression.

Shortly after the first democratic elections in South Africa that ended 46 years of minority rule, African theologian Tinyiko Sam Maluleke, made the following incisive observation:

“Issues of culture are again acquiring a new form of prominence in various spheres of South African society. **It is as if we can, at last, speak truly and honestly, about our culture.** This is due to the widespread feeling that now, more than at any other time, **we can be subjects of our own cultural destiny.** ... The reconstruction of structures and physical development alone will not quench our **cultural and spiritual thirst.** On the contrary, the heavy emphasis on the material and the structural may simply result in the intensification of black frustration. We do not just need jobs and houses, **we must recover our own selves**” (Maluleke in Balcomb, 1998:70, my emphases).

Whereas the struggle against apartheid or communism or imperialism or Americanism forced and still force a kind of uniformity of resistance, and is aimed at **the right to be “the same”**, the post-liberation struggle aims at a restored subjectivity and agency with **the right to be different.** In the ethical terms of this section: **the right to life unselfconsciously.**

This has been echoed three years later from a different perspective by Miroslav Volf:

“In recent decades the **issue of identity** has risen to the forefront of discussions in social philosophy. If the liberation movements of the sixties were all about equality – above all gender equality and race equality – major concerns in the nineties seem to be about identity – about the **recognition of distinct identities** of persons who differ in gender, skin color, or culture” (Volf, 1998: 23, my emphasis).

Let us make this argument about culture and distinct identities more concrete. I found it quite remarkable to see how much emphasis is placed on **language** in the process of identity re-negotiation.

On a first level, language itself plays this exclusivist role. To this I will turn in the next paragraph. On a second level, a “language of exclusion” is created by naming or labelling the other in a manner that takes the other outside “the class of objects of potential moral responsibility” (Zygmunt Bauman as quoted by Volf, 1996:76). This does not only justify exclusion, but in fact necessitates it. “The rhetoric of the other’s inhumanity **obliges** the self to practice inhumanity” (Volf, 1996:76; original emphasis). Like supporters of the linguistic turn, one could state that exclusion is equally language-sated. Words do kill.

But in a more subtle way, language itself – as in “mother-tongue” and “foreign” language – plays an

exclusionary role. In a remarkable essay, *Aria: A memoir of a bilingual childhood*, Richard Rodriguez recounts how he grew up in Sacramento, California in a Mexican immigrant home in a predominantly white suburb. During his first few years in school, he struggled with English, but managed to move between the language of the public (English) and the private language of the home (Spanish). “Like others who feel the pain of public alienation, we transformed the knowledge of our public separateness into a consoling reminder of our intimacy” (Rodriguez, 1982:23). He eloquently spells out life in two linguistic and social worlds:

*But then there was Spanish: **español**, the language rarely heard away from home, the language which seemed to me therefore a private language, my family’s language. To hear its sounds was to feel myself specially recognised as one of the family, apart from **los otros** (the others). A simple remark, an inconsequential comment could convey that assurance. My parents would say something to me and I would feel embraced by the sounds of their words. Those sounds said: I am speaking with ease in Spanish ... I recognise you as somebody special, close, like no one outside. You belong with us. In the family. Ricardo (Rodriguez, 1982:22-23)*

But this juxtaposition of a double identity was shattered by a simple request from the teachers (nuns at the Catholic school) that, in order to improve their academic performance, English should be spoken at home. This led to an ambivalent outcome: a growing confidence in public, but a devastating silence at home:

There was a new silence at home. As we children learned more and more English, we shared fewer and fewer words with our parents. Sentences needed to be spoken slowly... Often the parent wouldn’t understand. The child would need to repeat himself. Still the parent misunderstood. The young voice, frustrated, would end up saying, “Never mind” – the subject was closed. Dinners would be noisy with the clinking of knives and forks against dishes. My mother would smile softly between her remarks; my father, at the other end of the table, would chew and chew his food while he stared over the heads of his children.

What followed was first a “disconcerting confusion” (29). Then, as fluency in Spanish faded fast, a feeling of guilt arose over the betrayal of immediate family and visitors from Mexico (30). Thereafter followed an understanding that the linguistic change was a social one where the intimacy at home was traded for the gain of fluency and acceptance in the public language. “I moved easily at last, a citizen in a crowded city of words” (31).

But the ambiguities remain. This is evident from the end of the essay where Rodriguez describes the funeral of his grandmother:

When I went up to look at my grandmother, I saw her through the haze of a veil draped over the open lid of the casket. Her face looked calm – but distant and unyielding to

love. It was not the face I remembered seeing most often. It was the face she made in public when a clerk at Safeway asked her some question and I would need to respond. It was her public face that the mortician had designed with his dubious art (35).

It was – in the terms set out above – the burdensome face of someone who constantly had to surrender what is taken for granted. You can keep your life, if you give up your identity. You can keep your culture, as long as you hold its values and customs, its “things taken for granted”, with diffidence. This **cultural diffidence** is a disposition that causes people either to be ashamed of their culture or to simply ignore it as irrelevant in the modern world (see Kwenda, 2003:71).

These powerful images from a single life and immigrant family is a metaphor, a simile, a parable of national and trans-national processes of cultural injustice. In *The political economy of transition* Tony Addy and Jiri Silny (2001) reflects on the changes that occurred in the ten years from 1989-1999 in Central and Eastern Europe. It is instructive for us in Africa too:

They make the interesting observation that the “market Bolsheviks” (economic advisors who advocated the move to a full market economy in one jump) not only harboured a blind faith in policy prescriptions from “the West” to be applied unaltered to “the East”, but also showed “little respect for indigenous knowledge and practice”(2001:503). The rapid privatization of former industries was carried out “in a way which did not respect positive cultural and ethical values within the region. Under conditions of globalisation, the process tended to block creative responses” (2001:505).

In a bizarre example of exclusion by elimination (Volf), the application of rigid market rules meant the literal closure of what Addy and Silny call “cultural industries”: “For example, rich traditions of film-making were lost and historic theatres, orchestras and other artistic companies were decimated. It would take a great deal of time and money to rebuild such industries and cultural assets” (2001:505).

Would it therefore be justified to include **aesthetic justice** as an integral part of cultural justice?

The answer is yes: This process of being subject to the aesthetics of “the other” is a vivid reality in the lucrative global tourism industry to Africa. Two examples illustrate this:

The desire of foreign tourists to see “local culture” carries the guise of cultural diversity. But the “exhibition” of such cultural products, like reconstructed “cultural villages” or dancing San children¹³ do often not honour the integrity and humanity of those objects/people involved. It constitutes what one could call “culturalism” – a name for condescending, paternalistic racism disguised in colourful brochures as an innate savage vision of “Africa”.

To make an area acceptable to international tourism, involves overt or assumed aesthetic judgments of what is „unsightful“ and what not. This ranges from architecture, subdividing potential heritage sites to informal settlements in which so many urban Africans live. A recent study of how the City Bowl area in Cape Town was transformed to make it more attractive to foreign tourism, show how it involved the displacement of whole sub-communities who made a legal living as card-box collectors, but whose presence was an “unpleasant” sight (see Klopper, 2003:224ff).

These injustices follow from the narrow aesthetic views fuelled by so-called “global” standards and have fortunately elicited response from the tourism industry itself¹⁴.

The issue of cultural injustice therefore highlights new forms of the subjugation of the other. In the context of globalisation, this happens without military armourment, in a faceless silence, and in the name of advancement, sadly but understandably embraced by many local people in Africa.

3. The task of business ethics in Africa

I have argued that globalisation as a cultural force poses two ethical challenges: First, the challenge of a competing cosmological story with its effect on identity and value-formation. By constituting a cosmological narrative and providing the alternative normative “story” globalisation enters the age-old realm of the battle of the gods; the battle for the ultimate loyalty; for the ultimate frame of reference from which to interpret the self and life- in- community.

The implication for the agenda of business ethics is clear:

We need to complement work “on the surface” of ethics (i.e. “applied ethics”) related to codes of conduct, whistle-blowing, corporate governance, HIV/AIDS in the workplace; the triple bottom line and so forth with work “under the surface”, i.e. addressing questions like: How is moral identity constructed? What effect does a global capital system have on local values? How can transitions from oppressive to open societies, or from colonial to post-colonial systems be understood? And how can they be managed to minimize their disruptive effect on the equilibrium of existing value-systems without impeding social transformation, or condoning essentialist views on “the social order” that sometimes keep tyrants in power?

If we do not engage in creative and cutting-edge archaeology “under the surface”, we will stumble from the one moral summit to the next Business Ethics conference, engaged in the lament over corruption and why applied ethics does not seem to work, but with little more effect than temporary emotional satisfaction and a

¹³ This is a real example from recent events at a tourist destination in South Africa. After a Sunday newspaper highlighted the plight of the children, the practice was discontinued. ¹⁴ See the work of Fair Trade in Tourism and the introduction of a certification system for “Responsible Tourism” in South Africa. ¹⁵ The notion of a “global village” is deeply ambiguous: On the one hand it depicts the reality of a shrunk world through global communication and virtual closeness like you would find in the traditional rural village; on the other hand this village is highly exclusionary (think of the digital divide!) with false senses of belonging, and imbued with asymmetrical power relations. ¹⁶ See the interesting work entitled *Transcultural management*, by Albert Koopman (1994) who combines his experience in Cashbuild with some reflection on business, culture and society. For an analysis from a postmodern perspective, see Van der Merwe 1994 and the implications thereof for “difference” in the workplace, read Painter-Morland 1999.

soon-to-be-forgotten bathing in the rhetoric of political and religious leaders.

The second challenge of cultural justice relates to community-in-diversity and the freedom of an unselfconscious life. It therefore has a bearing on the type of community or communities we build amidst the claim that we now live in a "global village"¹⁵. In a study on globalisation, the World Council of Churches makes the following remark:

"Moral issues, formerly seen as having to do mainly with personal conduct within stable orders of value, have now become radicalized. They now have to do with life, or the death, of human beings and of the created order in which we live. **Before we can even speak of a 21st century 'global civilization', life together on this planet, we will need shared visions and institutional expressions for which we have few really relevant precedents"** (*Ecclesiology and ethics*: 51-52, my emphasis).

The agenda for business ethics in this regard relates to issues like diversity management¹⁶, corporate culture, and what we actually mean by "community" when we talk about the "business community". Can business be such an institutional expression and create such a precedent of unselfconscious living? Some, like Jan Hofmeyr (without explicitly referring to cultural justice as such), believe this can and is already happening:

"To put it simply, multinational companies have to solve the problem of multi-cultural, multi-national interaction and they are finding that they cannot do so by asking people to leave their traditions and values at home. Some multinational business environments go further and find ways for people to choose their values and be themselves while working together in multi-cultural environments ... Global business, in particular, are bringing people from multiple cultural and ethnic backgrounds together in rather wonderful ways. I have been particularly struck by the fact that the process appears to work best when people are allowed to be themselves - when they are neither forced to abandon their local identities, nor forced to keep them; when spaces are created that are tolerant, and that allow cultural and personal difference to be worked out by choice" (Hofmeyr, 2003:178, 189).

This is a positive witness not to be discarded. But I am not sure whether there is enough insight into the asymmetrical relations at work. Nor for the reality that the power of Anglophone culture and obvious requirements of "cultural groupings as effective business units" (Hofmeyr) will imply that diversity and choice is professed on paper and even promoted in practice, but in fact implies subjugation by assimilation or cultural exploitation in service of the overriding profit motif.

These challenges obviously require more study and analysis. They hopefully show why cultural justice in the context of globalisation must be brought into the mainstream of Business Ethics in Africa today.

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Address correspondence to:

Piet J Naudé

Director: Centre for Professional Ethics
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

PO Box 77000

Port Elizabeth, South Africa, 6031

E-mail: piet.naude@nmmu.ac.za