

## **TO LIVE FOR A FUTURE: A REPLY TO MY CRITICS**

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It is disappointing that neither reply deals with the difficult issue of how to examine and articulate the way we live now, especially those ways that are only recognisable in dim outline, as it were. Name-calling is hardly a fruitful direction to pursue. Scattered about the replies are terms such as prophet, prophet-politician, suspect racist, a whiny, worried, gutsy, fearful white person with obsessive tendencies, a modernist (some kind of insult!) and common citizen. All that this does is to suggest that we should add "name-calling" to the list of sloppy thought habits. From Tony Leon and dissociated conspiracy theory to army provisions - military equipment, the intentions/problems assumed to underlie the text are now there for all to see, but whether these are indeed motivating an examination such as I attempt, is an issue that falls by the way side.

What I wanted to say was that we live in funny, strange and silly ways that are ruining our chances for a reasonable future. (That any particular "I" tries not to fall into these patterns, but often runs with the foxes and sometimes fails, is not really the point, is it?). The truth about the truth is, though, that all we want to say is never all we say or all that can be said; our slips are showing all the time. Van Deventer fears being harnessed, Terre Blanche and Hamber fear saying the wrong things now and I fear, or so I am told, something lurking in the future; and I thought I feared plain stupidity lurking in the *present* - how wrong we can be about ourselves!

Nothing that Terre Blanche and Hamber, or van Deventer said in their replies questions the central idea in my article, that is, that the ways we live now shape and direct those presents yet to come (as indeed the past shaped what is now). I assume, therefore, that we all agree on this. The difficult task, then, is to know what there is about the present that does not auger well for the future and, in addition, if one is that way inclined, to know what one is to do to make things better. My question, then, still stands; do you see, hear and find what I find?

Perhaps this is indeed a time to think about having installed a "predominantly black government", as Terre Blanche and Hamber urge, but why colour it in to rejoice in change? I thought we gained a democracy, which is undoubtedly progress. One can never, to repeat myself, merely equate change with going downhill, but then too, change is not necessarily progress either; neither of these points, however, bears any relation to colour, nor do the patterns I highlight in the article. Do Terre Blanche and Hamber have particular empirical instantions in mind that tip the scales that way? And, of course, we

should continue to worry about massive unemployment and the structural oppression of the past, but surely this time, like any other time, is also just fine for following that age-old injunction to live an *examined* life?

Vasi van Deventer, in rich post-modern style, catches me out between words and word-play. He writes, "what concerns us here and now ... is not the call to live reasonably but the reasonableness of the call itself, that is, the reasonableness of a voice of reason whose goal it is to harness a future, to deliver us to a harnessed future". Who wants to be harnessed? In this I must own up, I *do* want to place some straps and buckles (a harness) around things and practices so that we should not: 1. not know and about knowing and knowledge; 2. drown out in sympathies; 3. make unholy alliances; 4. follow the dictates of being liked; 5. confuse Dicks and jokes with more serious affairs; and 6. worry about who got "there" first. And truly Vasi, these patterns are about the *present*, not the future yet to come. The future, as you say, comes after; after all this and much much more. (I must also admit that practices are not horses – they do not harness as easily.) So, wanting to catch the future by its tails to equip our ways of life to work (to harness these) for all of us, still seems a worthwhile thing to do. This is not aimed at "taking us back" (how is this metaphorical jab even a conceivable/possible project?), as Terre Blanche and Hamber fear, but so that we will think more carefully about how we live now and the possible consequences of these later.

A life unfettered by shared practices that are destructive of a reasonable life, a future *free* of these, but not unable to work (without a harness) in reasonable ways is a worthwhile goal. "Ah", you will say, "there goes her faith in the *light* of Enlightenment again!" And, I want to ask, so what?

PS. To Terre Blanche and Hamber: Who talks about "(black) savages"?! Also, Verwoerd's grandson wrote his own story, an autobiography about his change of heart. Lastly, Tony does not get my vote; I wonder, though, who *is* fighting back and at what/whom?

PPS. To van Deventer: Yes, Derrida's analysis of the project of rationality can never be underestimated, ignored or written off. So, it is out of place in a description of funny, strange and silly ways of living. I am sorry I mention him above, but then, you started it; let us just agree to thank Derrida for god. In this way we agree that the prophet of all prophets is the one armed with a deconstructive reading.