



A Brief Pastoral Topography for Migrating People

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Abstract

Like God, humans are always on the move. Migrating people reflect the *imago Dei* of God the Earthroamer. Unlike God, humans do not always move with freedom as geopolitical forces, from societal disintegration to war and climate change, force migration. The experiences within migration reflect elements of a “personal knowledge” (Michael Polanyi). This essay recognizes that much of the migrating experience may escape verbalization, which not only impacts migrating people but also the scholars and researchers studying migration. Drawing on narratives in the Judeo-Christian tradition, the essay identifies seven pastoral-theological polarities to describe the migrating experience: Anticipation and disappointment; trouble and restoration; curse and blessing; at home and being a stranger; becoming and continuity of being; articulation and silence; and alone and in *communitas*. These themes are illuminated by pastoral-theological, cultural, psychological, and psychodynamic theories.

Keywords Earthroamer · Imago Dei · Migrating people · Michael Polanyi · Personal knowledge · Transcultural identity

Introduction

Many persons, especially in the United States, share a family history of immigration. Globally, countries receive migrating people, sometimes with open arms and other times with much tension and resistance, even conflict. We witness Europe opening its doors to Ukrainian refugees in Russia’s war on their country while being much more reluctant to welcome the stranger from Syria, Afghanistan, North Africa, and other troubled countries. Finding an American city or town with no “outsider” may very well be impossible. Immigration describes the “geographic mobility of people who move from one place to another, whether as individuals, as part of a small group, or in a large mass” (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p. 16). Within these “cross-cultural passages,” the result of a variety of circumstances, “there seem to be significant commonalities in the psychological processes that they unleash in the person undergoing the journey” (Antokoletz, 1993, p. 35). The commonalities are

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archetypal in nature, as I will argue by drawing on ancient narratives to elucidate a contemporary experience.

Descriptors such as “migrant” or “immigrant,” however, are inadequate since our DNA drives us to be constantly *migrating*. Despite the fact that migrating persons are common, reflection on the experience of a migrating person is complex. This essay explores a brief pastoral topography for a migrating people by highlighting seven core polarities readily recognized in the experience of migrating persons. This pastoral topography draws on the Judeo-Christian tradition and its stories of people on the move. As such, the topography can be distinguished from sociological, anthropological, political, economic, and even historic approaches to human migration. There are certain overlaps between a pastoral topography and the contributions other disciplines bring, though a pastoral topography is also distinct as it finds the migrating experience tied to God and the lived experience of persons. As one can expect in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary inquiries, this topography speaks to other disciplines even as those disciplines challenge a pastoral view on migrating persons. A topography of polarities describing the migrating experience is not new. Psychiatrist Salman Akhtar, for example, in his *Immigration and Acculturation: Mourning, Adaptation, and the Next Generation*, identifies psychological and sociological dualities such as being and becoming, work and money, sex and marriage, friendship and socialization, and religion and politics (2010).

This essay explores *pastoral-theological* categories with obvious overlap to sociopolitical, anthropological, and economic categories. Though certainly not an exhaustive list, the themes are sufficient for reflecting on a migrating people. The topography is autoethnographic, steeped in personal knowledge. It also reflects conversations in the social networks that evolve around migrating persons. The conversing, discerning, exploring, changing, thriving, longing, mourning, languishing, doubting, thriving, flourishing, and being grateful of migrating people mirror the experience of persons in the biblical witness. The practices and processes of parenting, working, and aging further inform the essay.

To understand “personal knowledge,” the essay first explores the thought of philosopher Michael Polanyi. Personal knowledge has specific meaning for a migrating people. I argue that a migrating people who straddle a wide spectrum of experiences follow the Judeo-Christian God who is always on the move. The essay introduces the metaphor of God as the *Earthroamer* to bring new possibility to understanding God and the migratory experience. Next, I identify seven interrelated, paradoxical pastoral polarities to describe a brief topography for a migrating people.

Migrating: A Personal Knowledge

The Hungarian polymath and philosopher Mihály “Michael” Polanyi (1891–1976) is best known for his study of the nature of truth in science and matters of rationality. Countering logical positivism’s claim of scientific, absolute truth and reliance on sense data (perceived objective facts), Polanyi argued that scientists work best when their projects are decentralized, when science accepts that all truth is fallible, and when scientists admit they bring personal values to their enterprise. He explored these themes in his 1951–1952 Gifford Lectures, published as *Personal Knowledge* in 1958 as well as in *The Tacit Dimension*, published in 1966 (Polanyi, 1966, 1997). Polanyi argued against the academic philosophy of the 1950s that argued for positivism, pragmatism, conventionalism, reductionism, objectivism, mechanism, materialism, and determinism. One reviewer describes *Personal Knowledge* as “disordered, repetitive, digressive and often

obscure; as a work of art it leaves much to be desired (Oakeshott, 1958, p. 77). Polanyi's contribution far exceeds this initial review.

Pastoral and practical theology have not fully discovered the importance of Polanyi's philosophical anthropology for interdisciplinary inquiry (Reinders, 2010). As disciplines that study the lived experience of persons and communities, Polanyi's thought both affirms and challenges pastoral-theological inquiry. "The act of knowing includes an appraisal," Polanyi (1997) writes, "and this personal coefficient, which shapes all factual knowledge, bridges in doing so the disjunction between subjectivity and objectivity (p. 17). Lest one assumes that he promotes pure subjectivity, Polanyi reiterates that "the personal... is neither subjective nor objective. In so far as the personal submits to requirements acknowledged by itself as independent of itself, it is not subjective; but in so far as it is an action guided by individual passions, it is not objective either" (p. 300).

Personal knowledge argues persuasively for the "personal participation of the knower in all acts of understanding" (p. xiii). Passionate and personal commitments—one's tacit awareness—create knowledge and determine how reality is approached and understood and also which questions are asked through the process of "indwelling" (p. 211). As such, personal knowledge harkens back to *phronēsis*, or practical wisdom, more so than reflecting *episteme* (as a principled system of understanding; scientific knowledge) or *theoria* (the contemplation of ideas). Simply put, knowledge's tacit quality redefines our understanding of what truth might be. "Truth [relies on] personal commitment," Polanyi writes,

which is involved in all acts of intelligence by which we integrate some things subsidiarily to the center of our focal attention. Every act of personal assimilation by which we make a thing form an extension of ourselves through our subsidiary awareness of it is a commitment of ourselves; a manner of disposing of ourselves. (p. 61)

Personal knowledge should not be confused as being anecdotal but is captured in comments such as "I have a feeling that..."; "I believe that..."; "something tells me that..."; characteristic of which is that the speaker cannot explain exactly where this feeling, or this supposition comes from" (Reinders, 2010, p. 31). As Polanyi writes, "We can know more than we can tell" (1966, p. 4).

Polanyi's contribution informs a brief pastoral-theological topography on a migrating people in a number of ways. It will suffice here to identify five themes that inform the discussion to follow. *First*, personal knowledge is a natural approach to living but is not readily transferable or shown until relationships of trust and constant interaction both awaken and instill this way of knowing. Since this trust is lacking in most forms of research and academic writing and conferencing, personal knowledge is likely to remain hidden. A conference such as the Group for New Directions in Pastoral Theology, where this paper was first read, offers a space safe enough for personal knowledge to emerge.

Second, the personal knowledge of a migrating people informs their wholistic experience, whether that is the loss in leaving, being confronted by a new reality, engaging power structures, living with trauma, seeking belonging and finding ways of integration, or receiving freedom and learning to survive or possibly thrive in their adopted country. Like a cyclist who cannot describe how they balance on a bicycle—an example Polanyi uses—describing the experience of migrating is always incomplete as aspects of the experience remain hidden and lack the language to be expressed. *What tacit knowledge do migrating people hold?* Might it be this personal knowledge that offends those who witness migration?

Third, this essay seeks to portray what Polanyi calls a “subsidiary awareness” of the particulars of migration by seeing the experience of a migrating people as a whole within specific contextual structures rather than employing a “focal awareness” of the particulars themselves (Polanyi, 1965, pp. 29–30). A subsidiary awareness cannot be reduced to a set of dogma, maxims, or formal operations even as the themes I explore here belong to certain traditions and communities. Each person’s indwelling of the migrating experience is unique (Polanyi, 1997, p. 195).

Fourth, personal knowledge anticipates “the personal participation of the knower in all acts of understanding” (Polanyi, 1997, p. xiv). This knowing, Polanyi writes,

does not make our understanding subjective. Comprehension is neither an arbitrary act nor a passive experience, but a responsible act claiming universal validity. . . . [It] is indeed objective in the sense of establishing contact with a hidden reality; a contact that is defined as the condition for anticipating an indeterminate range of yet unknown (and perhaps yet inconceivable) true implications. (p. xiv)

If personal participation is inherent to generating knowledge, how can a scholar write on the experience of migrating persons without exposing their own histories, experiences, even biases and prejudices, vis-à-vis migrating people or the experience of migration?

Fifth, writing about a migrating people runs the risk of turning personal knowledge into some form of an objective reflection. Japanese management professors Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) argue that the implicit knowledge contained in Polanyi’s personal, tacit knowledge can be made explicit or “practical” (p. 60). With others, I resist cognitivist projects of objectification (Ray, 2009, p. 76; Tsoukas, 2012, p. 455). Even as I offer this brief pastoral-theological topography, the migrating experience cannot be fully captured or contained by polarities conceived by researchers and scholars.

The relational qualities and located nature of the tacit dimension echo the 1944 dictum of Harvard anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn and psychologist Henry Murray:

EVERY [PERSON] is in certain respects

- (a) like all other [persons],
- (b) like some other [persons],
- (c) like no other [person]. (Kluckhohn et al., 1953, p. 53)

Each migrating person has experiences like all other persons, like some other persons, and like no one else. Embodying specific intersectional locations deepens the uniqueness of the migrating experience. One element every migrating person shares, one can argue, is their reflecting the *imago Dei*.

The Earthroamer and A Migrating People

The very first images we discover of God in Scripture are of a God who briefly dwells in darkness (Genesis 1), a God who is on the move, a God who creates, and a God who visits—moving yet again (Genesis 3). Though a God who dwells in darkness, who is the Creator God, or who is God with us holds particular theological promise for the times we live in, God on the move speaks in particular ways to a migrating people. God on the move appears to Abraham and Sarah with wisdom of a coming pregnancy (Genesis 18). Sarah

laughs in disbelief. God visits with Leah in her infertility (Genesis 29) and surprises Moses at a burning bush (Exodus 3). Later, God travels ahead of Israel by day as a cloud and by night as a pillar of fire (Exodus 13). God on the move offers direction, though it is confusing to think of God leading Israel for 40 years in circles to cover a distance of maybe 200-plus miles. The always-on-the-move God that visits is mostly seen as a positive experience but also awakens fear of judgment (Exodus 20). Often, God reminds the Israelites: “I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people” (Leviticus 26:12 NIV).¹ Jesus, we discover, had an itinerant ministry, at times tired from all his walking (John 4) and at other times walking with persons but remaining unrecognized (Luke 24). Even a cursory reading of Scripture reveals God as God on the move. A migrating people can find rest in God, the *Earthroamer* (Hamman, 2021, p. xxiii)!

God moving toward and with us identifies a responsiveness in God, an empathetic nature that informs the very being of God and all of God’s engagement with us (Baker-Fletcher, 2005, p. 180). God the Earthroamer points beyond Jesus as the embodiment of God with us. Regardless of the reasons for one’s migration, God as Earthroamer implies that God joins all people as kindred earthroamers. God does so with compassion, companionship, and care, for God is not impassible but, rather, is filled with pathos (Heschel, 2001, p. 242).

The Judeo-Christian narrative witnesses to the spectrum on which a migrating people find themselves. One can locate elements of a migrating people in Adam and Eve’s *exile* from Eden (Genesis 3), Abraham’s *searching for the next oasis* and sustenance (Genesis 13), and Hagar’s *displacement* as she flees abuse and seeks to protect the life of her unborn child (Genesis 21). Israel’s *exodus* takes them out of Egypt (Exodus 12). Migration includes, but might be more than, becoming a *wandering immigrant* like Abraham or a stateless *asylum seeker* like Ruth (Deuteronomy 26; Ruth 2), *journeying* or *crossing borders to trade* as the Queen of Sheba did (1 Kings 10), and being *forced into exile* as Israel was (2 Kings 17). Some migrating persons are *sent* with a purpose, like Joseph, Jesus’ disciples, or the first believers (Genesis 45; Luke 10, Acts 1). *Fleeing persecution*, in turn, adds additional dimensions to the migrating experience (Acts 8).

Within the wide spectrum that holds a migrating people, to which the scriptural witness points, select pastoral theological themes can be identified.

Anticipation and Disappointment

Anticipating is a spiritual practice. The Judeo-Christian narrative provides image upon image of our spiritual ancestors anticipating. An exhaustive list is not needed to show that being on the move is often associated with anticipation. The first time we meet anticipation is Adam anticipating a partner, only to discover no one. Adam was fortunate as his anticipation did not remain “empty,” even though he lost a rib in the formation of Eve. Next, we find the couple anticipating God’s coming to the garden of Eden after they ate the forbidden fruit. This time, anticipation was laden with guilt and shame as they went into hiding in fear and self-loathing. Meeting God, they are informed that they will be expelled from the garden and can expect enmity with the snake, pain in childbirth, and a land that will give up its food only after much labor. How this anticipation must have weighed on Adam

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture citations are from the New International Version of the Bible.

and Eve! Moreover, they are told to expect death and a return to the earth from which they came. We meet their sons Cain and Abel, with Cain anticipating that God will find favor with his offering, but when that does not happen, Cain kills Abel in disappointment's rage. Grace, however, remained. Cain, expecting that he will be killed for the murder, is told he will be a wanderer. He receives a "mark"—which remains a mystery—to keep others from harming him. We know the "mark" could not have been either the dark color of his skin or his accent as migrating people with those features were often attacked and even killed. We've only covered the first four chapters of Genesis, and anticipation is a thread in all the narratives.

Philosopher Husserl (1973) reminds us that anticipating is a form of precognition and, as such, is "empty" (p. 31). Whatever we know about the future is incomplete. When we bracket our own judgments as we enter an experience, literally putting them aside, an experience has the potential to inform and surprise. Knowing our thoughts are, at best, incomplete, we have to go beyond what we anticipate to experience fully. We have to cross a horizon of sorts and allow new experiences to surprise us (p. 32). This horizon is both internal to the experience but also indicates infinite possibility beyond what is essential to that experience. We anticipate best when we open ourselves to possibility. A migrating people nurture an attitude often called *protention*—having an openness to the future; reaching out into the future; thinking forward, living toward—rather than practicing *retention*, which ties us to a known past. Protention and anticipation that are not foreclosed go hand in hand. Empty anticipation is a present moment with a past to be reckoned with but holds on to an open future. Protention embraces a form of open uncertainty; we know that what we think might happen may not occur. We know we can be disappointed and we know this without the excessive anxiety not knowing brings.

Anticipation—the expectation that something will happen—is an action, a practice, and an emotion, one we first experience in the womb awaiting the moment of birth. There is a "thickness" to anticipation that a parallel experience such as expectation lacks. Both dynamics, however, reveal a looking-forward-to element in our biology. As infants, that looking-forward-to action and emotion continued around our need for food and also around basic bodily actions such as bowel movements and sleep. We were hungry, cried, and anticipated food, which most often appeared as if we miraculously produced it. Our parents or caregivers would leave the room, and we would anticipate their return. Initially, anxiety entered our little bodies when our caregivers left our sight, but we soon learned to anticipate their return. Of course, we also learned that we could not omnipotently control the return of someone or the outcome of an event. Sometimes we dreaded what we anticipated, such as when we remembered a bad dream we'd had—possibly a night terror—and we anticipated the dream's return the next night. Abuse in the home and bullies at school awakened similar apprehensions and fears for we knew what was coming.

We hatched, and as infants we crawled or walked away from parental figures, practiced separation, and returned in rapprochement (Mahler et al., 1975, p. 53). For some people on the move, anticipating precedes the act of migration. Many dream and think of leaving before doing so, whereas some are forced to leave without any preparation or planning, as is often the situation in war and conflict zones where personal survival supersedes personal freedom. For those with stability who are migrating to something better, anticipation reflects what the Dutch calls *voorpret*—pleasure experienced before an experience or event. Anticipating, however, is not hoping and does not always anticipate pleasure or a positive outcome. We also anticipate with fear, dread, and a sense of loss. A migrating people thus bring their psychological and emotional experiences from early childhood to their new experiences (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p. 23). For the migrating person, these

experiences form a “third individuation,” as Akhtar (1995) argues: “The term third individuation should therefore be seen as denoting an adult life reorganization of identity, a potential reworking of earlier consolidations in this regard, and a semisplayful extension of a useful psychoanalytic metaphor” (p. 1053).

Due to the emptiness of anticipation, which keeps us open to the future, the future surprises in ways that *disappoint*. The disappointment of a migrating people ranges from family members not understanding the choices one has made, to not being received and recognized by the host country and its people, to finding employment elusive, to discovering that friendships and a sense of community have become unfamiliar, to finding that the host country has significant sociopolitical concerns that impact the lives of a migrating people in adverse ways. The ways disappointment sets in never fail to surprise and follows one throughout life. I’m reminded of a piece of wisdom I received in my teenage years while at a compulsory military camp for teenage boys. A military officer yelled at our squad, the context long forgotten, “The grass is greener on the other side because there is more shit fertilizing the soil!”

My experience of leaving a country where White supremacy reigned to adopt a country where the same evil pervades mirrors the experience of fellow South African psychoanalyst Suchet (2007) when she writes, “I came to the United States to escape racism, only to re-find many aspects of that same racism here” (p. 884). Suchet calls on the migrating person to surrender to their experience, especially to their whiteness if that permeates their experience. For a migrating people, the practice of anticipating, looking forward to something “better,” is kept “honest” by what best can be called experiences of *chronic disappointment*. Chronic disappointment, much like chronic sorrow, is experiencing disillusionment, frustration, dissatisfaction, and even regret on a regular basis (Roos, 2002). Anticipation’s disappointment fuels ambivalence and feelings of being unsettled. It is a form of intrapsychic loss, the loss of a vision or a dream, as I’ll discuss next.

The experience of chronic disappointment is greatly shaped by the reasons prompting one’s migration, experiences while migrating and where and how one lands. *Was the migration forced or done in freedom? Was the act of leaving a response to a call from God or a higher power, a seeking of better opportunities, or a matter of life and death? What cycles of crisis, trauma, and even violence predated, accompanied, or followed the act of migration? What work of restoration was completed before migrating?* Certainly, flying in coach to a new country is different from running the gauntlet of a highway of death or relying on human smugglers to enter a country. Still, few, if any, migrating people can escape the polar tensions of anticipation and disappointment. Furthermore, the forces that fuel anticipation and that cause chronic disappointment are often the same forces that trouble the migrating experience.

Trouble and Restoration

Since humans left the garden of Eden, humankind has faced strained relationships, personal challenge and violation, and earthly toil—valleys of shadows of death, as the Psalmist states (Psalms 23). Likewise, the restoration of lives, relationships, and also the earth have been persistent concerns. God, we read, is “compassionate and merciful, very patient, full of great loyalty and faithfulness” (Exodus 34:6–7 CEB). The compassionate God, a leitmotif in Scripture, restores. God restores the earth after a flood, covenanting to never destroy the earth again (Genesis 6). Countless individuals in Scripture find

themselves in vulnerable situations and see their lives restored after calling out to God after trouble, crisis, and trauma. A locust-plagued people hear, through the prophet Joel, “I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten” (Joel 2:25 (CEB). Jesus’ healing ministry is such a central part of his person and relationship with both his Father and the people that he has been described as “the village psychiatrist” (Capps, 2008, p. xxii). A God who notices, cares, and restores is good news for all in trouble and in need of restoration. When restoration never comes, as many a migrating person witnesses, disappointment becomes an intimate enemy.

Psychologically, trouble and vulnerability speak to moments of crisis and trauma. “Crisis,” psychiatrists Grinberg and Grinberg (1989) write in *Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Migration and Exile*, is

the abrupt and decisive change in the course of any life process. . . . An individual or collective crisis can be either the cause or the effect of a migration. . . . [Migration] is a potentially traumatic experience characterized by a series of partially traumatic events and at the same time represents a crisis situation. (pp. 13, 15)

There is no experience of migration that is not deeply unsettling. “Migration is one of life’s emergencies that exposes the individual who experiences it to a state of disorganization and requires subsequent reorganization that is not always achieved,” Grinberg and Grinberg write (p. 14). A migrating people thus carries the experience of rupture, of catastrophe and being uprooted, but they also embody the potential that arises in periods of transition. Fellow psychiatrist Volkan (2017), in his *Immigrants and Refugees: Trauma, Perennial Mourning, Prejudice, and Border Psychology*, writes that some migrating people experience not crisis or trauma but rather “culture shock,” an unsettling, but less impactful experience (p. 5).

Culture shock, Mexican psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Garza-Guerrero (1974) states, is “a reactive process stemming from the impact of a new culture upon those who attempt to merge with it as a newcomer [that] severely threatens the newcomer’s identity” (p. 410). He reminds us that culture shock is stressful, anxiety-provoking, even violent as it threatens one’s psychic stability, causes personal stagnation and regression, and complicates the mourning process needed to grow into and discover a new identity. Culture shock indicates that the challenges hidden in the migrating experience and alongside trouble, crisis, and trauma determine the process of reorganization for a migrating person. Since migration does not end upon arrival or being “landed” (a phase in the Canadian immigration process) or even having stability and security, the work a migrating person needs to do in navigating the dualities explored in this essay never ends.

The themes of trouble and restoration include the ways a migrating people cope, the resilience they portray, and their experiences of moments of regression. Grinberg and Grinberg (1989) reference Winnicott’s false self, the caretaker self, as keeping the migrating person from psychological disintegration (p. 14). The false self keeps the “true self” hidden, that part of the self that instills in a person the sense of feeling alive (Winnicott, 1994c). Regression can take many forms, including extreme emotional vulnerability, manifesting in eating and sleeping disturbances, and also defiant, antisocial behavior. The process of working through carries no sense of time and can last a lifetime for some migrating persons. The process, however, can be accelerated if the person experiences social and financial stability, finds themselves part of a caring community, and works with a counselor or therapist. Restoration can be frustrated when new experiences awaken old wounds and instill new ones, when being a

migrating person turns into being a displaced refugee, or when personal, relational, financial, and even spiritual stability do not set in. As Grinberg and Grinberg (1989) write,

In [the migrating person's] new life experience, [their] childhood feelings of frustration and exclusion in relation to the couple formed by [their] parents will be recreated, since the members of the new community have ties among themselves and share many things (language, memories, experiences, knowledge of daily life) in the new country to which [they are] as yet a stranger. (p. 23)

Restoration speaks to having achieved reparative intelligence. Elsewhere, I have argued that “Reparative intelligence is the courage of discovering the truth of one’s childhood and life, seeking restoration for oneself and facilitating the restoration of persons, relationships, communities, and nature” (Hamman, 2017, p. 101). Restoration is not a return to wholeness, an unreachable goal, but indicates a way of living with vitality and with a sense of feeling alive while still being able to recall traumatic events. Whereas a desire for wholeness reflects infant grandiosity, restoration includes seeing reality for what it is, not always just or fair and often broken and always complicated by the migrating experience. Restoration is finding meaning in one’s history and discovering and integrating a new story for the self, one that includes one’s past. Reparative intelligence inevitably takes one toward caring, trustworthy, compassionate persons: friends, guides, teachers, pastors, mentors, and counselors. A faith community, fan club, sports team, and one’s chosen family can play important roles here. Not all migrating people have such webs of relationship to hold them as they search for a new identity.

Curse and Blessing

Curse and blessing, though strange to the modern ear tuned to the sounds of postmodernism, neoliberal capitalism, and individualism, are scriptural themes and inform the personal knowledge of a migrating person. The book of Deuteronomy (especially chapter 28) has many explicit curses (Hebrew: *qēlālā*) and blessings (*bērākôt*), reflecting on the social, legal, political, and religious significance of curse and blessing in the ancient Near East. Curse and blessing, I contend, reflect the lived experience of a migrating people who believe in an immanent God. “To ‘bless’ is to impart favor, whether specified or otherwise, on someone. The reverse of this, the curse, solicits injury of some kind. Blessings and curses are usually future oriented. They can be conditional or unconditional” (Quick, 2020, p. 2). Curses were used to protect societal norms, such as keeping the covenant relationship with God and keeping boundaries between peoples (Deuteronomy 27). Ham was cursed after seeing his drunk father Noah naked (Genesis 9), and Balaam was hired to pronounce curses against Israel (Deuteronomy 23, Numbers 22). Blessings, in turn, flowed to Israel, their land, their flocks and herds, and their produce. Blessings had to flow through Israel to others. They colored their covenant relationship with God. Isaac’s blessing Jacob and Jesus’ blessing during his baptism are archetypal personal blessings (Genesis 49; Matthew 3). Blessings and curses were alive for early Christians, too. The epistle writer James confronts people who praise (or bless) God and curse people (3:9).

Psychodynamically, curse describes ego dystonic life experiences, which may be ascribed to God but are most often the result of circumstances bought about by persons, by communities or power structures, by unsettling experiences, and even by places disrupted

by violence, war, or other forms of sociopolitical chaos. Many a migrating person may relate to this curse from Deuteronomy 28:

The Lord will afflict you with madness, blindness and confusion of mind. . . . You will grope about like a blind person in the dark. You will be unsuccessful in everything you do; day after day you will be oppressed and robbed, with no one to rescue you. . . . Your sons and daughters will be given to another nation, and you will wear out your eyes watching for them day after day, powerless to lift a hand.” (vv. 28–29, 32 NIV)

Or: “You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out” (v. 19 NIV). The association might not always be that “I am cursed [by God]” but rather that “Migrating has blinded me.... I am confused about... I am concerned for my children.... My difference gives me away.” When a migrating person’s education, morals, religion, and ways of relating are questioned, it can feel like being cursed.

Blessing, in turn, is referenced 425 times in the Hebrew Scriptures and carries connotations of wholeness, harmony, peace, and prosperity. Psychodynamically, blessing describes a spectrum of experiences where specific needs are effectively met—physiological, cognitive, and aesthetic needs and needs for safety, belonging, esteem, self-actualization, and transcendence (Mowinckel, 1962, p. 44). Blessing points to the divine source and spiritual value of material possessions as God transfers God’s life force to humans. Abraham, a migrating forebearer, heard from God before he set out: “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:1–3). This blessing is personal and private and also communal and public.

Blessing in the priestly tradition implies one person blessing another, most often an older person blessing a younger, as seen in Isaac blessing Jacob (Genesis 27) and Naomi blessing Ruth (Ruth 1). The blessing of Aaron in Numbers 6 links God’s face with ours and indicates our facial existence as we engage others. Moses reminds Israel that “the work of your hands” was blessed and that they can afford to pay for food while wandering in the desert (Deuteronomy 2:7; 24:19; 28:12). Some migrating persons can relate to the blessing of landing meaningful employment, receiving opportunities for material enrichment, and securing a better future for their children. We hear, “The Lord your God will bless you in the land God is giving you” (Deuteronomy 28: 8).

The blessing and curse traditions of the Hebrew scriptures are complex acts of remembering and weave the Judeo-Christian narrative into the ancient Near East, where such traditions were common. Here, I seek to highlight one element of the lived experience of migrating people: the curse of loss.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, narratives of loss abound: loss of Eden and innocence (Genesis 3); by natural disasters (Genesis 7; Joel 1); by deception and death (Genesis 4, 27, Matthew 27); of home (Genesis 37), in exodus and exile at the hands of powerful others (Exodus 14, Jeremiah 1); and in poverty and persecution (Revelation 2). Since a loss cannot be replaced, only mourned, we lament and gather in resistance and solidarity (Joel 1:13). Narratives of loss are often, but not always, balanced by narratives of blessing and restoration emanating from the covenantal, relational God (Genesis 9, 12, 18). Through the prophet Joel, for example, we read of God telling a people devastated by locusts:

I will repay you for the years that the cutting locust,
the swarming locust, the hopping locust, and the devouring locust have eaten—

. . . You will eat abundantly and be satisfied,
and you will praise the name of the Lord your God,
who has done wonders for you;
and my people will never again be put to shame. (Joel 2:25–26 CEB)

A migrating people has intimate knowledge of the locusts of life and the losses they bring. Some experience blessing after a time of turmoil.

Migrating people can experience “perennial mourning and perennial discovery,” as an expat friend expressed to me in a recent conversation. She is supported by Volkan (2017), who writes that

There is one key common element that underlies the psychology of all dislocated individuals. Since moving from one location to a foreign location involves losses—loss of family members and friends; loss of ancestors’ burial grounds; loss of familiar language, songs, smells, food in one’s environment; loss of country; loss of previous identity and its support system—all dislocation experiences can be examined in terms of the immigrant’s or the refugee’s ability to mourn and/or resist the mourning process. (p. 4)

The dislocation and sense of loss of a familiar holding environment include “cultural mourning, [the loss of] the smells, tastes, sounds, and the rhythms of life that so deeply shaped the sense of self in the world” (Ainslie et al., 2013, p. 665). “The one who leaves dies, and so does the one who stays behind,” write Grinberg and Grinberg (1989, p. 67). Similarly, Akhtar (1995) writes that “moving from one location to another involves loss—loss of country, loss of friends, and loss of previous identity—all dislocation experiences may be examined in terms of the immigrant’s or the refugee’s ability to mourn and/or resist the mourning process” (p. 1053). Since loss pervades the migrating experience, we are best reminded that each migrating person mourns differently: “The intrapsychic self varies significantly if not radically according to the social and cultural patterns of societies,” writes analyst Roland (1988) as he explores the self of persons in India and Japan (p. 4).

Mourning can become an acute or chronic preoccupation for a migrating people living with loss (Mitchell & Anderson, 1983, pp. 36–46). The COVID-19 pandemic accentuated the losses inherent to being a migrating person as many lost loved ones but could not travel “home” to pay respect and mourn with family members. The pandemic’s travel restrictions also enhanced anticipatory grief (Lindemann, 1944, p. 147). Persons displaced by war, as we witness in Syria and Ukraine or among the Rohingya, may not have a home to return to. Grieving without closure is something a migrating people know intimately. As one would expect, not all loss and mourning by a migrating people are the same. “Mourning the loss of one’s homeland, after one has experienced persecution [or war] there, is different from mourning in a case of voluntary departure,” Grinberg and Grinberg remind us (1989, p. 27). Grinberg and Grinberg tie paranoid, persecutory anxieties to the former experience and depressive and guilt anxieties to the latter. Migrating people with depressive and guilt anxieties integrate better than those with persecutory anxieties. Those who are able to return home mourn differently from those who, for various reasons, cannot or do not visit or return to their countries of origin. In all cases, anticipatory grief—“the gradual accommodation one makes to the loss of a significant other whose life is clearly coming to a close, and to the passage through some or all of the stages of grief that may in such circumstances take place before the actual event of death occurs”—colors the migrating person’s mourning landscape (Volkan, 2017, p. 15).

Since loss cannot be replaced but only grieved, the dynamics of mourning indicate some of the mourning tasks a migrating people needs to do to avoid risking a life of nostalgia and of being unable to be present to new challenges. The tasks can be summarized as accepting the reality of the loss, working through the pain of grief, adjusting to a changed environment, and emotionally relocating the loss and moving on with life (Worden, 2009, p. 18). Nostalgia can lead the migrating person to compulsively follow news and sports of the country they left; it manifests in a hankering for food and drink from the country left behind and also in the refusal to learn a new language or to accept new customs and traditions (Volkan, 2017, p. 19).

A migrating people rarely perfectly balance their past, present, and future. For example, when do my butchering habits—making South African *boerewors* and *biltong* or hosting a *braai*—and listening to Afrikaans radio stations serve nostalgic, even romantic purposes that reflect poor integration of my transcultural identity? When do these actions assist the integration of a new identity and reflect the healthy nurturing of what Davies calls the kaleidoscopic self with its “intricate patterns, varied but finite, conflating and reconfiguring themselves from moment to moment” (1996, p. 562)? Language for the migrating person is a complex concern and “is often one of the battlegrounds in which cross-cultural battles are fought, both within the individual struggling for adaptation and between cultural-linguistic heterogeneous societies with common borders,” psychiatrist Antokoletz writes (1993, p. 40). Within language, however, is also the potential for a new identity. Psychoanalyst Greenson (1950), in his classic essay “The Mother Tongue and the Mother,” reminds us that adopting a “new language... [offers a person] an opportunity to build up a new defensive system against... past infantile life... an opportunity for the establishment of a new self-portrait” (p. 21).

Food, music, and clothing, but also photos and other objects, can serve as “linking objects,” as Volkan (2003) calls those symbolic objects that a migrating person in perennial mourning uses to “re-libidinate” their internal world (p. 557). “Linking objects are protosymbols... or an amalgamation of symbols and protosymbols,” Volkan writes, representing “an ‘actual’ meeting place between the mourner and [what was lost]” (p. 558). Volkan warns that we’d best not see linking objects through a pathological lens: “While linking objects are utilized to postpone and freeze the mourning process, they can initiate future mourning. When circumstances are right, the mourner may go back to his/her linking object, internalize its function, and begin the mourning process as if the loss had just happened” (p. 558). Linking objects are central to the coping mechanisms migrating people embody to sustain themselves as they seek personal and societal integration and as they continue their work of mourning.

One pastoral-theological response to loss is the practice of lament. Lament, Capps argues, ties human suffering, God, and prophetic ministry together (1981, p. 70). In addressing God, raising a complaint, trusting God with a petition for a changed world, and possibly praising God, a lament takes a person on a transformative emotional, relational, and spiritual journey that informs a growing new identity. I wrote “An Immigrant’s Lament” the summer of 2008 (15 years after I left South Africa). I sought a way to express inner conflict—and a personal knowledge—as I grew concerned about caring for my family, seeing my employer struggling in the financial crisis that gripped the country at the time:

I pray to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I call your name. I pray to the God who followed my family to *Afrika* where we are faithfully sustained. I pray to the God of Barry and Maria. I am their son.

God, I recognize you as the *Great Heart* who stands is with me.

God I am a *trekboer*, a scatterling, an orphan of *Afrika*. I am neither the African I was nor the American I am becoming. I look at the sky and do not see the southern cross. How could I not feel lost? Sometimes I say that my roots are in *Afrika* and my branches are in Michigan, but that would be a false poetic description. *Asimbonanga*. I do not see Table Mountain. *Asimbonanga*. I do not see the aging faces of my parents; my growing nephews and nieces. *Asimbonanga*. I do not see smiling African faces. Their deep faith and hope. *Asimbonanga*. I do not see *Afrika*'s harsh sun. But I do see my daughters feeling disloyal when they speak English, as if they can survive on Afrikaans. I see individuality that leads to despair. I see clouds and snow and ice; a cold Africans were not created to experience. I feel the urge to move. I long for *ubuntu*, finding a sense of being in the community I keep.

Yet you are faithful to me. You have affirmed my call; you are blessing us as a family. I recognize hopes, dreams, and opportunities. Surely you have noticed my rootlessness; that I am a scatterling, an orphan, a soul lost without the southern cross.

Give me *ubuntu*, oh God. Remove my desire to continue to be a *trekboer*, a scatterling. Show me on the roots I already placed into new soil, and in your grace, let those roots grow deep. Give me a closeness with those we love in *Afrika* that can bridge miles of ocean. Rain on me, o God.

Not only have you heard this prayer, but you have witnessed my confusion and longing.

God, I notice the people you placed in my life and caring friends surrounding us as a family. I am being adopted by so many. I praise you as the One who traveled with Abraham, and who now journeys with me, a scatterling of *Afrika*.

Lament is an invitation to discover a new identity even as it nurtures one's spirituality and places one in a renewed relationship with God.

Migrating people, of course, do not only know loss; some also know blessing, an imperfect way to speak of receiving safety, opportunity, advancement, achievement, benefit, reward, and even privilege and enrichment. A Vietnamese friend, Phen, is a landlord. He often tells how he came to the United States with one bag of possessions. Arriving in Los Angeles, he was given a one-way bus ticket to Houston and \$20, the destination determined by the U.S. government. He had no connections in Houston, though there were other refugees from Vietnam there. After changing cities, he bought a duplex and rented one unit. Phen now has a number of apartments and often rents to immigrants. He remains mindful of his siblings, who never escaped their poverty, and often sends money "home." Vashti, a tennis partner, came to the United States as an undergrad, became a physician, and created a nonprofit that builds schools in India. *What drives this charity?* Though the desire to restore and to be responsible with one's privilege is virtuous, psychodynamically the dispositions also reflect the self's grandiose need to control and to create, to replace and restore, and to wrestle with guilt feelings and a sense of shame (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p. 68).

The paradox of the migrating experience demands work of integration around curse and blessing. Since blessing often leads to power and privilege, some migrating people are challenged by what political theorist Tronto (2013) calls "privileged irresponsibility"—being in a relationship where one person carries less weight amidst intersectional fissures of gender, race, class, and ability (pp. 103–104). Some migrating people embrace this invitation to make a difference, whereas others narcissistically chase cultural illusions of wealth or remain burdened by guilt feelings and a sense of shame. Theologian Rieger (2015), in his *Faith on the Road: A Short Theology of Travel & Justice*, argues that

“Christianity is a matter of the road” (p. 15). In the face of economic, political, and religious privilege, Rieger calls us to “deep solidarity” with a people who are at the margins of our society, often migrating people, to counter the financial systems of this world that keep most people in poverty. The ever-present experience of dislocation and being objectified, however, is not only troubling, unsettling, and unjust; it can derail the mourning process.

Dislocated and Being at Home

Since Adam and Eve were banned from Eden, humanity has been in perpetual cycles of dislocation. The themes of searching, exodus, exile, seeking, and even trading and being sent I have identified all speak to some form of dislocation. It does not surprise that dislocation fuels the longing to find a home, a drive permeating Israel’s memory. In search for a place to call home, Abraham became “a stranger” (Genesis 23:4). The stranger, with the orphan and the widow, were protected by Israel’s sabbath laws and were invited to their cultural festivals (Deuteronomy 14, 16, 26). Israel is explicitly told: “Do not oppress a foreigner; you yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners, because you were foreigners in Egypt” (Exodus 23:9; Deuteronomy 24). The followers of Jesus too are called to take care of the stranger (Matthew 25:25). *If home is the place where your speech and person are unconditionally valued, many migrating persons remain the perpetual, dislocated stranger.*

An Ivy League-educated, world-renowned scholar tells me of the challenge his family faced in sending him half-way across the globe to study in the United States, a possibility that came through American expats—a different manifestation of migrating. In the American academic system, which values creativity and independence of thought, his intellectual gifts thrived. More than 40 years after arriving in the United States, however, he still does not feel America is home. He has had many experiences of discrimination against his accent and being a person of color. Early in his career, he taught a parallel seminar with a White instructor. After the first class, half the students left his class for the White instructor’s, some claiming that they could not understand his accent. The scholar wonders whether he needs to retire outside the United States. Being treated differently is the intimate enemy of the migrating person. His experience reminds us that “one cannot adequately theorize about the experience of immigration without including the dimensions of ethnicity and race” (Ainslie et al., 2013, p. 670). Besides the presence of racism, the scholar’s experience indicates paradoxes of finding and making a new home yet remaining a displaced stranger; the difficulty of establishing a transcultural identity; moments of thriving intellectually yet knowing the loneliness and alienation of being objectified. His experience shows the presence of racism in a country that prides itself on its civil rights history.

A migrating person left a certain *location* for a wide range of reasons to adopt another location. Location speaks to personal and communal identities shaped in a cauldron where race, gender, sexual orientation, class, age, ability, economy, generational position, institutional affiliation, and geopolitical locale become a matter of alchemy, ever mixing in ambiguous ways. Location, postcolonial theorist Bhabha (1994) reminds us, cannot be described by either the coordinates on a map or the insights cultural competency brings (p. 2). Migration discerns neither distance nor location. Rather, migrating people find themselves in what urban theorist Soja called a “Thirdspace,” a way to speak about “*the spatiality of human life*: place, location, locality, landscape, environment, home, city, region, territory, and geography” (1996, p. 1, emphasis in original). Whereas first space is the

physical built environment, second space is perceptual space or the space that has been introjected. Thirdspace is a combination of the real and the imagined. Soja writes,

Everything comes together in the Thirdspace: subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history. (p. 57, emphasis in original)

In the Thirdspace, the trialectic of spatiality alongside historicity and sociality forms personal identity through a process called “thirling.” In thirling, an-Other identity is formed. It is a combination of polarities that, in being combined, transcend the dichotomy as the sum is more than the parts. This hybrid identity “partakes of the original pairing,” dichotomies such as subject-object, mental-material, natural-social, local-global, center-periphery, and agency-structure, “but is not just a simple combination of an ‘in-between’ position along some all-inclusive continuum” (p. 60). This leads Soja to speak about “thirling-as-Othering.” The migrating identity, forged by thirling, leaves the migrating person with an identity that is best described as an-Other identity. It defies easy description and transcends easy syntheses such as African American, Italian American, Polish American, or Haitian American, to name but a few group labels.

Volkan (2017) identifies the United States as a “synthetic country... a place where people, even refugees (except African slaves), have come voluntarily from different places with different experiences to create a synthesis of disparate influences and live together” (p. xv). Dual ethnic labeling serves the political elite, which is often connected to the economic elite, a group whose members do not describe themselves in binary terms. Imagine hearing “I am a one-percent American.” Class might be surpassing race as *the* issue American society is facing. Dual ethnic descriptors reflect a colonizing mentality in which colonial powers always seek to divide a people since a divided society brings less opposition and increased internal chaos (Said, 1978, p. 259). For this reason, migrating peoples are labeled, situating the latest arrivals at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder.

Migrating identities are best seen as *transcultural* identities—which is distinguished from a dual ethnic and hybrid identity—that are consistently integrating new experiences. A transcultural identity is not merely the synthesis of two or more identities. Rather, it is a new identity that transforms the very cultures forming the building blocks of the identity. A transcultural identity reflects cultural theorist Gloria Anzaldúa’s concept of *mestizaje*, a state of being beyond binary (either/or) conceptions seen especially in Chicanas, women of color, and queer communities. *Mestiza* are marked by feelings of insecurity and psychic restlessness. Anzaldúa calls for a “new *mestiza*,” a hybrid consciousness that embraces ambiguity, transcultural identities, and racial mixing, a neutral identity refusing to take sides, opening *mestiza* to all persons. Anzaldúa’s (1987) hybridity seeks to join people together, which is different from capitalist and postcolonial dual identities that aim at dividing communities and peoples (p. 5). A migrating person experiences what Anzaldúa calls *nepantla*, being in between physical and sociopolitical spaces where power manifests much like Soja’s Thirdspace. “Living in *nepantla*, the overlapping space between different perceptions and belief systems, you are aware of the changeability of racial, gender, sexual, and other categories rendering the conventional labelings obsolete” (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2015, pp. 2–3). *Nepantla* is an undetermined place of constant transition in which difference disappears. As such, it is a liminal space. In this space, assigned (binary) categories, such as man/woman, the powerful/the privileged, the rich/the poor, and native/immigrant are questioned. Rather, our shared humanity is honored.

With the maturation of a migrating people who arrived in their adopted country in early childhood and also with the arrival of the second generation, questions of home, displacement, and personal identity reappear and deepen. There is the opportunity to adopt rituals and customs from many cultures alongside the challenge of remaining loyal to family roots and traditions. For the migrating person, the question *Who am I?* remains. The process of forming a transcultural identity inevitably implies letting go of worldviews received in one's family of origin, a dynamic that mirrors emotional and relational disloyalty.

A number of years after I left South Africa for the United States, I asked my father about the last words he had said to me when I left South Africa in 1993: "Do not lose your identity." These words, forever etched in my being, probably came to my father's consciousness 30 years prior when a maternal uncle studied abroad and returned to South Africa to question Apartheid and nationalist politics. The family marginalized him and his wife. To my surprise, my father did not recall the moment, despite the words still ringing in my ears. Around a *braai*, I pressed my dad on his words. Strangely, he did not deny saying the words—which told me that my memory may be correct—but he was adamant that I have not changed. He added that he supported the plans I had at that time to remain in the United States for a number of years. Despite the fact that I could name many ways that I have changed as I have been growing into a transcultural identity, I felt validated in my leaving Apartheid South Africa. I did not pursue questions of identity further that night. Maybe my father's affirmation—a blessing—was all I needed.

It is said that home is the place where your speech and person are unconditionally embraced. Home, however, may defy any definition as it too is always in transition and always being formed. Similarly, the experience of a migrating person shows that personal identity is best seen as one containing multiple selves in endless cycles of being integrated. Political elections and sports and cultural events can stimulate the integration of one's transcultural identity. That sense of unity, however, is fleeting and unravels in the face of disappointment, discrimination, and longing when one is reminded that one is an-Other American or when the death of a loved one reminds one of relationships that ended years prior.

Migrating poet Francisco X. Alarcón captures the paradox of finding a home yet being displaced in his short poem "Roots/Raíces" (Alarcón & Gonzalez, 1997, p. 5):

I carry
my roots
with me
all the time
rolled up
I use them
as my pillow
Mis raíces
las cargo
siempre
conmigo
enrolladas
me sirven
de almohada

Alarcón has roots that are transportable; he builds and finds home where he is, just as one takes a favorite pillow when traveling. Alarcón, a Californian who lived in Mexico for extended periods in his childhood, was a transcultural person. He reframes our

understanding of where home might be and also of placing down roots. Home is ultimately where one is, a place that can be welcoming, indifferent, or troubling.

Becoming and Continuity of Being

A fifth theme in exploring a topography for a migrating people that is informed by a transcultural identity is best described as becoming through continual processes of creating, adjusting, adapting, and adopting while celebrating, preserving, and sustaining aspects of one's identity, including customs and traditions internalized in infancy. The Earth-roamer, after all, constantly breaks into our reality and creates something new in what theologian Moltmann (1996) calls the “adventus moment” but also reminds us of Egypt and eternal covenants formed along the way (p. 25). Holding the paradox of always becoming while having a sense of continuity of being is a challenge migrating people face. Becoming raises difficult questions: *Who am I becoming? Who is informing my new identity? How does one discern the preservation of core elements of the self's object relations?* Psychology reminds us of having a secure identity, one that instills a sense of continuity over time but also one that is personal even as it is shaped by social forces and one's group identity (Erikson, 1980, p. 17). Migrating parents and their “third-culture kids”—a generation raised in a different culture—experience the complexities of becoming and continuity of being firsthand (Useem, 1963, p. 481; Useem & Downie, 1976, p. 103). Through the family emotional process, the parents hand down language, customs, rituals, and traditions they first experienced in infancy, only to see their children being parented by the only culture the children know.

Parenting complicates matters. “Parents, Volkan writes, “may unconsciously ‘deposit’ their traumatized self- and object images related to dislocation into the developing self-representation of their child and give [them] different tasks to deal with such images” (2017, p. 47). Whereas children are active participants in identifying with their parents, “depositing” renders the child a passive recipient of emotional content as a parent unconsciously uses their child to integrate disparate parts. Third-culture kids experience what Volkan calls “a double mourning”—mourning a homeland they may not know and leaving childhood as they mature into adulthood—and often project the tension they feel on family or society or both (p. 58).

An expat friend who has spent most of her adult life in foreign cultures asked: *“To what degree does a family and does an individual hold onto their home culture, and to what degree do they assimilate to their host culture? Why? For mere convenience? Does it happen by accident? Is it affected by which culture has higher status in the world's eyes?”* She witnessed the breakdown of communication as emotions are often best described in one's mother tongue. As second-generation children and third-culture kids adopt a new culture and language, communicating about life's challenges, which demands language fluency, fuels a distance between parents and their children.

As a migrating people integrate a new identity while maintaining a stable sense of self, they create unique micro-cultures built around language, food and drink, customs and traditions, humor and joking, religious commitments, and shared worldviews. The uniqueness of these micro-cultures adds to the otherness third-culture kids and migrating people experience. The vitality of these micro-cultures offends a hegemonic culture that is slowly atrophying under its own weight. The micro-cultures reflect how a migrating people *adapt* to societal forces and also how they *adopt* a new culture. In communities formed by migrating people, relationships become strained when one group's micro-culture differs significantly

from the other group's micro-culture, easily recognized when each group hoists a different flag or supports competing causes.

Articulation and Silence

A subplot in the Judeo-Christian tradition is the tension between articulation and vocalization, between telling, witnessing, and preaching and being silent or not telling. Abram did not tell the pharaoh that Sarai was his wife (Genesis 12); Moses told God he was slow in speech and tongue, received Aaron as his spokesperson, but then never stopped talking (Exodus 4). Samson first refused to share his secret but then told Delilah (Judges 16); Job's friends sat in silence but could not contain their anxiety, leading to speech (Job 2); the wise, we read, know how to stay silent (Proverbs 10); Jesus informs some he healed not to tell (Mark 3); Peter denied Jesus by saying he did not know him (Mark 14); the women who came upon Jesus' open grave were told to tell (Matthew 28); Jesus's followers were told to witness about him to the ends of the earth (Acts 1); the apostle Paul spoke boldly on the meeting on the Areopagus in Athens (Acts 17). Articulation—the self telling about itself—for a migrating person is difficult, even impossible, as personal knowledge is difficult to communicate and trauma defies vocalization. When and what to tell and when to remain silent demand spiritual discernment. Personal knowledge, as I have said, implies more than one can tell. A migrating people thus have stories to tell, stories of what was home, of the migrating experience, and of building a new life. *What can they tell? Who will listen? How does one speak when others use a different language, different expressions, metaphors, and dialects? How does one speak past one's trauma?*

Martinican psychiatrist Fanon (2008) deepens our understanding of the migrating experience as he describes how “the White man... had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, and stories” (p. 91). The migrating person is caught in webs of stereotypes. On a train ride in France where no one wants to sit next to Fanon, a little boy runs away from him in fear and others offer him a disapproving gaze, Fanon is left “disoriented,” “deafened by cannibalism” and “racial stigmas” (p. 92). Fanon wants to laugh and speak but is left mute. “Every colonized people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local originality,” Fanon (1963) writes in his *The Wretched of the Earth*, “finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country” (p. 18). That the immigrating person who is often judged and marginalized speaks at all is an act of courage and resilience. Accented voices highlight the fissures in our society.

Following Fanon, migrating philosopher Spivak (1988) captures the tension around speech when she builds on the thought of the Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci and asks, “Can the subaltern speak?” (p. 1). The subaltern is the person socially, politically, and geographically outside the hierarchy and the cultural hegemony of the colonial or dominant power structure—the migrating person. The students who walked out of their professor's class were threatened by his alterity and voice. Though articulation and reticence or retreating into silence are vulnerable to power structures, they are also deeply personal dynamics.

Even before the migrating person needs to find a way to speak through and beyond troubles and traumas, authentic speech is a challenge. Psychoanalyst Phillips (1994) reminds us that “the telling of selves” is a need not easily met even as he acknowledges

that psychoanalysis makes memory possible (p. 65). Drawing on Freud's 1899 essay "Screen-memory," Phillips argues that we never forget; rather, we "omit" some experiences, and psychoanalysis makes memory possible. The healthier we become, Phillips argues, the more memories we have. He quotes Lacan: "The patient is not cured because he remembers, he remembers because he is cured" (p. 67). Phillips also quotes Sandor Ferenczi on the importance of memory and wholistic well-being: "The patient is not cured by free-association, he is cured when he can free-associate" (p. 67). Phillips further references the French psychoanalyst Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, who said: "One shouldn't write one autobiography, but ten of them, or a hundred because, while we only have one life, we have innumerable ways of recounting that life to oneself" (p. 73). Few migrating people—people who may not be able to recall their experiences—are privileged enough to tell their story to a therapist, to gain memory through the therapeutic process. Rather, we can imagine the opposite—parents not telling their children and newfound friends the stories of trouble and shame and marginalization behind their migration, the experiences of confusion. The sharing of joys and delights, of some success and recognition, might be shared in moments of idealism or nostalgia.

Though the telling of stories is important for personal integration and relational life, as Phillips argues, fellow British analyst Winnicott (1994b) reminds us that there is always a part of the self that does not communicate for it has the "urgent need not to be found" (p. 184). This too is part of the personal knowledge we bring, knowledge of a self that knows more than it can tell. For Winnicott, the part that resists communicating is also the part that relates to objects, thus the part that enters the transitional space. Here, the self is formed between what is subjectively experienced and objectively perceived. Winnicott (1994b), in his typical hyperbolic manner, concludes that each individual is "an isolate, permanently non-communicating, permanently unknown, in fact, unbound" (p. 187). It is when someone is invited to tell about these transitional experiences and core object relations, Winnicott believes, that the person comes alive. A study of a migrating people's transitional experiences can be enlightening.

Grinberg and Grinberg (1989) warn, however, that cultural continuity, a theme Winnicott tied to the transitional space, is not enough to ensure a sense of continuity of existence (p. 14). Still, they conclude that

the immigrant needs a potential space that [they] can use as the 'transitional place' and 'transition period' between them, the mother country/object, and the new outside world: a potential space that grants [them] the possibility of experiencing migration as a game, with all the serious implications that games have for children. (p. 14)

Articulation and silence and searching for transitional experiences indicate much more than the questions of language and culture, of speaking with an accent or not, of having the right words to describe an experience, or of feeling one belongs.

A migrating people holds the tension between giving voice to their experiences and being reticent. *When and where does one share one's migrating experiences? What does one tell? Who will listen? How will what I tell be received? What is best left untold?* These questions are never easy to answer. Numerous variables will determine the possibility of speaking and gaining memory. Here, pastoral caregivers can play an important role by being curious, listening with compassion, and creating networks of care as needed.

Alone and in *Communitas*

The seventh and last pastoral-theological theme I'll explore is the tension between the self as an isolate and the self relationally tied to a community. Adam's disappointment in being alone, as I have noted, prompted God to create Eve. Our archetypal couple introduced a tension every migrating person knows intimately: how the personal relates to the communal as one's relationship with one's self grows into a relationship with persons and things (Johnson, 2008). The tension deepens as in-person relationships become internalized object relations and as new in-person and object relationships are being formed. The psalmist courageously vocalized personal pain and suffering—personal trouble (Psalms 3–7). The prophets, often outsiders in their community, had tension-filled relationships with Israel as they brought God's promises and laws to God's people. Jesus sought out moments to be alone and felt abandoned by his disciples (Matthew 4; Mark 14; Luke 5). In the biblical narrative, loneliness and isolation are balanced with *koinonia*, which theologian Letty Russell defines as "community in partnership" (Russell et al., 2009, p. 84). British psychotherapist Patrick De Maré, in turn, sees *koinonia* as "a cultural and impersonal manifestation of fellowship" (De Maré et al., 1991, p. 88). *Koinonia* is a purposeful community, a communion or fellowship, a sense of belonging, deep association, and communal participation (Acts 2:42; Galatians 2:9; I John 1:3, 7). Simply put, *koinonia* is a common life shared. Table fellowship, service (*diakonia*; Luke 10:40), and hospitality to the stranger (*philoxenia*; Romans 12:13) are core elements of *koinonia* as a shared life (Pohl, 1999).

Koinonia highlights the fact that we are inherently relational beings, which in turn informs the social and the political. "Our fundamental need, the need that defines and characterizes our nature as human beings, is the need to relate to ourselves... and significantly to other human beings," writes pastor-turned-psychotherapist Guntrip (1956) in his *Mental Pain and the Cure of Souls* (p. 43). Following a similar vision of human nature, philosopher Benhabib (1992) writes in her *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodern Contemporary Ethics*: "To know how to sustain an ongoing human relationship means to know what it means to be an 'I' and a 'me,' to know that I am an 'other' to you and that, likewise, you are an 'I' to yourself and an 'other' to me" (p. 52). Guntrip and Benhabib describe the paradox of human nature first identified by Winnicott as the capacity of "being alone in the presence of others," being comfortable with a one-body relationship, relating to one's self, and knowing when it is appropriate to enter into two- and multi-body relationships, relating to others (Winnicott, 1994a, p. 29).

Migrating persons know the burden of isolation and the importance of being with others. Social media has made it easier to stay connected and to find an expat community. The growth of ethnic restaurants and other establishments allows many opportunities to congregate around familiar scenes and flavors. It is no surprise that community building is central to the migrating experience. Community, Buber (1958) writes,

is the being no longer side by side (and, one might add, above and below) but with one another or a multitude of persons. And this multitude, though it moves towards one goal, yet experiences everywhere a turning to, a dynamic facing of, the others, a flowing from I to Thou. Community is where community happens. (p. 5)

Buber reminds us that being in community has sacred, liminal qualities.

Whereas *koinonia* is a specific Judeo-Christian concept, Victor Turner's concept of *communitas*, which describes a core aspect of the relationships and friendships migrating peoples form, adds ethical and relational depth to our need to belong. *Communitas* does not

depend upon a religious worldview, though it is a deeply spiritual concept. Turner (1969) draws on Buber's view on community and states that when Buber writes on community, he actually means *communitas* (p. 126). "*Communitas*... [is a] modality of social relationships" (p. 97). "[It] is a relationship between concrete, historical, idiosyncratic individuals. These individuals are not segmentalized into roles and statuses but confront one another rather in a manner of Martin Buber's I and Thou" (p. 132). Turner places *communitas* over against the mediacy of organized "structure," the former spontaneous, immediate, and liminal in nature. Turner questions a concept such as solidarity as it depends on an in-group/out-group contrast. To thrive, Turner argues, one needs *communitas* and structure, even as structure has a "jural-political" nature that governs social interactions. *Communitas* has an existential quality and involves the whole person in relation to others. It is filled with potential. *Communitas* can be "existential or spontaneous... a happening"; "normative... under the influence of time, the need to mobilize and organize resources, and the need for social control... in the pursuance of goals"; or "ideological [as we find in]... utopian models of society" (p. 132). Describing the experience of many a migrating person, Turner argues that persons forming a *communitas* often "fall in the interstices of social structure,... are on its margins, or... occupy its lowest rungs" (p. 125). As such, *communitas* functions as a "facilitating environment," as Winnicott (1994d) calls relationships that hold a person in ways that protect one's "going on being," one's physical, emotional, and relational well-being. Since *communitas* emerges where social structure is absent, *communitas* is always at risk of becoming community, at which point it loses its liminal quality and relational strength.

Communitas speaks to immediacy, friendship, creating a new family, mutual support, and a deep bonding that originates in the experience of migration. It reflects powerful, life-giving relationships in which one's evolving identity can be discovered. There are elements of friendship and playing together in *communitas* (Huizinga, 1949, p. 12). Loneliness is induced when the organized structure does not recognize or overlooks the migrating person. Turner (1969) states that not being recognized and feeling alienated leads to a sense of "inferiority," of being "the other" (p. 128). The not being recognized, of course, can take many forms. The social and political structures can overlook the migrating person, but so too can a group of persons who once formed a *communitas*. An expat tells of the embarrassment and shame she felt when a group of women, whom she often joined as they tended to childcare, organized a birthday party for another mother but did not invite her. She was the only immigrant. The oversight became known when another mother mentioned the party, assuming she was invited. The group then proceeded to invite her to the party, but she decided not to attend, offering a made-up excuse.

Few migrating people, if any, have not experienced some form of objectification, stereotyping, discrimination, and further marginalization, destructive forces that immediately transpose the migrating person into an isolate. Volkan writes that "the Other who passes through the border surrounding the host people [awakens a] fear of newcomers" in the host. Volkan (2017) calls this fear "border psychology" (p. 95). The host people, Volkan continues, "throw mud, excrement, and refuse—that is, they externalize their 'bad' images of themselves and others, and project their own unwanted thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and expectations" onto newcomers in xenophobic terror (p. 96). Describing the mechanisms of projection and projective identification as inherent to a border psychology, Volkan warns that group upon group of newcomers are at risk of identifying with what is projected onto them, making it part of their new transcultural identity that is passed on from one generation to the next. "Psychologically speaking," Volkan concludes, "the main fear is the contamination of their [the host people's] large-group identity by the identity of the Other.

Those who are able to keep their individual identities from the impact of large-group sentiments become more willing to... accept the huge number of newcomers. Those who perceive the newcomers as tearing holes in [society's cohesion]... become anxious and defensively perceive the huge immigrant population as a major threat" (p. 101).

The border psychology of host nations is easily exposed. Low-hanging fruit would be a political leader espousing that some countries are "shithole" countries or that migrating people are murderers and rapists. More subtle, however, are those moments when a foreign education is doubted, when one's personal identity is conflated with a group identity, when one's accent or origin leads to either romanticization or distrust, or when one is asked about customs in a way that reflects colonial orientalism. A migrating people see things differently, which further offends. They notice power structures and incongruencies and are often more direct in the ways they express themselves. In cultures that avoid conflict to keep the appearance of common ground, seeing things differently is not appreciated. Migrating persons are in a perpetual wrestling match between the *communitas* they are experiencing and invited into at the margins of society, communities where they are a Thou, and those many moments when they are not being recognized and become the other, an It, as Buber (1958) taught.

When a sense of *communitas* is built between a migrating people and a host nation or established group, the latter can discover new levels of personal and societal awareness. Migrating peoples offer their host nations the opportunity to discover themselves anew. Kristeva (1991) explores this truth as she reflects on the harsh criticisms the French have toward whomever is the other. "Strangely, the foreigner lives within us," she writes, and is "the hidden face of our identity.... The foreigner comes in when the consciousness of my difference arises, and [disappears] when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, unamenable to bonds and communities" (p. 1). The boy on the train who was afraid of Fanon called him "Banania" (Fanon, 2008, p. 92). Consciously, he had the chocolate drink with the picture of the smiling Senegalese infantry man with a red fez as symbol in mind, but unconsciously he exposed his inherent colonial racism as Africans were racially depicted as monkeys eating bananas (French: *banane*). The boy and his mother had an opportunity to escape their own prejudice and fear of the stranger. Their missed opportunity solidified their unconscious fear and racism.

Never Finish and *Klaar*

Migrating people know more than they tell. They carry a personal knowledge that eludes objectification, whether for themselves or for scholars and researchers. We should not be alarmed by the presence of the migrating person, for being human is being always on the move. For transcultural people, the work of identify formation and of building a new life on foreign soil is never "finish and *klaar*" (Afrikaans: done), as a friend told me. *How does one write about ambivalence, paradox, about perpetual disappointment and blessings amidst integrating a transcultural identity? How does one reflect from a personal location that drips privilege and not offend others whose location is colored by war, conflict, natural disaster, or political upheaval? Simply put: How does one capture the breadth and depth of the spectrum of experiences that represent migrating people?*

A brief topography of a migrating people shows that the private and the public are intricately intertwined. Neither an *identity*-based politics (the migrating person above all else) nor an *interest*-based politics (citizens and borders needing protection above all else) is

sufficient to address the complex realities of migrating people. The ends of the political spectrum carry equal anxiety about foreigners, though serving different political purposes. Maybe a migrating people can learn from parallel societal changes.... Feminism, for example, has sought the liberation of the “second sex” from patriarchal intersectional powers (de Beauvoir, 1989). Women, de Beauvoir writes, experience “everlasting disappointment” in the face of patrimony (p. 213). Likewise, we can argue that the migrating person is always “the second citizen,” never secure in their belonging, remaining the other and vulnerable to deportation. Even with lawful permanent residence and having become a citizen, for example, a person who has come to the US can be deported if found guilty of a drug crime, amongst a list of other offences. *What movement of civic engagement will liberate the migrating person as “the second citizen”—someone easily exploited and often hated, whose individual agency only goes so far, someone who feels perpetually displaced even if they reach perceived success?*

With continued political and economic distress around the world and as climate change fuels new generations of migrating peoples, the need for theological and civic engagement around migration is essential. Sadly, we are witnesses to what Polanyi calls “moral inversion.” As he discusses the collapse of liberal Europe and the rise of Marxism, Polanyi (1997) identifies the mindset of moral inversion as developing “when people pursue moral ideals within a system of thought that denies reality to moral scruples” (p. 234). Moral inversion leads to immoral appeals to a person’s moral passions (p. 232). Russia has shown us her moral inversion toward her neighbor, Ukraine. But so too does the United States, straining under her own border psychology, portray moral inversion.

Any brief topography inevitably leaves important pastoral-theological and other themes unexplored: work and play, marriage and parenting, birth and death, health and illness... Here, I have discussed seven themes common to migrating people’s experience. The themes invite further reflection, for nothing is finish and *klaar*.

Postlude

Immigration and the family histories and identities they determine are complex. My ancestor Johann Jürgen Hammann, for example, was born in 1705 in Staucha (near Dresden, Germany) into a society decimated after the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648) within the Holy Roman Empire. Resisting the rule of Augustus II (1670–1733), Johann Jürgen and two of his brothers, Jakobus and Thomas, fled as Augustus’s military gained the upper hand. Jakobus went to Scotland, Thomas went to what became known as the Thirteen Colonies (the United States), and Johann Jürgen went to the Netherlands. There, he joined the Vereenigde Oost Indiesche Compagnie, the Dutch governmental corporation pivotal to their colonial project, and arrived in the Cape of Good Hope in 1732 on board the *Petronella Alida*. Now named “Jan Hamman,” he worked as a blacksmith in the town of Stellenbosch, where he married Johanna Gildenhuyzen, a devout Dutch Reformed believer, in 1738. With slave workers, they farmed Nietvoorbij (Dutch: “It is not over”), the current research farm of the University of Stellenbosch.

The various identities of Jan are not easily merged. He was a blacksmith in Staucha who became a resistance fighter; he was a displaced refugee who became a colonizing tradesperson; he was a Saxon (German) who became a Dutch citizen; he was dispossessed by a king and became a landowner; he sought his own freedom but kept slaves; he was Johann Jürgen Hammann but became Jan Hamman; he built a large family, but it is believed he

never again had contact with his brothers or family of origin. For modern interpreters, Jan Hamman's conflicting identities and ambivalences raise questions of intersectionality, coloniality, resilience, and more.

Following Jan, I too was 27 years of age when I left South Africa for foreign shores. Born into a lower-middle-class, Christian nationalist family, my railroad administrator father reminded me often that the British killed many of our family members during the Anglo Boer War (1899–1902). The scorched earth policies of the British decimated and bankrupted Hamman family farms. Hamman prisoners of war were among the twenty-eight thousand Boer soldiers sent to St. Helena, Ceylon, and Bermuda. Hamman women and children died alongside thousands of others in the concentration camps the British erected. My father was grateful that the Nationalist government lifted Whites out of poverty. Though my father never questioned why South Africa's Black population was disempowered and marginalized, my mother did so and served Black women in townships, teaching them how to read and make clothes to supplement their income.

My childhood was shaped by Apartheid's segregation and the benefits it afforded White nationalists. Exposed to persons of color through playing sports, I began questioning Apartheid's legitimacy and injustices as a teenager, causing tension between my father and me. My growing awareness became an existential crisis when I was drafted into the Apartheid military at age 16. Finishing high school and going to university avoided the draft, but after 10 years of studies I exhausted my options. Pursuing ordination in the Dutch Reformed church, I faced a denomination that made military service compulsory for their pastors. With tension in my family and trapped by my church, my enlistment day was fast approaching. Since conscription was not an option and I lacked the courage to be jailed, I left for the United States in August 1993, enrolling in a clinical pastoral education program in Connecticut.

The first free elections in South Africa in 1994 removed the military draft the following year. I was about to return to South Africa when I was invited into the doctoral program at Princeton Theological Seminary. New possibilities came my way in 1996 when I won a green card in the Diversity Immigration Visa program (also called the Green Card Lottery). The green card allowed me to accept dual citizenship in 2001. Since then, I have built a life in the United States but have a firm footprint in "the country of my skull," as South African playwright Krog (2007) identifies her birthland.

As many a migrating person will attest, questions of identity—that part of the self that maintains stability and sameness in the face of changing circumstances and life cycles—are difficult to answer. Following Jan Hamman, my various identities too are not easily merged. I'm a White African, a historic paradox; I'm privileged as a White male (with the privileges of leaving South Africa, of education, of financial security, and of systems that serve White men) but impoverished due to living removed from familial and relational webs; I seek to give back to Africa but work to change my local community; I left as a conscientious objector to make a home in a country where White supremacy is openly embraced; I blend into American culture until my accent exposes my otherness. Approaching my third decade in the United States, I am a transcultural person without an established sense of home.

Acknowledgements Polanyi's *Personal Knowledge* celebrates the concept of "conviviality," by which he means the social arrangements that further the pursuit of scientific truth in contrast to those elements that undermine and destroy it (1997, p. 216). Conviviality is found in a scholarly group meeting, and their search for knowledge is made more "effective by a . . . deliberate sharing of experience, and most common by conversation" (p. 216). It demands relationship, trust, and the creation of systems that foster and satisfy intellectual passion. Communities built by migrating people often reflect conviviality as the practical and personal knowledge of how to survive and thrive is passed from one individual or group to the newest arrival.

A conference such as New Directions in Pastoral Theology as a specific disciplinary community reflects Polanyi's conviviality. Through deep relationships of friendship, collegiality, and mutual encouragement, new knowledge is explored and celebrated as we recognize the larger whole needs restoration and renewal. For this group's support over many years and for its members' enriching of this essay, I am grateful.

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