# Forming a 'We' through a good-quality conversation

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## Abstract

Many Living Theory papers are jointly authored and written with a voice that uses the collective pronoun 'We'. By what process can separate, isolated 'I's claim to become a composite 'We'? This paper discusses the process by which its authors – two initially separate authoring voices – came to feel able to claim that they can speak as a believable and authentic 'We'. The process of that merging develops around the concept of a 'good-quality conversation'. The authors come from two radically different cultural traditions which they describe as the 'oralate' culture of South Africa that predominated before the spread of 19th century colonialism (JG) and the 'literate' culture of Western Europe that developed from the 17th century Enlightenment (PM). Starting with the production of intersecting autobiographical accounts, they form their 'We' by progressively helping each other to 'get on the inside' of each other's culture. In Living Theory terms, this is the process of each author's educational influence on the other. Engaging with de Santos' (1997) ideas of intercultural translation and with Jousse (1997) they seek "…discoveries [that] consist in the bringing together of ideas susceptible to being connected, which have hitherto been isolated" (p.49) to create a shared form of knowledge." Coming together to speak as 'We' also involves the identification of shared values and their expression in each of the author's separate lived contexts. These shared values lead them to identify a commonality within the tenets of Ubuntu – a person is a person through other persons – on which they base questions that have relevance for the future flourishing of Humanity.

**Keywords:** oralate culture; literate culture; ubuntu; respectful editor; conversation; shared values; shared knowledge; I/We

## Introduction

The opening narrative in this paper has largely been written by Peter who now speaks in the third person.

### a) The process and format of this paper

Peter Mellett initially approached Jerome Gumede with the suggestion that they might collaborate in developing a thread in the Wiki of Living Educational Theory that investigates movement in research perspectives from 'It' to 'I' to 'We' (see http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/Main_Page). Note that we confined our attention to the movement from 'I' to 'We'. An email conversation was initiated, through which the authors first identified common interests. At the same time, Peter continued his weekly meetings with Jack Whitehead and Marie Huxtable, who gave valuable insights into his exchanges with Jerome then wrote a core text of over 10,000 words to 'start the ball rolling'. In pursuing this goal we found ourselves focusing on:

- Autobiography

- *Oralate* education and Ubuntu in traditional South African culture

- The history of education in South Africa (to which Peter added a web-resourced history of education in England)

- What education *could* be

- The implications of the UN Global Millennium Goals for education (http://un.org/millenniumgoals )

At this point, it was realized that the writing and reading and editing of this text had generated around 25,000 words. It became clear that what had emerged was too much to communicate through a single paper and so it was scaled back and we concentrated on, what eventually became the title of this paper, *Forming a 'We' through a good-quality conversation*. Peter read through the text and inserted footnotes into Section 1. (Autobiography) where he saw parallels between his own family circumstances and upbringing and those of Jerome, his aim being to identify common values. At the same time, the email conversation continued, addressing the remaining sections in some detail and developing joint interests through the fusion of the *oralate* and the *literate* cultural perspectives. The whole formed an archive that told a coherent, developmental story:

1. The concepts of a 'good-quality conversation' and working as a 'respectful editor'

2. What do our separate 'I's share at the start?

3. Initiating the formation of our 'We' – intersecting autobiographies

4. Consolidating the formation of our 'We' – shared values

5. Speaking as 'We' to create shared knowledge – a summary

6. Sharing values in Ubuntu – 'We' questions that have relevance for the future flourishing of humanity.

These points will be considered in turn through the exposition of this paper. Readers should note that the voice within the paper moves progressively from the first person singular ('I') through third person reported speech and finally to the first person plural ('We').

### b) The authors

Jerome is a black African man who was born in 1957 and was brought up in South Africa during the apartheid era. Peter is a white European man who was born in 1946 and was brought up in England during the immediate post-war era.

They started their collaboration in July 2018 as a result of Peter's work with the *Wiki of Living Theory* (http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/Main_Page), which was founded to mark the tenth anniversary of the first publication of the online, *Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTs)*. Within the context of the wiki, he was looking to identify how two separate authors, each initially writing from within their own personal 'I', might create new shared meanings through the growth of an authentic 'We'.

Peter and Jerome had both published separate papers in EJOLTs (December 2016 http://ejolts.net/node/282 and July 2017 http://www.ejolts.net/node/306 respectively). Despite the disparate nature of their titles and of their authors' working environments, each paper included implied and explicit explorations of the authors' values. Peter also noted significant congruence between the areas of interest included in the papers. For example:

Jerome

- The incommensurability between cultures

- The abstract universalism currently embedded in western-centric philosophies

- The oral versus the literate

- Development of new epistemologies

- Cultural translation ... and the links to be made between cultural perspectives.

Peter

- Western reason as a destructive force (Rick Roderick, 1986)

  http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/Rick_Roderick,_1986

- Incommensurable paradigms (Robert Donmoyer, 1996)

  http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/Robert_Donmoyer,_1996

- living and working in Nigeria as an Oyinbo

  http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/Oyinbo

- the logic of question and answer

  http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/The_logic_of_question_and_answer

- Plato's Phaedrus: speaking and writing compared.

- http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/Phaedrus

Peter approached Jerome by email with a suggestion that they might identify a 'good-quality question' and collaborate in addressing it. Their correspondence is included in the wiki and may be accessed via the Collaboration Index page at http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/Collaboration_Index.

At around the same time as the publication of their papers, Jack Whitehead's review of de Sousa Santos' Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide was published (December 2016 http://ejolts.net/node/282). This review discussed the core components of de Sousa that move from epistemicide – the murder of the epistemologies of the South by the Northern intellectual hegemony – to the concept of intercultural translation, described by Jack Whitehead as:

> "… Santos' alternative both to the abstract universalism that grounds Western-centric general theories and to the idea of incommensurability between cultures. He sees the two as related and accounting for destruction and assimilation of non-Western cultures by Western modernity …
>
> For Santos intercultural translation consists of searching for isomorphic (similar form or structure) concerns and underlying assumptions among cultures. It includes identifying differences and similarities, and developing, whenever appropriate, new hybrid forms of cultural understanding and intercommunication."

Thus, the aim of this paper is to describe and explain the efforts of two Living Theory researchers to effect a form of intercultural translation based on comparing and contrasting their respective *oralate* and literate traditions of generating and holding knowledge – as they move from the position of two separate 'I's to a composite 'We', that is.

## 1. The concepts of a 'good-quality conversation' and working as a 'respectful editor'

This opening section has been largely written by Peter, who now speaks from his own point of view with the first-person voice of 'I'.

These two terms – 'Good-quality Conversation' and 'Respectful Editor' – have not been named as such in EJOLTs papers to date. *However, they underpin the quality of the email conversation between Jerome and I that developed over time and of our growing relationship.*

I identified the notion of the 'respectful editor' in 2000, when writing for the *BERA Review* (http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/values/pmreview.pdf) under the title *Educational Action Research within Teaching as a Research-based Profession*. Although the focus of that text was on educational research in the formal sense, I now maintain that there are many aspects of human interaction that take the form of educational research, whether through the generation of texts or within the question-and-answer relationships between humans engaged in conversation. Thus, although the *BERA Review* article refers to educational research, it may be read as a direct parallel to the interaction between people who seek to engage with each other in a 'good-quality conversation' in which they both act as 'respectful editors'. These two terms are described and explained as follows.

I shall start by asking the question: what are the 'rules of engagement' for human encounter as we seek to establish some form of understanding of each other? Considering the possible negative aspects of engagement, Donmoyer (1996) identifies "gatekeeping" as a common stratagem used by individuals and groups for eliminating unwelcome opinion. He explains gatekeeping in terms of the "Traditional Response" (we talk sense; 'they' talk rubbish) and the "Balkanization Response" (leave 'them' to get on with their business while we get on with ours). In these cases, there is no dialogue and no understanding, particularly between those who wish to maintain a position of power within a relationship. However, Donmoyer also describes a third way, quoting from the conclusions that Richard Bernstein (1993) suggests should be drawn from the debates about incommensurability:

> " ... to listen carefully, to use ... linguistic, emotional, and cognitive imagination to grasp what is being expressed and said in 'alien' traditions ... [without] either facilely assimilating what others are saying to our own categories and language ... or dismissing ... [it] as incoherent nonsense." (p. 22)

Following these insights, I regard a good-quality conversation as being the agency of a joint research project, through an exchange that centres on mutual respect and trust. Rudduck (1995) speaks of respect as one of the general principles that underpin good research as: "… respect for democratic values, respect for persons, respect for the integrity of our acts at every level of the enterprise, and respect for evidence" (p. 24). As I listen carefully, as Bernstein suggests, I maintain respect for the type of evidence that informs Living Theory research, spoken of by Lomax (1999) as: "… evidence that might appeal to moral, spiritual, political, aesthetic, emotional or affective criteria …" (p.13). Somekh (1994) extends my understanding of respect when she writes of *trustworthiness*, which can only be partially established by the text in which research is reported. The text requires a "writerly reader" (Sumara and Luce-Kapler, 1993, building on Bruner's concept of constructed realities), one who will approach the text with an expectation of collaborating with the author in the construction of knowledge. This approach appeals to the prior experience of the reader and to his or her passionate engagement with the issues raised, constructing further knowledge through that engagement. Thus, we must have trust in each other to avoid exchanges in which: "...The power of the writing is destroyed when it is subjected to [an objectivising] critical appraisal on the basis of the criteria normally applied to academic texts." (Somekh (*ibid*. p.372 – see also Barthes 1970 volume entitled S/Z – the *writerly* text does not have a single closed meaning; the readerly text treats the reader as a passive consumer, with all those aspects of power relations thereby entailed).

Substituting the exchange of verbal utterances within a conversation for the writing and reading of texts, I would now understand Somekh as referring to the manner in which two people – each with their own autobiography (the story each tells themself about themselves) – 'writes' the latest section of their respective story through their encounter with the other. As I listen to the words of another, and take notice of non-verbal cues, I edit them into my own current understanding in order to modify my understanding and learning. How do we incorporate each other's evolving story into our own as the conversation proceeds? How does each person act as a 'respectful editor' within this dynamic relationship?"

Gadamer (1989) discusses the form of human interaction through dialogue that I now term 'a good-quality conversation', as follows:

"…To conduct a dialogue requires first of all that the partners do not talk at cross purposes. Hence it necessarily has the structure of question and answer. The first condition of the art of conversation is ensuring that the other person is with us. ... To conduct a conversation means to allow oneself to be conducted by the subject matter to which the partners in the dialogue are oriented. It requires that one does not try to argue the other person down but that one really considers the weight of the other's opinion. Hence it is an art of testing … . the art of questioning. … Dialectic consists not in trying to discover the weakness of what is said, but in bringing out its real strength." p. 367

Thus, Jerome and I each approached the other – within conversational emails or within the written texts that emerged from them – as 'respectful editors', each creating a growing picture of the other though careful assimilation of the new into the existing. We engaged with respect, seeking to explore our emerging fields of interest through the agency of a good-quality conversation. That conversation and our collaboration began with a survey of our interests.

## 2. What do our separate 'I's share at the start?

This section comprises the individual first-person voices of the authors as they establish contact and negotiate the beginnings of their collaboration. The 'Collaboration Index' at http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/Collaboration_Index contains links to the full text of each email referred to below.

What follows are extracts from email conversations between Jerome and Peter.

### Establishing contact (Peter to Jerome 2018-08-0)

"I am hoping that you and I can enter a conversation in which we explore together some of our common interests in education and educational research. My main aim is to understand what meaning you and I can give to the term 'We' within our developing educational enquiry. My aim is also to use the Living Theory wiki (at

http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/Main_Page ) to describe and explain our journey. I am especially interested in the points that you focus on in the abstract to your paper – *Journey to Living Theory Development of a Black African (Zulu)* Male Educator: The Challenge of Doctoral Research – that was published in the December 2017 edition of EJOLTS. I have listed these points on the following page in the wiki – http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/Peter%27s_Question – alongside several of my parallel interests.

I hope my story about being an *'oyinbo'* (http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/Oyinbo) in Nigeria 40 years ago will help to explain part of my focus – and how this fits with your interest in: "...the links to be made between cultural perspectives …" The paper that I wrote for the December 2016 edition of EJOLTS (http://ejolts.net/node/286 ) contains a section (page 40) entitled "Who is I?". It contains a link to some autobiographical information: (http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/pmejolts16/Autobiography.pdf ).

My intention of providing all these links is to give you some clues about me, the person who is writing to you 'out of the blue'."

### Current research and writing as a possible starting point for our collaboration (Jerome to Peter 2018-08-14)

"I read about you and your experience in the texts [and] was happy to learn how you attained the values that you believe in. I was more intrigued by your academic journey as well as understanding a life different from mine or that of the South Africans.

I normally work well when questions are posed to me or else I pose questions and then move my discussion as I respond to the questions.

I may then have a few questions that you think can help me start or mention a few aspects that you feel can move our discussion. … I am busy on two papers – one on *Ubuntu* (humanity) and one on *inhlonipho* (respect and humble awareness). I am also looking for the value of teaching and learning as the cause of the 1976 uprising in SA."

### Looking for a good-quality question (Peter to Jerome 2018-08-19)

"I have been reading and making notes on your paper *Journey to Living Theory Development of a Black African (Zulu) Male Educator: The Challenges of Doctoral Research*. I have made an especial note of your interest in literate and oralate ways of doing things. I have developed a parallel interest over the years of comparing the propositional (*literate*) ways of doing things and the *dialectical* (which I equate to the *oralate*).

… My aim is to show how an individual person can move from a form of life that takes a wholly objective, propositional and literate view of their life in the world –moving on from speaking about 'It' to speaking from the position of 'I' and then on to create new meaning and understanding as part of a composite, collective 'We'.

I have a feeling that the culture you were born into has 'We' at its core; the culture I was born into has 'It' at its core and we struggle to say 'I'."

### A question is suggested (Jerome to Peter 2018-08-21)

"How do you feel about this question:

*How can our understanding of Traditional and Eurocentric education (as researchers) contribute in our learning and the learning of others (Whitehead) for improving / for improved theory and practice?**

Just a thought …"

### Our field is to be traditional (oralate) and Eurocentric (literate) education in SA and the UK (Peter to Jerome 2018-08- 22)

"The question you suggest will do very nicely – it is pregnant with possibilities. … We shall need to explore the initial meanings that the phrase our understanding has for each of us, as well as the words Traditional and Eurocentric.

I am hoping that, as we compare and contrast our separate perspectives, the 'I' of Peter and the 'I' of Jerome will come to form a 'We' that can generate new, shared meanings."

At this point Jerome prepared a draft text of over 10,000 words under the title of the question above* in order to act as a foundation to 'start the ball rolling' for the production of this paper. It is significant to note that the conversation on which this paper is based lasted for about 10 months – from August 2018 to June 2019. During that time, many themes were raised and explored through many thousands of exchanged words – until the subject of this paper that is represented by its title reasserted itself as the common theme underlying all of our discussions.

**Comments by Peter on Jerome's draft text entitled: How can our understanding of Traditional and Eurocentric education (as researchers) contribute in our learning and the learning of others for improving / for improved theory and practice within the context of Living Theory? (2018-09-07)**

"This type of comparison [between the *oralate* and the *literate*] fits the point about 'Intercultural Translation' raised by Jerome: "Cultural Translation always follows the path of trying something new". We need to look afresh at things as they are or were and identify their commonalities … Our differences may turn out to be not as different as we might have thoughts at the start – as we develop a common language and understanding … underpinned by our shared humanity."

**Adapting Jerome's draft text by the addition of footnotes (Peter to Jerome 2018-09-26)**

"… I hope that you can see that I am not trying to 'take over' your narrative but am attempting to add my voice as a sort of counterpoint to yours (definition: counterpoint is the relationship between voices that are harmonically interdependent (polyphony) yet independent in rhythm and contour).

[see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4O6lc_ym12U ]

I think that we are seeking to show how Santos' (2014) intercultural translation can be realised between two people from different cultures blending their 'I' voices to form a composite 'We' that can create shared meanings. … we are exploring the archaeology of our families and the roots of our personal values. I am hoping that your main text and my footnotes will show us discovering our shared values so that we can identify our shared humanity – so that, as we go on to explore our research question, we then can ask if what we are learning is valid and if what we already know should be forgotten or unlearned and why.

… If (and only if) you agree with the direction in which the text is now heading, where do we go from here?"

**First thoughts on blending the oralate and the literate for a new form of education (Jerome to Peter 2018-10-01)**

"… I approve all that you have done as it has also given me some ideas to use in future. What I appreciate the most in our paper is the learning that comes with it. I am trying to think like somebody who knows nothing about Eurocentric education – but it is difficult."

### A favourable reception and the way ahead is agreed (Jerome to Peter 2018-10-27)

"I have enjoyed and learnt a lot more especially in reducing or summarizing my work as that is what I believe I need to focus on. I also enjoyed Phaedrus' speech

[http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/Phaedrus ] and it reminded me of what Jousse says about regarding writing as superior, forgetting that only a small amount of knowledge is in the books as most is in human memory. He further says that memory is the source of all knowledge before it is in the books. He then advocates for an interface between orality and literacy. Any engineer or doctor that does his job never realizes the good job that other people marvel at.

As an answer to your question I say:

You have engineered, finagled and doctored the article like a 'jealous housekeeper' that likes milk and preserves it as butter, cheese, condensed milk… unlike baby powder that does not make a baby."

### The respectful editor (Peter to Jerome 2018-10-27)

"I must admit that I 'held my breath' when I sent you my last edit of our paper. I was very relieved and gladdened to receive your positive and encouraging response.

I would like to say that I … see myself … as a 'Respectful Editor'. I developed this idea when writing a review for BERA (British Education Research Association) in 2000 http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/values/pmreview.pdf. …you can see how I value being engaged in a 'good-quality conversation'."

## 3. Initiating the formation of our 'We' – intersecting autobiographies

This section is written by Peter as reported speech, drawing on the authors' voices from within their extensive autobiographical writings. The full text of Jerome's autobiographical text with Peter's autobiographical footnotes is available at Appendix 1. This composite autobiographical text begins with the circumstances of our births: Jerome: "… in a small town of Port Shepstone in the Lower South Coast of KwaZulu-Natal in Republic South Africa on August 9, 1957 at the time of Apartheid before the intensification of Group Areas Act of 1950 in the 1960s that promoted development of racial groups separately" – and Peter: "…on May 5th 1946, after my infantryman father had escaped from prisoner-of-war captivity in Germany in February 1945."

Our respective parents were brought up in the pre-WW2 conditions of relative poverty that pertained in rural South Africa (Jerome) and in the tenement buildings of the East End of London (Peter). Our grandfathers laboured to support their families: Jerome's as a blacksmith and a wagoner and Peter's as 'stokers' – one shovelling coal at the local gas works and the other shovelling coke at the public wash-house. Both of us can identify forebears who understood their 'lot' to be the result of social inequity and the importance of education as a means of 'betterment'. We both 'broke the mould' for our families –

Jerome:

> "… my first primary school was a government school and the last two were missionary schools associated with Protestantism. … both my parents had their secondary and training from Catholic linked training school for both nursing and teaching. I knew that I had received inferior education and also knew that my enrolling in a University such as University of South Africa I would then be treated in the same vein as those who came from education of other racial groups." PM: "At primary school, I was always 'top of the class'. … Passing the 11+ exam [with just three others in my year] was the most significant act of my life, diverting me from the third-rate provision of the local secondary modern school and the labour exchange to the academic rigour of the grammar school, which drew in selected boys from a 30-mile radius and sent 30% of us on to university."

Our correspondence soon established that we both had our roots in the underclass of our respective societies and that we were both the first generation to climb out from that grouping into 'professional' occupations through the agency of education. However, Jerome experienced his early Bantu Education (the separate and limited experience encountered by non-whites in South Africa when pursuing an education) as a cornerstone of the apartheid philosophy – while Peter experienced a bipartite education system that divided children at the age of 11 into two streams, with a minority to be educated for the professions and the majority to be trained for manual or administrative occupations. Both were forms of social engineering carried out by an elite. However, there was also a lighter side to our exchanges, which sometimes offered unexpected reinforcement to our growing sense of 'We'. For example Peter wrote to Jerome two months after the initial meeting:

> "You mentioned a while ago that you had to see your doctor. I have reached the age at which my teeth are starting to fail. Last Tuesday, the dentist spent 30 minutes wrestling with an ancient molar and finally extracted its remains and the roots. As a result, I have a large hole in my jawbone and am still not 'fully-functioning'. However, you will hear from me soon!"

The response came:

> "You were complaining about a hole in the jaw. I have only six premolars and four molars. If I were a horse no one would take me as a gift … old age is not for sissies!"

The shared image of two dentally-challenged warhorses continuing to withstand life's vicissitudes worked to increase each of our abilities to say, "I know you". The writing of intersecting autobiographies – and the constant communications during that process – led us to identify the following as factors that resulted in us realizing the commonality in our 'I's that form our 'We'.

- Both of us have our early education based on the *oralate* form of education – that is, education from our families – because neither of us attended kindergarten or crèche. The education that we started with had no specific curriculum but was based on values such as respect for adults, self (personal integrity) and others.

- This early education for Jerome was based overtly on the tenets of Ubuntu; for Peter, those tenets were implied within the unspoken format of 'family values'.

- We are both from families of grandparents who worked as labourers. We each realised that the only way to climb the social ladder would be through education – ultimately university education. We are first-generation graduates, Peter at master's level and Jerome at doctoral level

- We both worked as teachers. We believe that our professional work consolidated our values that we had from our families – and which the teaching profession contextualized and deepened (but did not fundamentally alter).

We also identified that both South Africa and England had forms of social engineering at work during our earlier years. For South Africa, it was Apartheid education/Bantu education that was provided for Blacks as a fourth race, with the mandatory repetition of Grade 8 at primary school as well as at secondary school. That set back black learners a year, as their school program became 13 years while school education of other races was 12 years. Black learners had to first learn in their mother tongue at primary school then switch to English at secondary school. Attempts to introduce Afrikaans as the medium of instruction at all secondary schools for blacks would have been a great setback for the black learner; it was introduced in an atmosphere of the worst contempt and led to the 1976 unrest and to the ultimate downfall of the Apartheid regime.

Peter cites the separation of learners through the 11+ examinations, where learners who passed were sent to grammar school and prepared for administrative or professional jobs and university education, while the rest who could not make through this screening would become the labour force of the UK. We realize that social engineering perpetrated inequality in society. In actuality, South African education contained the remnants of British education because the Afrikaners – as the architects of Apartheid – took over the reins of government from the British. Like Britain (with its valuing of 'received English' as an indicator of social standing), South Africa used language as a social engineering tool, promoting English as a medium of instruction for secondary and tertiary education for blacks, while Afrikaners were allowed to choose the language of their instruction from primary school to PhD. We note that, in both South Africa and England, education was made to be a scarce resource that determined people's livelihoods and reinforced the social strata of the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'.

## 4. Consolidating the formation of our 'We' – shared values

This section and those that follow continue to draw on the autobiographical and email texts (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2) and are jointly written from the perspective of 'We'.

Embedded values can be used as living standards of judgement in evaluating the validity of our claims to be making contributions to a shared form of knowledge within the context of Living Theory. The specific shared knowledge and the relationally dynamic values that form the focus of our research centre on our recognition of the 'We' produced over time from our separate 'I's. We acknowledge that this process has involved us in a sharing of autobiographies and a commitment to share an accountability to living as fully as possible the values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity. As Living Theory researchers, we also recognise that we need to show clearly how we produce shared knowledge and how we validate that knowledge through developing values-based standards of judgement.

Our conversations up to this point had moved across a wide range of subjects, each of which involved a process of exploration that expanded our understanding of each other. These subject areas included (see

[http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/2019-0202_Jerome_to_Peter#Critical_Cross-Field_Outcomes](http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/2019-0202_Jerome_to_Peter#Critical_Cross-Field_Outcomes))

- Oralate and literate cultures – what makes a person?
- The crisis of identity in the 'developed' world (see http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/Schumaker )
- Lessons from Ubuntu
- The UN Millennium Development Goals and education
- What is a curriculum for – and for whom?
- The 'given' curriculum
- Living Theory and a new 'living' curriculum
- Critical Cross-Field Outcomes

Each of these successive areas claimed our full attention for a time and was explored as the possible focus for a joint enterprise and as the central subject for this paper. Each led to the next, until we had generated a substantial archive that we eventually realised had become completely unwieldy. At this point, we turned our attention back to the point from which we had started – the formation of a 'We' through a good-quality conversation.

These explorations had enabled us to bring together our separate 'I's, as we tacitly identified and acknowledged the common values that encouraged our collaboration and the incremental formation of our 'We'. We would now claim that the process of our exploration of each other through our collaborative research on these topic-areas demonstrates our educational influence on our own individual learning and on the learning of each other. Thus, our claim to knowledge as two individual 'I's and as a corporate 'We' is expressed as a contribution to Living Educational Theory.

Our autobiographical researches into our family histories revealed shared values expressed in:

- Respect as the value that Jerome received from his parents and carer Aunt MaHlongwa as an oralate person that never had a school education and that Peter received from his paternal grandmother who received an elementary schooling at the end of the 19th century.

- Patience that comes from the fact that we had to persevere against odds as we knew that we would not have a better life if we had not stuck to education as learners – as well as teachers. Both of us were the result of two separate systems that attempted social engineering.

We regard respect at the level of family culture as the setting for those elements of respect contained in the 'Respectful Editor', outlined by Ruddock (1995, ibid.) above as the general principles that underpin good research i.e. "… respect for democratic values, respect for persons, respect for the integrity of our acts at every level of the enterprise, and respect for evidence". Respect and patience are also reflected in the values and principles implicit in Ubuntu that represent our shared humanity and the value of community. There are resonances with the formation of our 'We' as Living Theory researchers – making claims about our educational influence – where Eze (2010) speaks of the core of Ubuntu as:

> "… an affirmation of one's humanity through recognition of an 'other' in his or her uniqueness and difference. It is a demand for a creative intersubjective formation in which the 'other' becomes a mirror (but only a mirror) for my subjectivity … Humanity is a quality we owe to each other. We create each other." (p. 190)

However, these are lexical definitions of values, where shared values are communicated through words alone. Further shared values could be enumerated in this manner. We must remember that there are also embodied expressions of values, where meanings include both digital visual data with lexical definitions and expressions of meaning. In other words, we include pictures here that we claim illustrate the surface differences of our cultures and yet the human commonalities that lie beneath the surface and which we both choose to identify within the spirit of Ubuntu. For example, consider the photographs on page 9 of Appendix 1. In Figure 1 below, you can see two schoolboys, both about 16 years old and both posing for the camera with the same set look around the mouth – they already appear to be 'serious' people who take a largely thoughtful approach to their lives.



**Figure 1. Jerome and Peter – both schoolboys about 16 years old**

**Figure 2. Jerome (in 2000 age 42) –
A successful head teacher whose school had attained a 100% pass rate**

The two further photographs on page 9 of Appendix 1 show us 25 years later, both at almost the same age (41–42) and both established in our careers as teachers. The photograph of Jerome  (Figure 2) is from a newspaper article in 2000, celebrating the100% pass rate achieved by his school.  While the photograph below (Figure 3) shows Peter with his tutor group, his chemistry students that year had achieved a 100% pass rate in the 16+ examinations.



**Figure 3. Peter (in 1987 age 41) – a successful teacher**

In Peter's personal context, the educational process was driven by his curiosity. As a child, the frequent admonition was "Leave that alone – you'll break it!" – anything from a flower to a clock. In Jerome's personal context, education was the only way out and up and to gain social standing.

As educators, both of us value education as an activity involving an appropriate balance of enthusing, engaging and instructing students; our personal values do not permit us to embrace rote and pure didacticism: we have always wished to understand – and we wish our students to understand, which leads to successful growth and educational achievement. In two very different professional arenas, we have both pursued our values through working towards the educational outcomes implicit in Ubuntu, i.e.

- control of thought and action

- steadfast and purposeful life
- having a mission in life
- belief in the master and teacher
- confidence in the ability to learn
- identity with the spiritual life
- ready to face challenges

These outcomes constitute just a part of Jerome's beliefs and values (Gumede, 2011) stated as:

> "*ubuntu* (humanity), *inhlonipho* (respect and humble awareness), *ukuzithiba* (deferred/ delayed gratification), *ukubekezela* (perseverance/ endurance), *ukungacwasi* (non-discrimination/ equity), *uNkulunkulu nomthandazo* (God and prayer), *ukuzivocavoca* (physical training and training the mind), *amancoko nokutekula* (jokes and humour), *ubuqotho* (integrity), *ukuzihlola* (introspection), *ukuthula* (peace), *ubuchwepheshe/ ubungoti* (professionalism), *nokuqikelela* (perfection/ being meticulous in doing things), *ukukhuthaza* (motivation), *ukuphana* ( generosity), *ukubonisana* (advice giving) *nokuboniswa* (and receiving/ listening to advice), [*ukwaluleka nokwalulekwa*] *kanye nokubambisana* and (cooperation)." (P. 46)

We shall now review the knowledge that we claim to share as the result of forming our 'We'.

## 5. Speaking as 'We' to create shared knowledge – a summary

This paper has discussed our attempts to merge our two initially separate authoring voices, each of which comes from its own distinct cultural and educational tradition – the oralate and the literate. This process has involved us in a dialogical engagement centred on the notion of a 'good-quality conversation' in which each acts as a 'respectful editor' in order to make meanings from the other's utterances. We see parallels between our process and that described by Shotter (2011), who refers to "the dialogical in practice" in the following terms:

> "… it is not only the participants' shared circumstances that are refined and further developed; participants also change their identities – for the changes within them are not only epistemological, they are also ontological (Shotter, 1984). It is our spontaneous, embodied ways of seeing and acting in the world that we change… we change in who we 'are,' how we relate ourselves to our surroundings." p.191

In moving from 'I' to 'We', each of us has expanded his understanding of the other's culture and, in so doing, have changed ontologically, as a common understanding has grown. Starting with the identification of common threads of interest in our separate prior writings, an interweaving of autobiographies identified parallel developmental influences from family histories and family values. There is an underlying commonality, an unspoken inner 'language', that permits us to understand each other from the outset. This point is elaborated by Campbell (1976) when he draws on Whorf (1956) to observe that:

> "... the language learned in infancy determines not only the manner in which one's thoughts and feelings have to be expressed, but also the very patterns of those thoughts and feelings themselves. ... the imprints of our parish are within us, tattooed on the insides of our skins." (p.253)

Our conversation then turned to the oralate viewed from Peter's literate perspective and the literate viewed from Jerome's perspective. This conversation revealed the power of an oralate tradition to inform our shared humanity, whatever our ethnic or geographical origins, through concepts such as the need for a primary aim of education being to instil a sense of "… unity of person, unity of the tribe and unity with nature" (Jerome). Against this, we see the current crisis of personal identity within literate cultures described by Schumaker (2018) and Giroux's (2017, ibid.) "cultural infantilism", whose roots are traced backwards by Roderick (1986) to the fundamental structure of Western reason:

> "Throughout the course of Western civilisation, the rationality of myth, as well as the Enlightenment which replaced it as reason only to become a myth itself, exposes Western reason as a destructive force. Reason abstracts, conceptualises, and seeks to reduce the concrete and the non -identical to identity, to destroy the otherness of the other. Horkheimer and Adorno locate the irrationality of what Weber analysed as rationalisation at its deepest source – the identity logic which is the fundamental structure of Western reason. Human liberation could be conceived, if at all, only as a complete break with mere formal rationality and instrumental reason ...." (p.40)

For us, the term "instrumental reason" is implicit in the workings of a literate culture. The tenets of Ubuntu offer an alternative curriculum for our lives, expressed in terms of its expected outcomes. Tutu (2000) elaborates:

> "Ubuntu ... speaks of the very essence of being human. [We] say ... "Hey, so-and-so has Ubuntu." Then you are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is to say, "My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours." We belong in a bundle of life. We say, "A person is a person through other persons." …"

Tutu has also suggested that: "For me to be the best that I can be, I need you to be the best that you can be" – reflected in our core values of respect and patience discussed above.

We have spent significant proportions of our working lives in education. Throughout our conversation, the notion of alternative curriculums has constantly arisen – in simple terms of what to teach and how to teach it for a 'given curriculum' in formal educational settings and also in terms of a more generalized 'curriculum for life'. There is not space to set out these ideas here but they may form the basis for future work.

As our readers, you may by now have generated your own personal narrative that can be compared and contrasted with ours within this text. You may want to reflect on your own life as you converse with this text to generate your own narrative about the interplay between the *oralate* and the *literate* in your life. And, finally, you may feel the wish to generate your own questions whose exploration offers hope for the flourishing of humanity. We offer our own suggestions in the following, final section, of this paper.

## 6. Sharing values in Ubuntu in 'We' questions that have relevance for the future flourishing of humanity.

We have generated questions at regular intervals throughout our conversation – questions that ensued particularly from our growing shared understanding of oralate and literate perspectives, traditions and cultures. We shall conclude by leaving you a selection of these questions on which to reflect, hoping that you, like us, will be moved to ask the fundamental question: "Now . . . what shall I do?" which leads naturally on to "Now . . . what shall we do?"

- How can our understanding – as initially separate researchers of traditional (oralate) and eurocentric (literate) education – contribute through intercultural translation to our learning for improving the theory and practice of education within the context of Living Theory research?

- Has our personal experience of early formal education – as Traditional and Eurocentric education – equipped each of us for life?

- "How shall I live a good life?" … "How can we live a good life?" … "How can we contribute to the common good?" (What is more significant – the good life or the common good?)

- What would a 'curriculum for life' look like?

- (How) can we make a better contribution to the flourishing of humanity through our understandings of Ubuntu that we have developed between us?

- What are we doing together to make a better contribution to the flourishing of humanity through our understandings of Ubuntu that we have developed between us?

## 7. Conclusion

The authors of this paper have never met in person or engaged in live online video conversations. Each has worked with care over the space of almost a year to create an understanding of the other through the agency of written exchanges. We claim this communication to have constituted a 'good-quality conversation' in which each has striven:

> " ... to listen carefully, to use ... linguistic, emotional, and cognitive imagination to grasp what is being expressed and said in 'alien' traditions ... [without] either facilely assimilating what others are saying to our own categories and language ... or dismissing ... [it] as incoherent nonsense." (Bernstein, ibid.)

Each of us has worked as a 'respectful editor' as we each approached the other – within conversational emails or within the written texts that emerged from them – as we each created a growing picture of the other though careful assimilation of the new into the existing. This open sharing of self to the other and assimilation of other into self leads to the point where two separate 'I's can feel justified in expressing themselves as 'We'. This point is reached as Shotter (*ibid*.) speaks of how participants in "the dialogical in practice" not only share their circumstances but:

"… also change their identities – for the changes within them are not only epistemological, they are also ontological … It is our spontaneous, embodied ways of seeing and acting in the world that we change… we change in who we 'are' …"

The origins of this paper lie in one of the author's (PM) questioning of the grounds for the claim of many Living Theory researchers to write their accounts from within the voice of 'We'. This paper attempts to describe and explain the process through which its two authors worked over time in order to justify their claim to express their research into that process through the agency of 'We'. Within the terms of our separate and joint living-educational-theories offered here, we make a claim to have demonstrated our educational influences in the learning of self and the learning of another. However, we cannot make a claim within the text of this paper to have demonstrated our educational influence on social formations, such as the wider EJOLTs community. If that influence is to be felt, then we suggest that collaborating living-theory researchers might first question the nature of the 'We' in which they came to write and to also question how they came to form it from their individual 'I's. We hope that they will find some use-value in the ideas discussed here and that their questioning will be facilitated by their engaging in a 'Good-quality Conversation', in which they each act as a 'Respectful Editor' of what the other is offering to them – in the spirit and community of Ubuntu:

*I am because we are.*

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# Appendix 1

# Jerome's autobiographical text with Peter's 'footnotes'

### I Jerome

*Family as the education initiator*

Education that people have does not occur in a vacuum but normally from the people's families. At the start of my discussion I will define my family so that I can be clearly understood. I Jerome Thamsanqa Gumede was born (Peter's footnote 1) in a small town of Port Shepstone in the Lower South Coast of KwaZulu-Natal in Republic South Africa on August 9, 1957 at the time of Apartheid before the intensification of Group Areas Act of 1950 in the 1960s that promoted development of racial groups separately. I grew up with none of my paternal grandparents but as I was told my grandfather Ernest Mpambane was a blacksmith in Marshal Campbell family farm in Mount Edgecombe who after passing standard four trained as a blacksmith at Dwalalesizwe Institution that was a missionary institution. Mpambane was the son of a farm worker Wata Gumede who was responsible for the farm's ox wagon in Jan's farm which translate to that he was driver in modern day language. I do not know much about him and other family members before him except the genealogy that I provide in my thesis in (Gumede 2011). Mpambane was married to Eva Chiliza of Mthwalume.

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[1] **Peter's footnote 1 :** I (Peter Ernest Mellett) was born on May 5th, 1946, after my infantryman father had escaped from prisoner-of-war captivity in Germany in February 1945.



6th February 1941 – the wedding of Ernest Mellett and Mary Bill. A rifle is leaning against the wall of the church; in my father's pocket are five rounds of ammunition and a 48-hour pass from the army. After three years of front-line infantry fighting, he was captured at Anzio in January 1944. For his account of his captivity and return to England, see http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/pmejolts16/powdiary.pdf

They were blessed with two sons Wilfred Ndabezitha Gumede also known as Mputuz*a* and Theophilus Sipho Gumede also known as Mpandlana*,* which means the bald one.

Wilfred Ndabezitha Gumede-Mputuza was a subsistence farmer who attained his skills from his grandfather, father as well as that he grew up in a farm. He had vast knowledge of farm work from crop rotation to animal husbandry. Theophilus *Sipho Gumede- Mpandlana* which means 'the bald one' was a primary school teacher who after completing his junior certificate an equivalent of Grade 10 trained at Marianhill Francis College an institution that was established by Francis Abbot Pfanner an Austrian monk who voluntarily said 'if no one goes, I will go' as the Vatican wanted missionaries to go to Africa. Theophilus Sipho Gumede- Mpandlana got married to Mary Tseiso Phooko of Watervaal in Lesotho, formerly a British protectorate now an independent country, that is land locked and surrounded by the provinces of the Republic of South Africa. My parents (Peter's footnote 2) were blessed with five children two girls and three boys. I am the second born of the family. I never had an opportunity to stay with my maternal grandparents as my grandmother stayed in Lesotho and my grandfather whom I am told was a postmaster in Qacha's neck died in 1947. My grandmother had seven children four girls and three boys. I only visited my grandmother before I was nine years and when I was nine in 1966.

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**Peter footnote 2**: My parents were raised barely 100 yards apart during the early years of the 20th century, in the tenement flats located in Shoreditch in the East End of London, UK. My father's family of six lived in three rooms in Gladstone Buildings and my mother's family of four lived in two rooms in Albert Buildings. My father told me a story from his days at Scrutton Street Elementary School in about 1920, when the head master told the assembled children of the local poor and working classes that, to celebrate the annual 'Empire Day' they should take pride in being members of the most civilized and fortunate country on earth. My father said that he could never reconcile this regular assertion with the life that he and his family and all his neighbours lived.



**Gladstone Buildings where my father lived 1914–1940  (early 1970s prior to demolition)**

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I could not attend even her funeral because I had to have passport to do so. My mother too could not attend my grandmother's funeral because of not having a passport and the harsh apartheid laws that could not even offer her a special permit to attend the funeral.

The inability of my mother to bury my grandmother (Peter's footnote 3) caused her high blood pressure that she died having at the age of 76. It is surprising that I now travel to and from my grandparents' place in one day, as there is an improvement in roads as well as the laws are now relaxed it is not difficult to get a special permit as long as the reason for travelling is a sound one. My mother was a nursing sister [trained at Benedictine Hospital in kwaNongoma in Zululand] at the time of her retirement at the age of 60 years. My first ten years of my life were not spent with my parents. My father taught in schools further away from home and those days transport and the roads in South Africa were poor as most of the roads were gravel roads. It is only at the age of ten that we stayed with our father as a family.

As my mother was working odd hours she then sought for a maid servant that would stay with us. I am told that at the time of my birth my mother got Aunt MaHlongwa as we called-that is Lucia Bizekile Nene. She was our 'mother' as well as a grandmother as she was almost the same age as my grandmother. The relation between my mother and aunt was that of a mother and daughter as a result we went to Lesotho for a family gathering of my mother with her. We travelled by train for three days a distance that I now drive two and fro in a day. It is about a four-hour drive if the weather is fine, a single trip I can thus attribute our learning to Aunt MaHlongwa as we as siblings spent most of our time with her.

**Peter footnote 3**:

This picture shows my paternal grandmother (born 1882) in 1963 at the age of 81; frail and almost worn out after a lifetime of caring for her family – yet now at relative ease, knowing that others had taken over the responsibility of caring for her and her descendants. Then aged 17, I would return home from school (both my parents being out at work) and talk with her about the day. With failing eyesight but an acute mind, she spent her time listening to the radio and I remember particularly hearing her views on the tragedy of the escalating Vietnam war. She spoke from an experience of seeing three sons go to fight in World War 2 (they all returned but her daughter was killed in an air raid); she had filled shell cases in 1917 and assembled machineguns in 1944. She had lived through an era whose ethic had denied her class and sex what I now understand to be social justice. Looking back to 1963, I see her generation then as a sort of partially inert geological layer, upon which the rest of the family was set.

In addition to that our mother did not speak pure isiZulu as a Mosotho so basically our language acquisition was mainly from Aunt. We also lived in area where there were mixed racial groups and it was sometimes difficult to learn a language that was pure so we spoke a mixture of isiXhosa, isiZulu, isiMpondo, Afrikaans, English and some Indian languages like Tamil and Telegu.

### My reasons for seeing the importance of education

I received my school education from three schools; my first primary school (Peter's footnote 4) was a government school and the last two were missionary schools associated with Protestantism. My family was Catholic as both my parents had their secondary and training from Catholic linked training school for both nursing and teaching.

I knew that I had received inferior education and also knew that my enrolling in a University such as University of South Africa I would then be treated in the same vein as those who came from education of other racial groups.

I had hoped that though the scars of my inferior education will always be there, but my being educated at a university that was world-wide recognized would make me feel better as I abhorred Apartheid and its Bantu Education.

**Peter's footnote 4:** After the war, my parents settled in Reigate, a suburban town south of London, where my brother was born in 1949. My parents started a business in 1952, manufacturing filing systems for offices. After a decade of a hand-to-mouth existence, the business started to flourish and eventually employed 45 people. My

father became a member of the Rotary Club and was also a Justice of the Peace at the local magistrates' court – both of my parents had travelled a huge distance from the privations of the Buildings in Shoreditch, just 25 miles to the north and 25 years in their past.



Me – back row, far left, 1953 – with Mrs. Jackson and her 38 seven-year-old pupils; Holmesdale Road County Primary School, Reigate, Surrey. Post-war food rationing ended the following year.

I still feel the damage it did to the blacks as they were only taught education that would enable them to get employment for livelihood only. (Peter's footnote 5)

**Peter footnote 5**: At primary school, I was always 'top of the class'. I passed the 11-plus examination in 1957 – which sent me on to the Grammar School, where I proved to be an erratic and sometimes mediocre pupil. Passing the 11+ was the most significant act of my life, diverting me from the third-rate provision of the local secondary modern school and the labour exchange to the academic rigour of the grammar school, which drew in selected boys from a 30-mile radius and sent 30% of us on to university.

"Passing – or not passing ('failing') – the eleven-plus was a defining moment in many lives, with education viewed as the major prerequisite for enhanced social mobility. 30% of children passed the 11+ and 70% failed. Grammar schools received the lion's share of funding; secondary modern schools were correspondingly neglected, giving them the appearance of being 'sink schools'. They suffered from underinvestment and poor reputations, in spite of educating around 70% of the UK's school children from 1951 to 1976" (Kynaston, D. (2014) Modernity Britain: A Shake of the Dice 1959-62, Bloomsbury, pp.179–182).

**Me (left) with brother Howard 1960: wearing our grammar school uniforms**

I graduated from Nottingham University in 1968 with a BSc in chemistry. A diploma in education from the University of Bath followed in 1970. I taught in secondary schools from 1971 to 1989, worked as a freelance science author and editor 1989 to 2000, completing an MA in education in 1994. From 2000 to 2011, I worked at the University of Bath, converting three distance learning engineering MSc courses from a paper-based 'correspondence course' delivery mode to a blended learning style that engaged students' academic study with improving their professional practices. I retired in 2011.

My aim of learning was to answer the questions:

• What is it that attracts people to education?

• How was I to escape the harsh realities of Apartheid if I was not educated?

After ten years of working as a nurse, my mother left us as her four children under the care of Aunt MaHlongwa for a year to study midwifery. We missed our mother but Aunt took good care of us and that was one reason that I bonded with her. I could say that she was my surrogate mother more on our relationship is found in Gumede 2011 my doctoral thesis. My mother's act of furthering her studies was also my motivation for studying further. My father also played a great role as he used to send to the book exchange to collect books for him as he was an avid reader. Among the books that he chose there would be two or three novels that he requested me to that is: one novel a week or two as he saw my reading improving.

My understanding of cultural norms also pushed to study as I had my elder brother and younger brother and according to Zulu custom they then have positions of recognition as an elder and the young who then can be considered in terms of being heirs. Likewise there was an elder sister and younger one who were also liable for consideration in being heirs.

I was neither the old nor young member of the family so I realized that I had to be independent, so that encouraged me to study. I also knew the position of the black South Africans as an inferior race, I also knew that education would put me in good stead therefore clinging to it was going to help me. The future was very bleak for the blacks in South Africa before 1994 though new forms of discrimination still exists such family political affiliation and many other forms that are created as a means of marginalizing people. I must also note that in some communities or families you can be ostracized for being educated.

Accidentally seeing my father's salary advice shocked me when he was earning less than 5 US Dollars/R60.00 a month with seventeen years' teaching experience. I then vowed to do something about my qualification as a way of uplifting my standard of living.

I then worked as a pension's clerk for two years after my matriculation, so as to accumulate money for my teacher training that I did for two years. I started teaching in 1981-2004 at Nobamba, Mshweshwe, Sister Joan's and Mthusi high schools teaching mainly high school Biology, English Second Language, Afrikaans Second Language, IsiZulu First Language and Geography at junior secondary. I was then promoted and worked as a ward manager in2004-2006 and in 2006-2012 worked as a Governance and Management Coordinator in Ugu District. I then took early retirement in 2014 so as to try something in the education field as I felt less productive in my job.

During my working I upgraded my qualification from my two-year teacher training to doctoral studies. I really pat myself at the back for my hard work more especially between 1985 and 1995 I was able to complete two degrees and a diploma part-time.

### My understanding of Traditional and Eurocentric education

In my discussion of education as Traditional or Eurocentric education I wish to point out that there seem to a common factor in all communities or societies to coin a meaning to a word in two ways – that is, as the word is used universally or as a particular society uses the word as influenced by political or economic reasons or any other aspect of their choice. As a Black South African to me, because of political and economic reasons, Traditional is associated with all that is rural, occurred before the coming of western civilisation and the word Eurocentric is associated with urban or townships and with western civilization. It is for this reason that I prefer the words oralate for traditional and literate for Eurocentric.

I feel *oralate* goes together with all that was done before scribal writing as most of what was to be transmitted from generation to generation was done through the word of mouth and intensified through dance or other gestural means or gestures as it is normally referred to when referring to the use of non-verbal communication.

I then use the word *literate* to refer to *Eurocentric* as the writing (Peter's footnote 6) as we know it is associated with the west as it was brought about in the same time with inceptions of school [Colonialism and neo-Colonialism] in South Africa or Africa.

I do have an understanding of the use of the word tradition to mean that which has been done and is accepted as normal behaviour over a long period such a way of doing things in a school for example that goes together with ethos of the school or a particular family or institution. I will then look at the history of South African education before 1652 as well as the period after 1652 as a way of forming the 'í' of me, Jerome – my understanding of Traditional and Eurocentric education so as to view this in comparison with 'I 'of Peter so that we may come with the 'we' and ultimately attempt to answer our question: *How can our understanding of Traditional and Eurocentric education (as researchers) contribute in our learning and the learning of others (Whitehead) for improving /for improved theory and practice in the context of Living theory context?*

We both hope to come with suggestions or remedies that will inform us how we can contribute in our learning and in the learning of other as hope to have improved theory and practice that will be employed to improve our learning and the learning of others as Living Theory researchers.

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**Peter's footnote 6**: In parallel to Jerome's thinking about the *oralate* and the *literate*, I have long been persuaded by the arguments of Socrates in Plato's Phaedrus about writing usurping the 'art of the dialectitian' – see the extract at http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/Phaedrus . A summary of Socrates' argument is that, on being offered the gift of writing by the god Thamus, King Thamus replied:

"… this discovery of yours will create forgetfulness in the minds of those who learn to use it; they will not exercise their memories, but, trusting in external, foreign marks, they will not bring things to remembrance from within themselves. … You have discovered a remedy not for memory, but for reminding. You offer your students the appearance of wisdom, not true wisdom. They will be hearers of many things and will have learned nothing; they will appear to be omniscient and will generally know nothing; they will be tiresome company, having the show of wisdom without the reality.

… And when they [written discourses] have been once written down they are tumbled about anywhere among those who may or may not understand them

… is there not another kind of word or speech far better than this, which shows itself to be the legitimate brother of this bastard one, both in the manner of its birth and in its better and more powerful nature? … an intelligent word written in the soul of the learner, which can defend itself, and knows when to speak and when to be silent. … the living word of knowledge which has a soul, and of which written word is properly no more than an image? … nobler [by] far is the serious pursuit of the dialectician, who, finding a congenial soul, by the help of science sows and plants therein words which are able to help themselves and him who planted them, and are not unfruitful, but have in them a seed which others brought up in different soils render immortal, making the possessors of it happy to the utmost extent of human happiness. …"

In this manner, I equate the *oralate* with the dialectical and the literate with the propositional. It might be that Plato felt his culture of 2500 years ago was on the cusp of transitioning from the dialectical to the propositional, which had a profound influence on Western discourse and the Enlightenment of two millennia later.

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## History of South African Education – my understanding (Jerome)

### Traditional education

The information that I will provide is from my learning African literature, stories told by my elders and (Saule et al. 2013.)  Prior to 1652 there existed informal schools dissimilar to the schools as we know them nowadays. From my learning the Zulu culture as well as African culture the following prevailed:

The traditional African home was the source of all that people needed or if no help was found in the home the community had people who specialized in various needs that the people needed. The family provided basic education and further education was found in places of work specialist in certain crafts, in the veld as herd boys, field when collecting wood for girls, hunting or in games that were played as most of the games that were played for enjoyment as well as depict the community or society.

The primary aim of traditional education was unity of person, unity of the tribe and unity with nature (Peter's footnote 7).

The type of education provided also developed social responsibility, character and spiritual power. Methods of teaching were based on separation of children according to gender, age, and level of teaching and learning pertaining to the aspect of what is learnt. All education was done using mother tongue instruction with a positive interaction between the teacher as an adult and learners. Most education was done orally through storytelling, proverbs, idioms, riddles, songs and dances. These would convey information about issues of birth, behavior, values, and world view. Evaluation of progress was based on remarking about the level of achievement and providing the learner time to rectify or improve work done for attainment of expected standards. Masters or teachers were expected to be people of good character and be exemplary in all respects.

Expected outcomes would be attainment of Ubuntu, as entailed in;

- control of thought and action
- steadfast and purposeful life
- having a mission in life
- belief in the master and teacher
- confidence in the ability to learn
- identity with the spiritual life
- ready to face challenges

**Peter's footnote 7**: My grandson Rowan is four years old. He lives with his parents in the same rural village as my wife and me. Now retired, I have been able to follow his development far more closely than that of my own children 35+ years ago.  In parallel with Jerome's words above, Rowan's understanding of himself is growing ("unity of person"), his place as an active member of the family and amongst his increasing number of friends is developing ("unity of the tribe"); living in a country village with gardens, allotments and surrounding woods and fields, he is actively involved in the growth of plants and the lives of domestic and wild animals from bees to badgers ("unity with nature"). He avidly requests the re-reading and telling of familiar stories but is now graduating to making up his own stories in a dialogue with an adult.

I hope that the outcomes that are shown here or above do not make any reference to a formal school that prepares people for employment. Schools, church and employment greatly changed the lifestyle of traditional South African people in many ways. Days of the week became classified and there was the inception of words such week-end as in the traditional SA even the word is not found – week is *isonto* – an equivalent of the word *church.* There also was the introduction of holidays and vacation, something that became associated with spending hard earned money so that one would have to go back to work again. I see this as a form of slavery in disguise. Working should to me be self-fulfilling and not for money. Eurocentric and the school changed the way of thinking of the traditional people and in that way dislocated people emotionally, intellectually and physically.

Recreation in communities also changed. I for example view the type of recreation provided for people as too artificial and as entertainment that is too frivolous therefore lack emotional attachment. Education also came with payment of salaries and wages. My experience is that no matter how good something is but the introduction of money in its dealings dilutes the purity of the phenomenon.

In traditional education parents as educators ensured that information that was transmitted from ancestors to descendants was accurate. This was common to all oral communities who had no scribal writing as (Jousse, 1997, p.5) proclaims that they were extremely interesting to observe, because they were passionate about accuracy. Thus when someone began to intone one these chants or dared to introduce a variation, one or other of the old ladies, (and I can once more picture good old mother Guespin in her corner). Would reprimand the reciter and say: "It is not that word but this!"

Most of the transmitted knowledge was done around the fire place after all family chores were completed. Grandfathers and grandmothers were bearers of valuable information (Peter's footnote 8). The relationship between grandchildren and grandparents made teaching and learning easy as it was a cordial relationship based on love, trust, understanding and knowledge.

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**Peter's footnote 8**: Both of my grandfathers were stokers during my parents' childhoods – one shoveling coal into a retort at the gas works and the other shoveling coke into a furnace at a public baths and wash house. Both families had a history of alcohol abuse, but my grandmothers fought hard to keep their husbands in check so that they could run clean and decent homes and hold their heads up amongst their neighbours and in the streets outside the Buildings.

What values helped to keep these four adults and six children 'decent', to use a term of those times? I knew my grandparents well as a child and adolescent. My father's parents lived – from 1946 until their deaths in the 1960s – in part of the house 20 miles south of London in which I was brought up. Visits to my mother's parents, who remained in their Shoreditch flat, were frequent and I can remember absorbing the 1930s feel of that environment into my child's uncluttered understanding of the world. As a result of this immersion, I retain a strong memory of who these four grandparents were as people and of the lives that they had led.

Thinking now about what made my grandparents 'tick' and the values that guided them, the dominant impression that comes to my mind is dealing fairly with others and speaking truthfully, the motive force behind their expression being one of care, the overall result giving

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an advantage to the survival of the family group within that environment. These and similar values have been passed on down through successive generations of my family; they have been successively adapted to inform each generation and the spirit of the age in which they find themselves.

The home was also not a strange environment as the modern school is and time as in the modern school was not adhered to as soon as children as learners felt sleepy they would stop learning with no pressure of a curriculum that had to be finished and be assessed.

Assessment was conducted within the time of learning content transmission. Any shortcomings would be noted and if possible remedial work done between the lagging behind learner and the teacher. In that way slow learners were saved the embarrassment of being noticed by their equals. Children were taught to identify right or wrong and thus attain the correct concept of life.

Child minders sang lullabies, songs, told folktales, riddles, idioms, proverbs and games that were all educational. Games such as '*amangende*' for girls where stones would be put in a ring on the ground and then moved in and out as the major stone '*ngeji*'[ from the word *geja* meaning miss, as the aim was to always catch the up thrown air without missing to catch as missing would mean losing a turn thus giving other players a turn to play] was thrown in the air as the stones in the ring were moved. This game was good for hand and eye coordination. Young girls would '*ukulinda amabele*' that is going to the field or crop to watch bird so that they did not eat sorghum.  This encouraged patience and vigilance to young girls who would later be child minders as older girls were given tougher chores that matched their maturity.

For boys, herding would start from herding goats, sheep and finally cattle. Boys then at early age learned responsibility and care up to more advanced skills such animal husbandry. At that stage boys would learn animal praises '*izibongo*'  that gave them training of later developing the skill of praise singers/ heralds of prominent people such as '*inkosi*' the kings or chiefs. Both girls and boys were taught about the utensils that were used in the home and even taught to make them such as carving '*izinduku*' fighting sticks,'*izinkezo*' wooden spoon up to making spears and hoes as the most advanced skills for males. This also include being taught remedies for small ailments or as the boys showed interest in medicinal skills they would be sent to a seasoned '*inyanga*' traditional healer as '*udibi*' an apprentice traditional healer.

Boys' games include '*ukuciba insema*' similar to dart playing or arrow throwing but done with a round plant stem like and onion that would be stabbed [while rolling on a steep slope] with sharp objects such as a sharpened stick. This was preparation for the use of a spear. Stick fighting better known as '*induku*' was a form of education as it had more than just fighting as it taught boys hand and eye coordination, foot work, bravery, precision, protection. *Induku* developed personality as there were rules that were observed during and after any *induku* bout. The boys had leaders '*izingqwele*' who ensured that the fights were following the rules. The izingqwele were boys who later became headman *abanumzane bendawo* lords in the community.

Womanhood and manhood were taught in initiation schools as these are still found in some Nguni or Sotho cultures but unfortunately what is done by the initiates and initiands is kept as a secret and never discussed openly more especially with

persons that are not the member of the initiates. Therefore very little or nothing is known about the initiation school except that sexual education is also taught to the initiates. Children from royalty, poor, and rich families were grouped together and any mistake done by one of the initiates would be shouldered by the whole group as that kept the initiates on their toes and heightened responsibility of the individual and that of the group. There was an emphasis on communality than individuality.

In my discussion of traditionalisation or oral education I also provide a modified version of what (Matjila and Ladzani 2016) assert about traditional education. Traditional education was oral and was upset by the introduction of Eurocentric literate education.9 In traditional education all education was aimed at communal work but this was destroyed by the inception of education that was controlled for the sole purpose that of enriching the colonial powers and their multinational cooperation. The first example of the multinational cooperation was The Dutch East India Company whose main aim was to develop a refreshment station for sailors that would be travelling from Netherlands to India for their trading missions. Nothing was aimed at helping the indigenous people of the Cape colony or those of traditional South Africa.

In addition to communal work traditional people supplement their diet with hunting but the form of hunting that the West came with had more motives than hunting presumably it might have been that of proving the sailors and travellers with fresh meat. This practice meant the inception of buying and selling and thus the end of the then barter system.

Among other things traditional system had the lent cattle system-*Ukunana/ ukusisa*-according to *ukunana* no one was allowed to go hungry as homesteads shared their food supplies with no monetary exchange involved and no one bothered who has *nanaed* how many times. The *ukunana* was a generous act done with good faith as the main aim was to sustain livelihood without gain in terms of profit. *Ukusisa* meant that even the poor household would have its shame hidden to the community as the rich family in terms of cattle would give the impoverished family cattle to look after with an agreement that as the cattle multiplied the one who had cattle *sisaed* to him would ultimately develop his own kraal *'Abe nesibaya sakhe'* as soon as that was achieved he would take back the cattle *sisaed* to him or the number that was given to him. Under normal circumstances it was appreciated that young and healthy cattle would be ideal as cattle brought back after *ukusisa*.

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**Peter's footnote 9**: I think that my young grandson (Rowan – currently 4 years old), within his extended family life and within the life of this village, is following a similar developmental pattern and process to the one Jerome describes as "traditional education" for young village children in South Africa. This time next year, Rowan will be attending the local state primary school. Much of his early experience there will be mediated in a verbal and *oralate* manner, but the school curriculum will steadily lead him towards developing the cognitive processes necessary for reading and writing and mathematics. He will come to view and live his life experiences through this lens, as the literate culture and mental patterns grows in proportion to the *oralate*.

Between the ages of 11 and 18, he will attend secondary school, where the dominant culture will be literate and the transition will become completed. Compared to him, I suspect that many young children in the West live in impoverished cultural circumstances: in their young non-mediated worlds of sensation and emotion they do not develop a sufficient

understanding of themselves in terms of "… unity of person, unity of the tribe and unity with nature". During their formal schooling, many do not fully make the transition from their state of incomplete *oralate* psychological development to the literate world-view that is required by western culture; and they have nothing to fall back on. In the words of the poet T S Eliot: "And the wind shall say: 'Here were decent Godless people: Their only monument the asphalt road – and a thousand lost golf balls."

The literate way of helping the poor cause the poor to remain poor as the financier has motive similar to that of Shylock of 'The Merchant of Venice' where the financed is showed no mercy when he/she fails to pay his dues. In (Gumede, 2017, p.7) I narrate about the living contradiction (Whitehead, 1999) where I write about the dryness of the agreement in site location that the literate world does   through the lawyers compared to the emotionally imbued handing over of a site in which there is some feasting involved where both parties the giver of the site and the recipient are present and the giving of the site is also information that generations also know about.

Grieving after the death of a family member was taught and respected as there was a belief that whoever failed to grieve as per decorum would *'dlebeleka'* be prone to spirits that would encourage him to do untoward or inappropriate things that would lead him/her to be a social misfit that would be ousted by the community. Social misfits were not arrested, sentenced and incarcerated as the West did /does. Many other changes were initiated in acts such as child bearing, polygamy, *ukungena* custom - that is marrying the brother or relative of the deceased husband as means of propagation of the family more especially if the deceased died before having children and engagement as actualization phases. Changes that the West came with changed oral education and life in general. The literate did not understand the acts or activities that were practiced by the *oralate* but they rushed to negatively criticize them without actually finding out the source and the reason for their practice. (Gumede; 2000) refers to this as cultural mistranslation and says: Mistranslation occurs as soon as a person from 'one cultural group' tries to interpret the behavior of the other people of the 'other group 'from his own perspective and without understanding:

1. What they are doing group
2. Why they are doing it.
3. How are they doing, and when do they do what they are doing without insights, mistranslation occurs.

For proper understanding we need to admit that we do not understand what other people are doing and find out first before making uninformed comments and decisions (p.33, unpublished dissertation).

*The development phase* of the oral was achieved through age set, quality and team work but the literate with the standards of the West introduced schools that had ways of doing things such as the introduction of the use of time contrary to what (Gumede 2017, p.4) The times according to the *oralate* are/were:

- *Kusempondo zamnenke* that is when snails are retreating to their shelter in the morning.
- *Sezibuya inhlazantshe/inhlazane* when the herd boys bring the cows for milking before midday.

- *Emini bebade* when people's shadows are long.
- *Seliya ngomtsha wendoda* when it is like the man's beaded belt to which is attached a decorative beaded apron called *isinene* when worn by males and *isigege* when used by females. This signifies sunset like the *umutsha* that hides the private parts of adults.
- *Phakathi kwamabili* between the two that is midnight that separates two days, towards.
- *Kusempondo zamnenke* that is when the snails retreat to their burrows hiding away from potential predators at dawn.

But for me, literate education came with bell ringing, books, teaching and times different from the known ways of doing things. Literate education never bothered to know about traditional education. My experience of the literate time management act is that literate time management has been as source of stress and depression to those that were un-preparedly introduced to the 'new 'time lines.

# Appendix 2

## Coming together to speak as 'We'

### 2018-11-06 Peter to Jerome: The context for starting our conversation to generate Part 2

"… We engage in a back-and-forth dialogue as I explore the *oralate* with your guidance and you explore the literate with my guidance (I have far more to learn than you!)… You have written:

> … *oralate* goes together with all that was done before scribal writing, as most of what was to be transmitted from generation to generation was done through the word of mouth and intensified through dance or other gestual means ... the use of non-verbal communication.

> … The traditional African home was the source of all that people needed or ... the community had people who specialized in various needs that the people needed. The family provided basic education and further education was found in places of work specialist in certain crafts, in the veld as herd boys, field when collecting wood for girls, hunting or in games that were played as most of the games that were played for enjoyment as well as depict the community or society.

> … The primary aim of traditional education was unity of person, unity of the tribe and unity with nature. … The type of education provided also developed social responsibility, character and spiritual power. Methods of teaching were based on separation of children according to gender, age, and level of teaching and learning pertaining to the aspect of what is learnt. All education was done using mother tongue instruction with a positive interaction between the teacher as an adult and learners.

> Most education was done orally through storytelling, proverbs, idioms, riddles, songs and dances. These would convey information about issues of birth, behavior, values, and worldview. Evaluation of progress was based on remarking about the level of achievement and providing the learner time to rectify or improve work done for attainment of expected standards. Masters or

teachers were expected to be people of good character and be exemplary in all respects.

Expected outcomes would be attainment of … Ubuntu, as entailed in:

- control of thought and action
- steadfast and purposeful life
- having a mission in life
- belief in the master and teacher
- confidence in the ability to learn
- identity with the spiritual life
- ready to face challenges

… the outcomes that are shown here ... do not make any reference to a formal school that prepares people for employment."

Looking at my own experience, rather than generalising, my grandson (Rowan) is almost four years old. He lives with his parents in the same rural village as my wife and I. Now retired, I have been able to follow his development far more closely than that of my own children 35+ years ago because then I was working full-time as a school teacher. In parallel with your words above, Rowan's understanding of himself is growing ("unity of person"), his place as an active member of the family and amongst his increasing number of friends is developing ("unity of the tribe"); living in a country village with gardens, allotments and surrounding woods and fields, he is actively involved in the growth of plants and the lives of domestic and wild animals from bees to badgers ("unity with nature"). He avidly requests the re-reading and telling of familiar stories but is now graduating to making up his own stories in a dialogue with an adult. I think that these stories help him to explain to himself who he is.

I see parallels in Rowan's upbringing with your words about the oralate tradition: "The family provided basic education … done orally through storytelling, proverbs, idioms, riddles, songs and dances; these would convey information about issues of birth, behavior, values, and world view …" There are also parallels with the elements of Ubuntu that you list. You say that the family provides the basic oralate education: in this country, I would say that the task is mostly undertaken by women – mothers, grandmothers and other women in formal and non-formal settings - 'mothers' methods' rather than 'fathers' methods'.

Therefore, I sense that there are similarities between the developing world-views of the children in your community and (some of) the children in my community during their early years. However, Rowan starts at state primary school next year (September 2019) – and that is where the paths start to diverge. As I understand it, he will start to apprehend new things by looking at the outside (through an intensifying vocabulary) rather than by feeling from the inside.

I think that you have a foot in the *oralate* tradition and a foot in the literate tradition, so my question to you is:

Do you see any common threads in the early years (0-4) growth of children in 'traditional' SA and in 'literate' UK? Are there any similarities - and what are the differences?"

**2018-11-07 Jerome to Peter: Parallel experiences from Jerome's family and from his own life.**

"… As a response your question: Do I see any common threads in the early years (0-4) growth of children in 'traditional' SA and in 'literate' UK? … I have reflected on the growth of my daughter, my two nieces, my nephew and my three grandsons and my education.

### My daughter, my two nieces, and my nephew

The four children were born in the mid 1970s and early 1980s and were brought up in a rural area of Murchison by an old lady that was our neighbor as well as my mother who was a nursing sister. They grew up doing house chores that were not differentiated to gender such as; gardening, cooking, fetching water from the well was for them all. From age 0-4 they spent time with the old lady and my mother though there were also other adults in the family such as my father when he retired as a primary school teacher. I would say the basic education of four children was rich as it contained knowledge of the Zulu traditional culture of the old lady and several ladies in the neighborhood about seven of them and a number of younger women that were in the area though most of them were employed. Younger women could only spend time with the children on weekends.

All the children had an opportunity to be taught through storytelling, games, riddles, proverbs but that changed when television was introduced in 1985. Most of the time that was spent on storytelling and games in the evening was spent watching television. There then appeared a new form of education that was not censored as not everybody took care of which programs were suitable for children. The positive effect is that the entrenched Apartheid policy of the differences in cultural groups was steadily being dissipated by TV programs that encouraged the use of all 11 languages of SA. That gave children exposure to a diverse and rich culture compared to my times in the early 1960s.

### My three grandsons

My two grandsons spent time with my mother and from age three went to a daycare centre as my mother had retired and wanted to enjoy her retirement. My father played a major role in their growth and would spend a lot of time talking and asking them questions that were based on simple problems that were of their age. To the elder of the first two my father said at an early age that he was brilliant. … Thabiso is now has a mining engineer Diploma doing his Bachelor of Technology in mining engineering.

My second grandson Thamsanqa was brought up by my parents when they took their retirement … He also spent most of the time with his mother who did not work but took care of him.

My third grandson stays in a township because there was nobody to look after him he had to go to a nearby crèche and that made him to be introduced to reading and writing at the age of four he was able to write his name and surname…

From these few examples I would say there seem to be common threads in the early years (0-4) growth of children in 'traditional' SA and in 'literate' UK. These are caused by the fact that most parents are employed, the presence of TV in most households, the government's encouragement of early school-going age even before the age of four in some instances where all parents are employed

In deep rural areas there are homesteads that are far apart and in those areas the type of education that I have given in my explanation of traditional education still exists. There is also an exodus from deep rural areas to places with piped water, electricity …"

*Extra material*

This email contained Jerome's reflections on his personal experience as a learner within the SA education system, available through the following links.

- The strange school environment
- http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/The_strange_school_environment
- The language factor
  http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/The_language_factor
- Reading and writing and counting (primary education)
  http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/Reading_and_writing_and_counting
- Subject content and translation (senior primary and secondary)
  http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/Subject_content_and_translation
- Tertiary education
  http://ejolts-wiki.mattrink.co.uk/index.php/Tertiary_education

**2018-11-30 Peter to Jerome: Getting on the inside of an oralate educational environment – and then the literate**

"Your last two emails have been most useful in helping me to understand that there are similarities in the early-life experiences of young children in rural villages in SA and of some young children in the UK. Both benefit from an oralate process that is based on close family relationships.

I think that, with your help, I have now 'got on the inside' of oralate influences on the growth of young children. I am also drawing on my 1975 experiences of rural villages in Nigeria. I admit that Nigeria is in West Africa and not South Africa but I suspect that traditional rural cultures are similar – also many of their traditional physical arrangements.

In my mind's eye, I have transplanted my grandson, aged almost four years, into what I know of a traditional African village (N.B. his father is South African / English). I have given him the ability to speak the local language at the same level as his current English. He has been involved in an oralate transmission of our family's values here in England (as you wrote):

> "… done orally through storytelling, proverbs, idioms, riddles, songs and dances … [conveying] information about issues of birth, behaviour, values, and world view."

I am sure that my grandson would already recognise the aim of his new African traditional education to be (as you wrote): "… unity of person; unity of the tribe; unity with nature".

He would also already have the rudiments of the expected outcomes of Ubuntu (as you wrote):

> "Control of thought and action; Steadfast and purposeful life; Having a mission in life; Belief in the master and teacher; Confidence in the ability to learn; Identity with the spiritual life; Ready to face challenges."

In my mind's eye, I see the internal elements that make up my grandson being essentially 'in tune' with his new environment: there would not be a cultural disjunction and he would continue to thrive. I outlined this scenario to my son-in-law and asked how Rowan would manage with his new surroundings. With spontaneous enthusiasm he said: "Oh – he'd love it!"

**Question: Can you recognise what I have written here – is it plausible to you?**

I would like to turn now to the *'literate* tradition' and to what I see as the latest extreme developments of its influence here in the northern hemisphere. I have copied below the first one-third of an article printed in the current edition of the *New Internationalist* magazine. It is a rather extreme piece of polemical writing but I find that, for me, it fits well with the current level of debate surrounding President Trump in the USA, Brexit in the UK and the UN report on extreme poverty in the UK (see https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-46236642) – which has been dismissed by the UK government. Please note the final paragraph about the young.

**Question: What is your understanding of the term 'Literate tradition'?**

"We agreed earlier to address the UN Millennium Development Goals by looking at possibilities for a new *oralat*e- / *literate*-informed education curriculum. I am starting to think that the core of our joint concern is not so much economic poverty or even social inequity - it is more concerned with a crisis of self. "

**Question: Can you and I claim to be on the inside of 'Oralate' and 'Literate'; can we claim to constitute a 'We'?**

Schumaker, J.F. (2018). The Personality Crisis. *New Internationalist* No. 516: Nov/Dec, p.48

For a culture to avoid self-destruction as it progresses, wrote Henry George in his classic 1883 work Social Problems, it must develop a "higher conscience, a keener sense of justice, a warmer brotherhood [sic], a wider, truer, loftier public spirit", while ensuring responsible and visionary leaders who embrace "the mental and moral universe". By stark contrast, modern consumer culture barrels in the opposite direction, breeding an increasingly trivialised and disengaged strain of personhood, devoid of the "loftier" qualities needed to sustain a viable society and healthy life supports.

While the ever-deepening mental health crisis is common knowledge, less understood is the even more serious 'personality crisis' that has rendered the consuming public largely unfit for democracy and nigh useless in the face of the multiple emergencies that beg for responsible and conscientious citizenship.

In time of crisis, we turn reflexively to the 'state of the economy' without considering possible collapses within the general 'state of the person', or what the psychologist Erich Fromm called a culture's "social character". By this he meant the shared constellation of personality and character traits disseminating from a society's dominant modes of inculturation, all of which serve to forge common values, priorities, ethics, lifestyles and worldview, and even the so-called 'will of the people'.

Writing when he did over 50 years ago, Fromm already noticed the unfurling of a personality crisis, using the term "marketing personality" to describe the one-dimensional, commodified and desensitised "eternal suckling" that was, as he forewarned in the famous conclusion of *Beyond the Chains of Illusion* (1962), conforming to a culturally manufactured "consensus of stupidity" that would prove our ultimate undoing. Since then, the social character has become so stunted and the decline of citizenship so complete, that some now speak of the 'apocalyptic personality' propelling our rush towards self-destruction.

### Cultural Infantilism

Immaturity has joined forces, as a cultural consensus, with a growing number of social thinkers warning of 'psychological neoteny', otherwise known as 'cultural infantilisation'. Bruce G Charlton's influential 2006 Medical Hypothesis article *The Rise of the Boy Genius* detailed the cultural evolution of a personality profile marked by delayed cognitive maturation, emotional and spiritual shallowness, and diminished "profundity of character" that manifests itself in a "child-like flexibility of attitudes, behaviours and knowledge". While these "unfinished personalities" may have increased adaptability in a mercurial culture of inconstant loyalties, abbreviated attention spans and compulsive novelty-seeking, they also expose society to the rawness and limitations of youth that hamper higher-order judgment and decision-making abilities and culminate in a "culture of irresponsibility".

In his 2017 book, *The Public in Peril*, Giroux writes about the cultural infantilism of daily life, which encourages adults to assume the role of unthinking children, while simultaneously crippling the imagination of the young and destroying their traditional role as "the repository of society's dreams".

### 2018-12-01 Jerome to Peter: We can now claim to be a 'We' – to be able to write a believably composite voice

"I have come to the same realization that we are dealing with' the crisis of unity of person' that manifests itself as the identified the millennium global challenges and what Schumaker says.

In response to your questions I say: I agree with what you have realized about your grandson's development as being similar to that of the *oralate* world as both worlds (*oralate* or *literate*) have the start of education as the family.

Even though there is no mention of Ubuntu in the *literate* world but education at family level is based on it as it follows no particular curriculum as the crèches or schools do. In fact the word Ubuntu comes from the stem *-ntu* which has to do with the human being.

#### My understanding of literate tradition

I take literate as being concerned with the letters or those that believe in the transmission of knowledge from generation to generation through the written letters people who subscribe to the notion that, that which is not written does not exist. The notion that Jousse (1997) refutes as he avows that about ninety percent of human knowledge is found in memory as very little is found in books. The literate tradition is also based on the belief that reading and writing is paramount in human beings. The literate world sees lack or inability to read as a form of poverty.

Schumaker (2018) views the literate tradition as a culture that is leading to self-destruction as Henry George suggests that the literate world needs 'a sense of personhood' with a high sense of the mental and moral character. I do not purport that we need to go back to our primitive lifestyles as the modern world seem to be looking down upon all that is said to be savage. I feel advancement in science and technology, as well as the values that are promoted, need to be looked at anew. In looking at the literate world we have to look at what makes the world: is it advancement in the non-living at the expense of the living. Human life has been relegated to a lower level than material things.

My belief is that the literate world needs to review the notion of what makes man. The literate tradition is imbued with all that is instant and there seem to be more emphasis on outcomes irrespective of the process to or the after effects of the outcomes. The outcomes have led to 'quick fix' in all matters such as the need for riches that has eroded the moral fibre and has led to ridiculous immaturity and stupidity in which people of high stature such as accountants, cabinet ministers and many others have involved themselves in racketeering, money laundering of trillions of rand from state owned enterprises - as common world phenomena.

The literate tradition has resulted in adults with cultural infantilism (Charlton 2006) a personality profile marked by delayed cognitive maturation, emotional and spiritual shallowness, and diminished "profundity of character" that manifest itself in a child-like flexibility of attitude…that hamper higher order judgment and decision-making and culminate in a "culture of irresponsibility" …

Has our understanding of the 'Oralate' and 'Literate' enabled us to claim that we now have the 'We' based on our (Peter's and Jerome's) 'Is'?  I believe we have now reached a stage where we can boldly claim that we have an understanding of both worlds/ traditions. I say so because the work that we have done on both clarifies all that we need. You have claimed to have a better understanding of the oralate tradition from some of the information that I provided and I now say I have a better understanding of the literate tradition."