

*Rethinking thinking: Modernity's "other" and the transformation of the university.* Catherine Odora Hoppers and Howard Richards. (2012). Pretoria: University of South Africa. 103 pp. ISBN: 9781868886890.

In this book, Odora Hoppers and Richards consider the following questions: 1) What is thinking?; 2) Why do we need to change the way we understand thinking?; and 3) What constitutes knowledge? The authors argue that there exists a status quo in which western knowledges of the law, economics and science – the great knowledges taught by the university – are “hegemonic” tools, promoting an ideological vision of what is in everyone’s interests that is largely accepted as common sense. This belief, however, is in direct contradiction of the experiences of the vast majority of peoples. Nevertheless, it continues to prevail; therefore, the authors contend that the world university system that promulgates the dominant worldview is in need of a transformation – one that requires “rethinking what universities do” (p. 3).

The introduction of *Rethinking thinking: Modernity's "other" and the transformation of the university* sets the stage for the development of the argument provided by Odora Hoppers and Richards. In subsequent chapters, the authors, therefore, provide examples of the process of rethinking thinking through a re-centering of marginalized knowledges, epistemologies and ontologies and by proposing the re-emergence of Indigenous knowledge systems as equal partners in the hierarchy of knowledges.

The authors provide a genealogy of the progression/regression of the concept of “development” through a discussion of 1) the emergence of the terms “first,” “second,” and “third” world, 2) Joseph Schumpeter’s theory of development, 3) the launch of “underdevelopment” by President Harry S. Truman in 1949 and 4) the subsequent emergence of international development policy. Odora Hoppers and Richards then critique Rostow’s concepts of modernity and modernization asserting that “Rostovian thinking still hypnotizes policy” inducing “everyone to believe that becoming what they are not is a psychological precondition for participating in the glorious future that economic growth ... will bring to everyone” (p. 24). They view this form of development – an economic development which “reaffirm[s] the subordinate position of colonial areas, financially and discursively” – as extremely problematic, thereby calling for a rethinking of thinking on development, appealing for the ethical revisioning of development in terms of “human capacities” (p. 29) and recommending “transformative human development” (p. 30).

Odora Hoppers and Richards extend their critique of economic development and modernity by calling for a “transformation by enlargement” (p. 35). According to the authors, transformation by enlargement necessitates “including modernity’s other” (p. 35) – the term by which they refer to those placed outside of modernity and who are unable to benefit and unwilling to benefit from modernity and economic development – in the process of transformative human development. This call for transformation by enlargement is necessary because it “is not working and is dividing people” (p. 42). The authors, therefore, propose the development of a common vision that all people can agree on in order to collectively overcome the crisis.

The final three chapters are devoted to the development of this common vision. Odora Hoppers and Richards examine the ways in which the historical evolution of the law, economics

and science have worked individually and together to subjugate modernity's other. The authors provide examples through which transformation through enlargement can take place. With regards to the law, the authors contend that the law "constitutes the *basic cultural structure of modern society*" (p. 45). However, the law as currently understood and practiced has its origins in European colonialism. The authors, therefore, contend that the law can be constituted in myriad other ways and illustrate the manner in which *ubuntu* cultural structures have organized and can continue to organize the capacity and livelihood of many African peoples, thereby providing one alternate way forward. Odora Hoppers and Richards are not asking for the dissolution and collapse of Western- Euro- centric epistemologies and ontologies. They are demanding the re-valuation of previously subjugated epistemologies and ontologies and a world in which modernity's other are the equals to those currently in dominant positions. They are demanding that modernity itself be transformed by "learning from its other" (p. 66).

This treatise is a call to action for those who want and require change. It compels readers to view the solutions to modernity as not only possible but necessary for human development. It has been described by Kosheek Sewchurran as "one of the bravest scientific contributions we have had [in South Africa] since 1994." This book explains the historical development of many of the world's current problems in language that is easily accessible to those who can communicate in English.

However, the authors often fail to explain the process through which certain aspects of transformation by enlargement can come to be. While coming together for the common good is a worthy endeavor, is it possible that those who benefit from the subjugation and oppression of peoples will see the necessity for unearthing a common good or could agree on what could constitute the common good. The authors do not sufficiently clarify how this can come about, given that different groups have contradictory opinions on what constitutes the common good and that the most powerful societies tend to value personal liberation and individualism at the expense of common good (Velasquez, Andre, Shanks & Meyer, 1992). This lack of clarity on the part of Odora Hoppers and Richards is partly a result of their homogenization of the peoples of the global North/West and a subsequent lack of acknowledgement that Indigenous knowledge systems would also bring about vital changes for the vast majority of peoples marginalized within western societies. The system as it is does not work for ninety-nine percent of the population of the West, as proven by the Occupy movement and the recession of 2008 and its after effects. Furthermore, the possibility of discovering a common good increases substantially when the vast majority of those who would otherwise not see the validity of such a need become allies in understanding the necessity for rethinking thinking.

This is an ambitious and vital contribution to our understanding of development and education. Odora Hoppers and Richards provide a concise, yet thorough description and critical analysis of the development of the modern university and its role in knowledge construction and valuation. And while I am somewhat skeptical of their vision for the development of a common good and even the possibility that there exists universal truths held by all peoples and societies, the possibility that societies can begin to rethink thinking in order to ensure human and social development offers a solution to the myriad problems facing humanity. Odora Hoppers and Richards offer readers a rare sign of hope that if we all come together, change is possible.

### References

- Velasquez, M., Andre, C., Shanks, T. S. J., & Meyer, M. J. (1992). The common good. *Issues in Ethics*, 5(1). Retrieved from <http://www.scu.edu/ethics/practicing/decision/commongood.html#sthash.g8OlJG1L.dODYR1nr.dpuf>