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Imagination and Homiletics

An Explorative Conversation with
James K.A. Smith and Kate Bruce

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Abstract

The purpose of the present exploratory study is to create a structured place of conversation about the relationship between the concept of imagination and the subject of homiletics. Two theological texts are used as lenses to investigate the relationship; James K. A. Smith's *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* and Kate Bruce's *Igniting the Heart: Preaching and Imagination*.

The many-layered history of imagination is surveyed to identify some helpful definitions of the concept in relationship to homiletics and create a tentative framework. The framework focuses on three aspects: imagination as images in the mind´s eye, imagination as empathy and imagination as social imaginary. A corresponding brief survey of the vast homiletical landscape leads to an identification of three areas of homiletical concerns.

Smith´s and Bruce's texts are analyzed with the help of questions relating to their definitions of imagination, metaphors used and possible implications for homiletical teaching. The answers to these questions are then discussed with the help of the homiletical areas of concern relating to linguistic craft, connected relationships and holistic formation. The language-world used in the homiletical classroom is in focus, leading up to a conversation of the possible strengths and weaknesses of using the concept of imagination in the concrete situation of teaching preaching. The research problem is: *What are some possible strengths and weaknesses of using the concept of imagination in relationship to homiletics?* The four research questions are:

1) How do Smith and Bruce define and use the concept of imagination in relationship to homiletics in *Imagining the Kingdom* and *Igniting the Heart*?

2) How does this relate to the tentative framework of imagination as images in the mind´s eye, empathy and social imaginary?

3) What metaphors do Smith and Bruce use when talking about preaching and which ones do they seem to prefer as the most fruitful and sustainable?

4) What are some possible implications their view on imagination might have for homiletical teaching?

The main conclusions of the present study are first of all that if the concept of imagination is to be valuable, it needs to be thoroughly elucidated, defined and delineated, for example with prefixes. Furthermore, imagination linked to linguistic craft might be helpful when coupled with concrete tools, like for example Bruce's "lyrical voice". Moreover, using

affective imagination as a concept to address the relationship between pastor and congregation might be a strength for the teacher´s own epistemological understanding, but a weakness could possibly be that it is an unfamiliar concept and other, more common, words could be used to signify the same thing. Finally, imagination connected to holistic formation seems to encompass some strength in being clarifying and pointing in the direction of a more embodied epistemology, but a possible weakness is the infirm connection to biblical vocabulary.

Sabbaths 1979: X

Whatever is foreseen in joy

must be lived out from day to day.

Vision held open in the dark

by our ten thousand days of work.

Harvest will fill the barn; for that

the hand must ache, the face must sweat.

And yet no leaf or grain is filled

by work of ours; the field is tilled

and left to grace. That we may reap,

great work is done while we're asleep.

When we work well, a Sabbath mood

rests on our day, and finds it good.

Wendell Berry

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Acknowledgements

A desk is a dangerous place from which to watch the world, said John le Carré. That is true. But a desk can also be a place with a view. New perspectives and sights give new vision. A desk is often a lonely place and writing a study like this is in a sense a lonesome project. But a desk can also be a place of conversations. Conversations with authors and scholars, both living and dead, close by and far away. Working as a homiletician since 2012, these views give me the wider perspectives needed when I am up to my knees in preparing lectures, examining papers, planning courses and writing sermon-feedback to students. Being invited into an extensive conversation is humbling, realising how little one knows, but also encouraging as an orientation and direction that can be found in the wider story. No Master's Thesis is written without help or gifts received from others, and I am greatly in debt to my colleagues, teachers and fellow students who have followed me during this process of writing.

and kind wisdom. His insightful suggestions at the end of my writing definitely improved the unity and structure of this Master´s Thesis.

I am especially grateful for the privilege of having Dr. Roland Spjuth as my advisor. The clarity of his vision and the humble elegance of his character shine through in his patience and perceptive guiding. He has the gift of giving wise counsel in a nutshell. I am thankful for the model Roland offers, being a respected scholar who encourages younger colleagues and sees things in us before we can even see it ourselves.

Finally, I want to thank my family for their support and encouragement throughout the process of writing.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Intrigued by a video that got viral after the terrorist attack in Paris on the 14th of November 2015, I looked into the background of the story.[1] What had happened was that Davide Martello, a young man from Germany, took his grand piano and drove 400 miles with it to Paris. He then brought his black, big instrument to Bataclan Theatre and all the other locations in Paris where the attacks had taken place. And each time he played the same song.

> Imagine there's no countries
>
> It isn't hard to do
>
> Nothing to kill or die for
>
> And no religion too
>
> Imagine all the people
>
> Living life in peace.

There seems to be something about this song that makes people want to sing it when tragedies have happened, at difficult and shocking times. There seems to be something in the words that point beyond what has just happened. Maybe like a vision people can gather around for comfort and a sense of community and belonging. But what is the song really about? Is it not only a feel-good fairy-tale? A dreamy and impossible vision by a drug-using hippie? A flight into fantasy?

Coming from the world of practical theology, and specifically homiletics, I have noticed that imagination is a popular concept. One of the books that started my interest in imagination and preaching many years ago was Walter Brueggemanns *The Prophetic Imagination*. As I read, I had that inextricable experience of knowing that I had stumbled across something significant and momentous. Preaching as prophetic imagination. I also knew that I didn´t understand the depths of what he was talking about, but I was captivated.

As I read other homiletical works I saw that there seemed to be a certain kind of "stretchiness" to the word of imagination. The term seemed often vague enough to include the author´s favourite thoughts. It was a kind of imprecision and vagueness that evoked suspicion on my part. I often found myself wondering, what do they *actually* mean when they talk about imagination and preaching? Is imagination one of these popular words that sound good and evoke mental and emotional pictures, but is actually too imprecise to help us in our concrete

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[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pf9xNdIBGE8. http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/news/paris-attacks-the-story-behind-the-pianist-who-drove-400-miles-to-play-imagine-outside-the-bataclan-a6735786.html Entry 2017.11.02

work of practical theology? Is it a word we season the text with to give it a sense of revelatory, arty or deep air? Imagination is a well-liked and well-used homiletical concept, but in what ways is it helpful or obstructive in the concrete situation of teaching preaching?

1.1 Background and Previous Research

In this introductory chapter we will look at the background, previous research, purpose, significance, limitations and a disposition of the study. Already in 1970, the British philosopher Peter Strawson wrote in his influential article *Imagination and Perception*:

> The uses, and applications, of the terms 'image', 'imagine', 'imagination', and so forth make up a very diverse and scattered family. Even this image of a family seems too definite. It would be a matter of more than difficulty to identify and list the family's members, let alone their relations of parenthood and cousinhood.
> (Strawson 1970:31)

In *Mimesis as Make-Believe* Kendall Walton throws up his hands at the prospect of delineating the notion correctly. After distinguishing a number of instances of imagining, he asks:"What is it to imagine? We have examined a number of dimensions along which imaginings can vary; shouldn't we now spell out what they have in common? —Yes, if we can. But I can't" (Walton 1990:19).

Imagination is a vast and elusive concept. The word imagination is used in many different ways and contexts with different meanings. Trying to map previous research is complicated, as the word imagination is difficult, if not impossible, to define exactly. "There is a general consensus among those who work on the topic that the term *imagination* is used too broadly to permit simple taxonomy" (Liao & Gendler 2019:1).

One contributing factor to the difficulty of creating a comprehensive map of the meanings of imagination is that it is used in many academic disciplines; philosophy, aesthetics, ethics, poetry and religion (Eslinger 1995:46). The term is used with entirely different connotations, like "the ability to think of something not presently perceived, but spatio-temporally real" and "the ability to create works of art that express something deep about the meaning of life" (Stevenson 2003:238). Using the word *imagination* gives associations in all directions. In everyday life the term is sometimes used in contexts such as:"I can´t imagine that they will choose anything but a church-wedding" or "use your imagination to draw your future". Playing and imagination are closely related, even small

children have the ability to create alternatives to the reality around them. Playing ”make-believe” by turning a pine into a cow or a broken glass into a diamond. Or when a child is listening to their parent reading a story and a whole different world is evoked in the child's mind and body, we call it imagining. Imagination in this sense is the creative ability to have pictures in the mind without any direct input from the senses. The concept of imagination is sometimes used in the sense: ”I can´t imagine what they are going through”, akin to empathy, the ability to feel for and with someone else. Imagination is also closely related to interpretation, as in the ability to see an ordinary meal of potatoes and fish as manna, or a time of suffering and bewilderment as a journey in the wilderness, or those wonderful shiny shoes as a piece of a golden calf.[2]

Imagination in relationship to preaching is sometimes connected with revelation, sacramentality and prophesy, a divine gift of "seeing through" or seeing with an "inner spiritual eye". Imagination is then the capacity to perceive the hidden in what is right before our own eyes. It is, with the words of Craig Dykstra "the capacity to see beneath the surface of things, to get beyond the obvious and the merely conventional, to note the many aspects of any particular situation, to attend to the deep meanings of things" (Bass & Dykstra 2008:48). Hans Boersma investigates and wants to embody this in his book *Sacramental Preaching*, *Sermons on the Hidden Presence of Christ*, well captured by Eugene H. Peterson in the foreword: "So we are speaking of an incarnational imagination, a Jesus-soaked imagination, a sacramental imagination so that every truth becomes a lived truth, lived in the homes and workplaces that our congregations face us with every time we preach a sermon." (Peterson in Boersma 2016:ix).

Imagination can also be the possibility to re-frame and re-narrate our history by placing it within another story, like the biblical, or the psychoanalytical. Sometimes the word is used interchangeably with creativity. Imagination is sometimes used as a word to describe the centre of human perception, understanding and interpretation (Bass & Dykstra 2008:48). This imagination can be described as a way of being in the world, a person's way of experiencing, perceiving, choosing, desiring and hoping, or with Charles Taylors definition of social imaginary, a shared take on reality, constructing meaning and significance, a take-for-granted way of sensing and understanding the world (Taylor 2004:23).

As a teacher, I am always on the lookout for pictures, images, words and concepts that can help me in the classroom to be more pedagogical and create a space for knowledge, practicing and deepening learning. As I taught in practical theology, and especially

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[2] For biblical references see for example: Exodus 32:1-20, 16:1-35

homiletics, I was searching for language and concepts that could hold both the skills and handiwork of preaching, the concrete and often detail-oriented skills in the actual construal of the sermon, as well as the more abstract question of the spaciousness of the preaching, the vibrancy, the aliveness and invitation to mystery. I agree with the homiletician Thomas Long who claims that the event of preaching is so multifaceted and comprehensive that we will never understand it fully, but nonetheless we need to take a stab at naming what it is (Long 2005:15). Craig Dykstra writes: "The teachers' task is to find words, and help others find words, which actually do clarify what is going on" (Dykstra 1981:13). So even though it is hard, and ultimately impossible, to name all that is going on, we need to try to find robust concepts, and this study is an attempt to take a closer look at the word imagination in relationship to teaching preaching.

1.2 Purpose of the Study and Research Problem

The focus of the present study is the relationship between imagination and homiletics. The purpose of this exploratory study is to realize an agenda for this conversation between the concept of imagination and homiletics by searching for definitions, identifying areas of concern and categorize frameworks. The two theological texts that are employed as lenses in this exploratory research are James K. A. Smiths *Desiring the Kingdom* and Kate Bruce's *Igniting the Heart*. The research problem formulation took form during the research process and reads:

What are some possible strengths and weaknesses of using the concept of imagination in relationship to homiletics?

This broad enquiry is narrowed by four research questions:

1) How do Smith and Bruce define and use the concept of imagination in relationship to homiletics in *Imagining the Kingdom* and *Igniting the Heart*?

2) How does this relate to the tentative framework of imagination as images in the mind´s eye, empathy and social imaginary?

3) What metaphors do Smith and Bruce use when talking about preaching and which ones do they seem to prefer as the most fruitful and sustainable?

4) What are some possible implications their view on imagination might have for homiletical teaching?

By surveying the history of imagination and identifying some of the definitions of the concept, a tentative framework of imagination is created with attention to questions relating

more particularly to homiletics. The working definition of imagination in this work is captured in this tentative framework of imagination.

Imagination and preaching is a quite well-explored area as we shall see, but imagination and homiletics is a much more scarcely researched area. Reference to specific previous research will be made throughout the study. Through a brief survey of the homiletical landscape some contemporary homiletical concerns regarding homiletical linguistic craft, relationships between pastor and congregation and human formation are identified. The homiletical concerns are then related to the concept of imagination as it is described in *Desiring the Kingdom* and *Igniting the Heart*. The concluding discussion looks at some possible strengths and weaknesses with using imagination-language in homiletic practice.

1.3 Disposition

My initial critical questions about the use of imagination-vocabulary in homiletics led to an unfolding process where questions were recalibrated and theoretical frameworks emerged. Each chapter has an introduction and a summary that briefly renders the content of the chapter.

Chapter 1 consists of an introduction with a background account of the research area chosen, research questions, the limits of this study and the researcher's entry into the subject.

Chapter 2 describes the methodological perspectives and concerns.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to a brief investigation into the historical and biblical use and definitions of the term imagination, resulting in a framework of imagination. Given the historical variety and the slippery meaning of the notion of imagination, three aspects or kinds of imagination, are chosen out of their importance for the homiletical perspective. The three aspects are separate, but still intertwined, as there are no clear boundaries between them. The first aspect is *imagination as images in the mind´s eye*, which has to do with the productive imagination, creating images without direct sensory data. The second aspect is *imagination as empathy*, the affective side of imagination. The third aspect is *imagination as social imaginary*, the deep orientation, worldview or ground patterns in human society. These aspects are used as tools when organising and analysing Smiths and Bruce's text respectively.

Chapter 4 consists of a brief description of the homiletical landscape, some historical processes, important influences and Longs levels of sermon, congregation and preacher. Through an effort to discern the challenges and opportunities facing the homiletical conversation today, three homiletical concerns were inductively chosen while investigating the contemporary homiletical field. The results were organised and analysed with the help of

these three areas of concern. The first area relates to how to talk about *homiletical linguistic craft*, the second area relates to *connected relationships* between pastor and congregation and the third area relates to *holistic formation* in the homiletical classroom.

Chapter 5 presents the research results concerning Kate Bruce's text: *Igniting the Heart*. The research results are organized and mapped using the four research questions and describe Bruce view of imagination as images in the mind´s eye, empathy and social imaginary in relationship to sermon, congregation and preacher.

Chapter 6 presents the equivalent research results regarding James K.A. Smith´s text: *Desiring the Kingdom.*

Chapter 7 discusses implications for homiletical teaching, concerning linguistic craft, connected relationships and holistic formation. Some of the possible strengths and weaknesses of using the concept of imagination in relationship to homiletics are analysed and discussed.

1.4 Overview chart

What are some possible strengths and weaknesses of using *the concept of imagination in relationship to homiletics?*	
Tentative Framework of Imagination	**Homiletical Concerns**
Imagination as images in the mind´s eye	*Linguistic craft*
Imagination as empathy	*Connected relationships*
Imagination as social imaginary	*Holistic formation*
1) How do Smith and Bruce define and use the concept of imagination in relationship to homiletics in *Imagining the Kingdom* and *Igniting the Heart*? 2) How does this relate to the tentative framework of imagination as images in the mind´s eye, empathy and social imaginary?	3) What metaphors do Smith and Bruce use when talking about preaching and which ones do they seem to prefer as the most fruitful and sustainable? 4) What are some possible implications their view on imagination might have for homiletical teaching?

The aspects in the tentative framework of imagination are used as tools to organise and analyse Smiths and Bruce's text respectively. The homiletical concerns relate to the search for adequate homiletical language and images concerning firstly methods, form and technique,

secondly relationship and interdependence between sermon, preacher, worship and congregation and thirdly the formative aim and role of preaching.

1.5 Significance and Limitations of the Study

This research is explorative and tentative by nature with no aspirations to give an exhaustive or complete answer to questions concerning the relationship between imagination and homiletics. Hopefully, the contribution lays in making visible some of the questions arising when the concept of imagination meets homiletical theory and practise and in suggesting some of the ways that imagination might be helpful and unhelpful in relationship to homiletics.

The tentative framework of aspects of imagination in relationship to homiletics that I present could possibly be part of the contribution of this study. The study is limited by the scope of the work to only two texts, several others by the authors could have been included. At one point I thought about including analyses of actual sermons by Smith and Bruce, but the limits set by the scale of this master's project made that unattainable.

1.6 Summary

This study originated from an interest in how the diverse concept of imagination was and could be used in the context of preaching, and more specifically, homiletics. As a practising homiletician, reading about imagination, I saw that the word was used with a broad spectrum of definitions and this caught my interest and curiosity. This study unfolded during a process of recalibrating questions, scope and lenses connected to imagination and homiletics. In this introductory chapter I have tried to paint a background and articulate the purpose, significance, limitations and disposition of the study.

Chapter 2. Method and Material

2. 1 Introduction

The prospect of this study is to investigate with an explorative approach some of the possible strengths and weaknesses with using imagination-language in homiletical teaching. The concept of *imagination* is looked at in a historical and philosophical broader sense, and then narrowed down to imagination in the homiletical context as it can be studied in the work of

James K.A Smith and Kate Bruce. This chapter outlines the method, research perspectives, material, role and the pre-understanding of the researcher.

2. 2 Method and Research Perspectives

The homiletical language is in the forefront of this study. The questions are not primarily concerned with the ontological reality, but with the possible strengths and weaknesses of using the concept of and the word imagination when teaching preaching. As Jerome Bruner writes in *Culture of Education*, all education is situated in culture and culture provides the symbol system, that is to say language, by which the meaning-making process takes shape (Bruner 1996:43). This culturalist view of learning affirms that meaning-making is filled with ambiguity, perspectives and negotiations connected to language, particularly visible when trying to define words.

As Scott M. Gibson illustrate it in *Training Preachers, A Guide to teaching Homiletics*: "The teacher of homiletics comes to grip with the perspectival nature of learning at the moment of trying to define "preach" or "preacher" (Gibson 2018:58).[3] Teaching is among other things a way of naming and giving vocabulary to articulate, reframe and analyse experiences.[4] Returning to Craig Dykstras quote: "The teacher's task is to find words, and help others find words, which actually do clarify what is going on" (Dykstra 1981:132). He argues that some language reflect reality in a more full and complex way than others and teachers have to be painstaking and meticulous when choosing language and metaphors in the classroom. When the teacher settles for "unhappy" linguistic, as he calls it, it makes it harder to see the fullness and complexity of human life and processes (Dykstra 1981:68).[5]

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[3] For a assessment of the history of anthropology of education, see the compilation by George Spindler in *Education and Cultural Process: Anthropological Approaches*.

[4] For an example of how a new concept can name an experience, see Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoungs description of how the word pusillanimity (smallness of soul), in the works by Thomas Aquinas, lead to an aha-moment and re-framing of reality. DeYoung, in Smith, D. & Smith, J. *Teaching and Christian Practises.*p.26-27

[5] Dykstra compares the juridical-developmental account with visional ethics in his book *Vision and Character*, *A Christian Educator´s Alternative to Kohlberg,* where he is searching for new language to talk about changes that takes place in human moral life. Dykstra writes: "I believe, therefore, that in the use of `development´ we have settled for an unhappy metaphor. We need to work out other metaphors that will help us to think more comprehensively about changes that take place in the moral life" Dykstra continues to explain what other words he has been using: "I have used "growth" and "progress" as my substitutes, but I am not entirely happy with these either. They do not have some of the connotations that development does, but growth may imply too much of an unfolding of what is already there and progress may connote straightforward movement toward a goal. Perhaps we, as Christian educators, would be better of using words that connected our concern here with more traditional and biblical understandings, such as "pilgrimage", "formation" or even "sanctification". In the end, however, it may be best not to choose just one, but to use several in order to indicate the multiple aspects of what we are after, hoping that, as a result, we will all better be able to see our moral journeys in greater fullness and complexity" (Dykstra 1981:68).

My focus is not on the sermon itself but on the *teaching* about the sermon, the congregation and the preacher. First with the focus of definition, trying to create a framework of imagination and then a tentative exploration of some possible advantages and disadvantages, strengths and weakness with using imagination-language in homiletic practice. The problem formulation is: *What are some possible strengths and weaknesses of using the concept of imagination in relationship to homiletics?*

The method used in this literature-based study is text analysis. Considering the challenges of text analysis as a method, like the perils of misinterpretation and misapprehension (Johannessen & Tufte 2003:105), the method still seemed to be best suited for the task at hand. Interviews with teacher of homiletics or classroom observations would have been interesting, but were not considered to serve the aim of this study as well as a close reading of two texts written by theologians who has worked comprehensively with the concept of imagination.

As the term and concept of imagination in relationship to homiletics does not have clear-cut and agreed upon definition, I decided that it would be more useful to lay a ground in this study with a more exploratory and descriptive research approach. As Robert Stebbins write in his *Exploratory Research in the Social Sciences*, exploratory method is especially useful when there´s definitional disarray concerning the concept studied (Stebbins 2001:21). Exploratory, or formulative, research is primarily inductive and has as its objective to gather information that will help define problems and areas of concern. Stebbins uses the metaphor of setting and realizing an agenda for a meeting. "Agendas are normally established in advance of the get-together and consist of a number of points to be considered there, each of which can potentially generate discussion and new ideas not previously weighed." (Stebbins 2001:18).

This study is explorative in the sense that it is trying to define imagination in relationship to homiletics, and systematically search for and tentatively evaluate areas where the concept might be helpful. This limited exploratory research is engaging critically and constructively with different aspects and definitions, looking at, describing and evaluating concepts and ideas from different perspectives. Explorative studies are tentative and should not be used to draw distinct conclusions and does not claim extensive reach, the results of this study would therefore have to be tested and studied in more empirical studies for more definite conclusions.

I hope that the definitions, frames and results of this study can be used and tested later in other empirical research, for example action research in the homiletical classroom. The

homiletical concerns that were identified and described in chapter four, rose up from the systematic exploration as well as my own experience as a teacher of homiletics (Stebbins 2001:53). This method requires that practical theology is in dialogue with and is enriched by other scientific perspectives. The concept of imagination has a long and broad history with roots and branches in philosophy, psychology, literature theory, the arts and many other disciplines, I have thus chosen to make a wide exposition, with both philosophical, historical and theological homiletical perspectives. This subject clearly belongs within the practical theology, but does require a more extended approach of investigation at the outset.

The aim of this study is not just do describe two text, but also to explore some possible strengths and weaknesses with using this concept in the light of these texts. Such a task implies, as Swinton and Mowat suggests in their presentation of practical theology, "a method that is hermeneutic, critical, correlation and theological" (Swinton & Mowat 2006:76). With *hermeneutical* they want to stress that interpretation is at the heart of knowledge and that we always read the world from our own perspective and understand differently because of context, echoing Bruner's views mentioned above.[6] The exploratory method used in this study is inherently hermeneutical. A *critical* method is a hermeneutically suspicious process, because researchers have to do with a flawed world. The object of study, as well as the researcher's method and analyses, is taunted by faults and errors. I have tried to keep an awareness of these limitations as I have been conducting this study, knowing very well that results and discussions would have looked different if another person, with other questions, other backgrounds and pre-understandings would have read the texts of this study. The results are therefore presented as preliminary and provisional. By *correlation* they mean that it has to relate to three different perspectives at the same time; the situation at hand, the Christian tradition and knowledge from other disciplines.[7] This study invites both the philosophical, historical and theological perspectives. By *theological* they mean that the method should relate to the "unfolding eschatology of the gospel narrative" (Swinton & Mowat 2006:76). This study is guided by theological method in the sense that it relates to the Bible, the homiletical tradition and current pedagogical questions in theological seminaries.

These terminologies will also be used in the final chapter as a tool to look at and evaluating the possible helpfulness of the concept of imagination in the homiletical classroom.

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[6] see also Thagaard 2003:38

[7] Paul Allen stresses the importance of relating research from different disciplines. He is not launching a new method, but he stresses that the question of theological method will always return as a major question for theologians, and he gives some suggestions towards a theological method that is encouraged to work integrated in interdisciplinary hermeneutics. Paul L. Allen, *Theological Method: a Guide for the Perplexed*.

Critical in the sense of searching for critical objections from other disciplines. Correlational in the sense of relevance for contemporary challenges and concerns in the homiletical conversation. Theological in the sense of significance to grasp, name and enable deeper theological understanding.

2.3 Material

From the initial interest in the relationship between imagination and homiletics two contemporary theologians were chosen. James K. A. Smith's text was selected because of his influential position in the areas of liturgy, culture and formation. He has a clear pedagogical alignment and orientation as his ultimate purpose is to re-vision Christian education, in a broader sense, as a formative process. His use of Charles Taylor's notion of social imaginary and the understanding that is embedded in practices also contributed to the decision to use his text. Bruce´s text was selected because of the focus on imagination and the concrete skills of preaching. The Canadian professor James K. A. Smith and the British Anglican priest Kate Bruce is more thoroughly introduced in chapter 5, but it is worth mentioning here that Smiths entrance is through philosophy and *Desiring the Kingdom* is the first volume of three that presents a comprehensive theology of culture, liturgy, education and formation. It would surely have been appealing to include all three volumes, but because of the limitation of the scope of this study, the material was mainly restricted to *Desiring the Kingdom,* where his position is clearly stated and explained in a comprehensive way.

Bruce´s entrance is through homiletic, with a clear interest in and favouring of imagination as a concept, as shown by the title of her thesis *The Vital Importance of the Imagination in the Contemporary Preaching Event.* A delimitation to note is that Bruce´s thesis is not included in the study, because of the limitations in range of a master's thesis as the one at hand. The material used in this thesis has been chosen based on three criteria:

1) It treats the question of the relationship between imagination and preaching (even though Smith does not explicitly focus on this).

2) It has a pedagogical direction towards theological education and the homiletical classroom

3) It works with different definitions of imagination.

The material differs in aim and influence which creates some tension and has the disadvantage of making comparison a somewhat knotty undertaking, and the advantage of giving new perspectives and creating novel conversations between philosophical, ecclesiological culture-analysis and the concrete craft of sermons, in the homiletical

classroom. The other material is mostly monographs that treat either imagination or homiletics in general. Some scholarly articles are discussed, mostly in relation to more comprehensive works.

2.4 The Role and Pre-understanding of the Researcher

The researcher collect, view, analyzes, and report with different lenses and degrees of sensitivity. As a researcher it is not possible to stand free from emotions, judgments and prospect, there is always a frame of reference (Sjöström 2011:83, Ejvegård 2003:19). This frame of reference relates to the researcher´s background, previous education, experiences, culture, expectations and habitats, what Hans-Georg Gadamer calls precognition (Sjöström, 2011:83). Researcher identity impacts research decisions, as the researcher is the instrument.

Reflexivity about self-understanding and responsible acknowledgment of where the researcher is situated is essential. Even though Eileen R Campbell-Reed writes about reflexivity in relationship to theological ethnography, and not text analysis, her claim holds true that "when it comes to reflexivity about my self-understanding, there remains an enormous amount of hiddenness in who I am, which cannot be reduced to essence or captured in words" (Ideström & Stangeland Kaufman 2018:80).

As a teacher of homiletics, I have a personal relationship with the subject, some experience of teaching about imagination in homiletical courses and have been intrigued, fascinated and puzzled by the concept of imagination in relationship to homiletics. I am interested in questions concerning the guiding concepts and metaphors for the act of preaching, which is a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon (Sundberg 2008:11). I am also concerned about the range and choice of metaphors, pictures and theories used to describe and think about the essence, craft and raison d'être of preaching in the homiletical classroom.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has outlined the method, research perspectives, disposition and material that have been used in this study. The reasons for why these texts were chosen, the precognition of the researcher and the ground premises for the hermeneutical work have been stated.

Chapter 3. Imagination

As a way to prepare for a conversation, or with the words of Stebbin, setting and realizing an agenda for a meeting (Stebbins 2001:21), the two areas of imagination and homiletics will be explored by brief expositions in the following two chapters. Chapter 3 gives some historical, biblical and philosophical perspectives on the concept of imagination and its different meanings. This will result in a tentative framework of imagination which will hopefully clarify and delineate the definitional disarray concerning imagination.

3.1 Introduction

Imagination derives from the Latin word *imaginationem (*nominative *imaginatio)*, from *imaginare* – to form a mental picture or image (from *imago* – an image, a likeness). In old French *imaginacion* meant "concept, mental picture, hallucination". The corresponding Greek word is *phantasia* (Engell 1993:566). In his profound analysis of the concept of imagination, *The Wake of Imagination, Toward a Postmodern Culture* the philosopher Richard Kearney takes the readers on a trip through the history of imagination and he will be our main guide in the following historical overview.

3.2 Historical Background

The scope of this paper does not include the task of giving an exhaustive account of imagination theory and the history of imagination, but I will try to show briefly some of the ideas that have folded into the concept over the centuries. The aim is trying to do something akin to a helicopter trip over the history of imagination, zooming in on some strands of thoughts and themes that connect directly or indirectly with homiletics.

3.2.1 The Ancient Hebraic Culture

Starting with premodern narratives, Kearney states that: "The story of imagination is deeply informed by the ancient biblical heritage..." (Kearney1988:38). Acknowledging the polysemantic nature of imagination, and the gulf of time and culture between us and the Hebraic culture, Kearney undertakes to examine some possible Hebrew roots. The Hebraic term most frequently linked with imagination is יֵצֶר *yetser*. Kearney argues that this word originates from יצר *ytsr* which means to create. The verb *ytsr* was among other things used as

the technical word for the potter's work, and also to form and fashion in a more general sense. It was frequently used of God's forming of nature and of man, and of his planning or purposing. In *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible* we find the following definition:

> The Hebrew word *yetser* for which the RSV retains the translation
> 'imagination' in two places (Gen. 6:5; 8:21) does indeed seem to
> mean the power of forming mental images, but presumably also as a
> prelude to action, and in three of the five instances of the KJV obviously
> a bad action. In only two passages (I Chr. 28:9 and 29:18) does the
> English word has a good, or at least a neutral, sense. Here, as in Deut. 31:21,
> The RSV translates "purposes" or "plans". In the later rabbinic view the
> word *yetser* was taken to mean "impulse" and the "good impulse"
> and the "bad impulse" was elements in the human personality.
> (1962:685)

Yetser seems to be an ability to form mental images and also a creative power or impulse, an inclination to imitate God's own creation. While the Hellenic culture discuss imagination primarily from the point of view of cognition (epistemology), the Hebraic concept of the *yetser* is primarily concerned with the ethical aspects, with emphasis on man's free choice between good and evil (Kearney 1988:52). In some instances *yetser* is neutral, or slightly positive, as in I Chr. 29:18[8] "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the imagination (*yetser* יצר)of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee" (KJV), but the emphasis seems to be on the negative sides, like in Gen 6:5[9]"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination (*yetser* יצר) of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (KJV).

The Hebraic concept of imagination in the term *yetser* seems to connote a neutral capacity to creatively imitate Gods creation, but this capacity contains an ethical choice between the good and the evil yetser. The Jewish thinker Eric Fromm writes in his commentary on the narratives of the Old Testament *You Shall be as God*:

> The noun yetser means 'form, 'frame', 'purpose' and with reference to the mind,
> 'imagination' or 'device'. The term yetser thus means 'imaginings' (good or evil)…
> The problem of good and evil arises only when there is imagination. Furthermore, man

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[8] In NIV version: "Lord, the God of our fathers Abraham, Issac and Israel, keep these **desires** (*yetser)* and thoughts in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you"

[9] NIV version The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every **inclination** (*yetser)* of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.

can become more evil and more good because he feeds his imagination with thoughts of evil or good. They grow precisely because of that specifically human quality— imagination.

(Fromm 1966:126)

To conclude, Kearney describe how *yetser* is depicted in terms of four properties, the first being *mimetic*; a human imitation of the divine act of creation. The second being *ethical*, a choice between what is good and what is evil. The third being *anthropological*; an activity proper to man which differentiates him from both a higher divine order and a lower animal order. And the fourth being *historical*; a horizon of future possibilities, to be able to imagine something different than what is at hand opens up the freedom to choose, to "transcend what exists in the direction of what might exist" (Kearney 1998:42,52-53).

3.2.2 The Hellenistic Culture

The biblical story of Adam's fallen imagination finds its closest Greek equivalent in the myth of Prometheus, a pre-philosophical narrative of how man first acquired the power to shape his world, to be capable of transforming nature into culture. Prometheus steals fire from the gods and gives it to humans. The power over the flames enables the humans to imagine life in a new way, and out of that transform their world, which means to encroach on the prerogatives of the gods. "With the use of this stolen fire, man was able to invent his own world. The stigma of theft was thus attached to imagination, understood broadly as that Promethean foresight which enabled man to imitate the gods" (Kearney 1998:79-80).

In both the Prometheus and the biblical Babel narrative, humans are trespassing on powers that properly belong to God (or the gods). The concept of imagination in these stories has a sense of rebellion to them, a fight against the boundaries God has set up, something Paul Ricœur emphasizes when he describes the basic trait of the Hebraic imagination in *The Symbolism of Evil* (Ricœur 1967:233).The imagination is seen as a battle field between the human and the divine worlds.

So, what did the Greeks have to say about imagination? As it turns out, quite a lot. Plato (428-348 BC) makes groundbreaking work by presenting the first properly philosophical categories and formulations of imagination. He took the theme of imagination from divine and mythic drama and created the first systematic critical account of imagination, a concept of the nature and function of *phantasy* (Kearney 1998:79). Important to observe is the shift from

the pre-modern ethical emphasis to the Hellenistic stress on the epistemological.[10] Before we continue we must once again take notice of the words we are using, since the word the Greeks were using, *phantasma,* also has a sense of "appearance" or "how things appear" to it. With this in mind let us look at Plato´s view of imagination.

What is the relationship between images and reality? For Plato, reason alone has access to the divine *Ideas*, reality in other words. He makes a clear distinction between the reasoning faculty that can *know* the truth and the faculty of imagination that can only *mimic* the appearance of things, in a passive and reflective way. Imagination cannot create anything new (Engell 1993:567). This leads to a kind of suspicion on the part of Plato in relationship to poetry and painting. These activities are inferior, as all imaginative acts, because they will never be more than copies of the original and creative acts of the gods (Kearney 1998:88). Plato's critique of the artistic imagination is quite fierce, and has five points of accusations, the first being ignorance, the second non-didacticism, the third immorality, the fourth irrationalism and the fifth and last, idolatry (Kearney 1998:98).[11]

What about the other founding father of Greek philosophy, Aristotle (384-322 BC), what is his description of imagination? For Plato the chief question concerning imagination was truth and falsehood, he was interested in the epistemological assessment of imagination. Aristotle on the other hand shifted the terrain of investigations from the metaphysical to a more psychological level (Kearney 1998:106). Aristotle coined the classical definition of imagination as a: "mental reproduction of sensory experience" in his book *De anima*. This means that imagination registers sensory impressions through perception. Images are mental representations. What we see in Aristotle's treatment of *phantasia* is "a transition from an idealist to a realist epistemology" (Kearney 1998:106).

The difference in relationship to Plato is that the emphasis is now placed on the role of the image as a *mental intermediary* between sensation and reason, or sense and intellect, and not as an imitation of the divine. For Aristotle imagination is something that plays a constant role in our perception, and thus contributes to rational thinking, rather than "seducing the mind" the way Plato sees it. The legitimate and important function of the mental image in humans is to *represent reality to reason* as faithfully as possible. "If the draughtsman of

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[10] Kearney states that: "whereas the Hellenic culture treats imagination primarily from the point of view of cognition, the singular originality of the Hebraic concept of the yetser resides in its emphasis on man's free choice between good and evil" (Kearney 1998:52).

[11] Kearney writes that Plato's view of images and imagination, whether it concerns the mimetic phantasies of the artist or the divine visions of inspired seers, is that it is only legitimate to the extent that it acknowledges that it is an imitation rather than an original, that it is ultimately subordinate to reason and that it serves the interests of the divine Good as absolute origin of truth. If human imagination doesn´t acknowledges this, it is to be criticized (Kearney 1998:105).

imagination dares to break his contract with the rational master, he is at once condemned to error" (Kearney 1998:113). Plato and Aristotle agree that imagination must always remain subservient to reason. For both of them imagination remains largely a reproductive rather than a productive activity, a servant more than a master of meaning, an imitation rather than origin.

3.2.3 The Medieval Culture

During the Medieval period, there were no significant differences in the conceptions of the imagination from those passed down from the ancient Hebrew and Greek traditions. The Church Father Augustine (354-430 AD),[12] who lived during the end of the Roman Empire, considers imagination with the same distrust as the Hebrew and Platonic texts. He agrees with Plato that imagination is mostly a hindrance to true philosophical contemplation and also a threat to spiritual life. Augustine's theory of imagination principally conforms to the schema of 'mimetic' representation. The image, no matter how interiorized, continues to refer to some original reality beyond itself. The imagination cannot create truth out of itself or declare any status of originality. Novelty is the prerogative of the divine. "And so we find that even when Augustine is prepared to acknowledge a role for imagination in prophecy, he leaves us in no doubt that such a role is permissible only on the condition that our images are meticulously supervised by reason" (Kearney 1998:117-118). For Augustine, imagination is, at best, the humble servant of a higher intellect. The only true 'image of God' was Christ.

The Franciscan monk and theologian Bonaventura (1217 or 1221- 1274), accepts that imagination can sometimes be useful, but only if it carries the mind and heart towards God. Imagination must be kept firmly under the control and leash of reason, otherwise it will lead people from God instead of towards God (Kearney 1998:124). Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), greatly influenced by Aristotle, considers the imagination to be a kind of mediator between mind and body. Imagination passes up images from perception to the reason and the intellect then distil these images into abstract ideas. The imagination is still to be distrusted as it is a particularly fragile part of the mind, vulnerable to confusing its images with reality. Aquinas writes that: "Demons are known to work on men's imagination, until everything is other than it is" (*Summa Theologiae*, quoted in Kearney 1998:147).

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[12] Augustine is usually not placed within the medieval era but rather the Early Church, and his death in 430 AD can be seen as part of the transition (or the fall of the Roman Empire in 476 AD or the Council of Chalcedon 451). Some historians argue that the medieval period, in a church-historic perspective, begins in the period 380 to 390 AD when Christianity becomes state religion. I have followed Kearneys headings where Augustine belongs to the medieval period.

3.2.4 The Enlightenment Culture

For the Enlightenment philosophers, the imagination was an obstacle that needed to be overcome by reason in the search for truth. The French philosopher and mathematician René Descartes (1596-1650) makes it clear that imagination has no significant role to play in his truth-searching: "This power of imagination which I possess is in no way necessary to my essence ... for although I did not possess it I should still remain the same that I now am" (cited in Klottrup & Egan 1992:14). During this period one can also see how close the concept of "the soul" and "imagination" was. As Egan writes: "Another reason for the lack of fuss about this commonplace capacity was due to the more profound and meaningful experiences that we today associate with imagination being then associated with the concept of the soul. But once the centrality of the soul to people's conceptions of themselves began to wane, so imagination began to 'grow into the place it vacated' "(Klottrup & Egan 1992:6). Creativity and meaning, areas earlier associated and put in the soul, were now more and more associated with the imagination.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, there was a watershed in the history of the idea of imagination. The classical view of imagination that was constrained to a kind of intermediary faculty between sense perception and reason changed drastically. The classical metaphor used to describe this shift is the transformation from *mirror* to *lamp*. Leaving the old picture of imagination and art functioning as a mirror reflecting external reality and moving into the new image of a shining lamp which"projects its own internally generated light onto things" (Kearney 1998:155).[13]

How was this drastic change achieved? The Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711-1776) played an important role in this shift. Hume's question was; how can it be that even if our perception of the world is always changing and partial, that which is delivered to our minds is still stable and constant images? How is that possible? Hume reluctantly made the conclusion that this role at the very core of our mind's functioning was performed by the imagination. And from there came a turn towards the"productive imagination", a creative power in its own right (Warnock 1976:16).

The philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and the German Idealists in the late 18th and 19th century also contributed to the recognition of the productive and inventive imagination. Kant went further than Hume, "first, by demonstrating that imagining was not

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[13] For a more thorough explanation, see for example M. H Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971)

merely a 'reproduction' of some given reality (the fallacy of imitation) but an original 'production' of human consciousness; second, by showing that the image was not a static 'thing' (lat. *res*) deposited in memory (the fallacy of reification) but a dynamic creative act; and third, by establishing that the image was not just a mediating courier between the divided spheres of the lower 'body' and the higher 'soul' (the fallacy of dualism), but an inner transcendental unity which resists this very duality" (Kearney 1998:155). Kant was also interested in the relationship between the imagination and the "unspeakable", things like infinite space, endless series of number and eternity, things that fill humans with complex emotions, such as wonder and a sense of the sublime (Warnock, 1976:63).

3.2.5 The Romantic Culture

In the same tradition as Kant, and Hume before him, William Wordsworth (1770-1850) and Samuel Coleridge (1875-1912) and the other romantic poets gave imagination a central and unifying role, essential to recognition, memory and recall. The Enlightenment philosophers sought to make a divorce between reason and imagination, but Coleridge, himself living and working in the midst of this process, reacted against this mechanical and materialist view of the world. He "wanted to challenge the philosophers on their own ground and show that the insights of imagination are insights into reality itself" (Guite 2012:145).

Wordsworth realised that the consequences of Kant´s "Copernican Revolution" is that imagination never merely copies the world or translate perceptions to us, it is a faculty constantly active and creative, actually shaping the world we perceive (Eslinger 1995:47). But not only that. Romantic poets and critics considered the imagination to be the *chief* creative faculty. They argue that it has a synthetic and even what might be called a "magical" power. It is responsible for invention and originality, it is the prime agent of all human perception, identified with genius, inspiration, visionary power and prophecy (Engell 1993:567). As Coleridge writes: "The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM" (Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Ch. XIII). In short, imagination is the hero of the day.

For Coleridge, imagination is related to the divine creativity. The *image of God* in humans is identified as the creative imagination, especially visible in the artist's poetic imagination. How then is *poetic* imagination different from *ordinary* imagination? The poetic imagination is a more intense expression of the same capabilities that people experience in everyday life. The poet has an ability to be more affected by absent things, to be moved and formed by experiences and memories that are not possible to experience with the senses, but

is still vividly present by the imagination. To imagine can then be described as construing images as a kind of faded perception. The poet is someone who is gifted with a "livelier sensibility", someone who can hear memories of sound unheard of by others, someone who can see memories of things and experiences unseen by others. For Wordsworth the poet possesses a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present (Eslinger 1995:48). The poet is striving to find that "lost vision", a purity and power of perception, experience and feelings.[14]

The poet can use both the *objective* and the *subjective* side of imagination. The objective side of imagination has to do with the power and ability to "bring near" objects of perception as a memory, as in: "I can remember how she looked at me that last summer". The subjective side of imagination has the ability to bring to mind sublime feelings and things that ordinary or mundane perception cannot present to humans alone (Kearney 1998:138-139). The imagination has an ability to evoke situations, bring to mind things and feelings not previously brought to mind by perception (Eslinger 1995:48). This is something new, to ascribe imagination the ability to transcend the normal experiences we have through the senses.

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), the British language philosopher who sought to combine the best of eighteenth-century Enlightenment thought with Romantic philosophy, claimed that: "the imaginative emotion which an idea, when vividly conceived, excites in us is not an illusion but a fact, as real as any other qualities of objects " (cited in Warnock, 1976:206). But what about reason? Wordsworth wrote that reason and imagination were not at all mutually exclusive, or even incompatible. He declared that imagination was nothing other than reason in her most exalted mood, a way to reach understanding and knowledge, without being in conflict with reason. For Wordsworth, the imaginative artist can help humans to reach truth and reality no less than the scientist.

3.2.6 The Modern Period

One of the twentieth-centuries philosophers that have written extensively about imagination is the French author and philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980). Inspired by the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) he voiced the idea that imagination is an intentional act of consciousness rather than a thing in consciousness. This means that

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[14] When someone who is not a poet hears a poem for example, the words evoke and talk to the less distinct and "less brilliant memories of their experiences" (Eslinger 1995:48).

imagination is a *way* of being conscious of the world. For Sartre, the imagination has capacity to intentionally create meaning. It is the condition by which "consciousness discovers its freedom" (Kearney 1988:227). This gives the human mind a freedom to create, construe and construct significance. Or with the words of Sartre's English contemporary, the literary critic I.A. Richards (1893-1979): "Imagination named the active mind, the mind in action construing and constructing, dissolving and re-creating, making sense, making meaning" (cited in Ford 2016:22). Imagination thus becomes a kind of orientation or a pattern of interpretation.

With the linguistic turn in both literary studies and philosophy, the creative capacity linked with imagination was connected to the language of metaphor. The philosopher Paul Ricœur (1913-2005) suggests that with imagination "suddenly we are seeing *as*... we see old age as the close of the day, time as a beggar, nature as a temple with living pillars, and so forth" (Ricœur 1978:8). Here language and imagination are closely related, it is a kind of linguistic imagination which generates meaning by working with metaphors and their inherent power. Humans structure meaning from the day to day data of experience, and we do this with the help of language, metaphor and narrative.

Imagination is not located in a special part of the mind, argues Ricœur, it is rather the way the mind functions when it is generating meaning. Who is then an imaginative person? That is someone with the ability to think of many different possibilities.[15] For Sartre the imaginative quality has to do with that power to conceive of possibilities beyond the realities in which we are immersed. The more imaginative, the more unusual or unexpected is the range of possibilities one can conceive. Imagination can thus be described as the subjunctive mood of mind.[16]

The Canadian philosophy professor Charles Taylor (b. 1931) coined the term *social imaginary* as a way to describe a kind of imagination that is as invisible and taken for granted to us as the water is to the fish, or the laws of gravitation to humans. It is an unarticulated understanding, an often unstated sense of things. It is not social theory, because Taylor is talking about "the way ordinary people "imagine" their social surroundings, and this is often not expressed in theoretical terms, it is carried in images, stories, legends, etc." (Taylor 2007:172). What he is trying to get at is that it is *social* in the sense of being shared by many, not just academics or intellectuals. It is *imaginary* in the sense of being something more than a

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[15] Ricœur describes imagination as both a "rule-governed form of invention" and as the "power of giving form to human experience", with other words, as the power to re-describe reality (Ricœur 1995:144). Imaginativeness is then a way of thinking that is not restricted or shackled by customary or habitual thinking and constructing of reality.

[16] The subjunctive is a specific verb form that usually expresses something that you wish for, or a hypothetical rather than actual situation.

theory or metaphysic, it is more akin to a worldview, a sense of how things usually go, and how they ought to go (Taylor 2007:172). It is like a paradigm, to use Thomas Kuhn´s (1922-1996) notion developed in *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*. It is something people take for granted, just the way "things are" and therefore not articulated or made explicit, like a kind of existential mother-tongue. This imaginary includes how we see ourselves, how we imagine what it is to be human and what it is to be humanity together. It can be described as the picture of ourselves and our place in the world, an image we assume without asking (Smith 2014:45). Imagination in this sense does not mean that it has something fictitious about it, but rather that this is a view, or a "take" on the world.

3.3 Framing Imagination

Given the historical variety and riches of meanings concerning imagination, or with Stebbins more critical wording, disarray of definitions, a framework of imagination is needed, for the conversation with homiletics in this study. By looking at the spectrum of different aspects of imagination with a homiletician's eye, three kinds of imagination were selected to create a tentative framework. There are of course many other aspects that could have been chosen out of this historical review, one might for example have chosen an aspect closer to the Hebraic critical notion of imagination as connected with idolatry or an aspect inspired by Plato´s view of imagination as contrast with the reasoning faculty. But these three were selected out of their perceived connection with the homiletical perspectives and questions arising from my own practise and from reading Smith and Bruce. The three aspects are separate, but still intertwined, as there are no clear boundaries between them.

The first aspect is *imagination as images in the mind´s eye*; this has to do with the productive imagination, creating images without direct sensory data. As we saw in the historical exposé, this is a classical characteristic, going back all the way to the Hebraic perspective of being able to imagine something that is not at hand. We can also see this aspect in Aristotle's classical definition of imagination as mental reproductions of sensory experience and in Augustine's description of imagination as reproduction and a kind of mediator. This reproduction is partly connected to language and we see here a connection to Ricœur´s linguistic imagination and the inherent power of metaphor, seeing as. This aspect relates to homiletics in many different ways which will be developed in the paragraph 3.3.1 below.

The second aspect is *imagination as empathy*, the affective side of imagination. The philosophers note that when imagination is evoked there seems often to be an affective tug

that comes with it. Kant saw the relationship between imagination and strong emotions and Coleridge stresses that true imagination has power to create affections even though they object is absent. Compassion is an essential part of imagination and belongs to the lost vision the poet is searching to find. Mill stresses that the emotion excited by vivid imagination is genuine and real. Imagination can even bring to mind feelings not previously brought to mind by perceptions, argue the romantic philosophers. Imagination can thus both produce and cultivate empathy. This aspect relates to homiletics in ways that will be developed in paragraph 3.3.2 below.

The third aspect is *imagination as social imaginary*, described by Taylor as the deep orientation, worldview or ground patterns in human society. Even though they do not mean exactly the same thing, this way to describe imagination can be seen already in Husserl's and Sartre's notion of imagination as a way of being conscious of the world and making sense of experiences. This aspect relates to homiletical questions on several levels, which will be developed in paragraph 3.3.3 bellow.

3.3.1 Imagination as Images in the Mind´s Eye

This is the aspect of imagination many people instinctively think about when talking about using your imagination. The ability to "see" things even if they are not present before you. It is a sensory imagination with perception-like experiences in the absence of direct sensory stimuli. The imagination can use the memories of perception and sense data to construct pictures, images and sequences of action that we have not experienced before.

The Anglican priest and homiletician David Day writes in a chapter called "Swallowing the scroll, scripture and the imagination", in his book *Embodying the Word*, about an experience that surprised him. He was having a workshop with a group of trainee preachers and they were digging into the story of Jesus and the leper in Mark 1.40-45. He asked them what struck them about the passage. One of the members of the group was quiet and looked preoccupied. After a while she said: "I was just trying to imagine what it would be like to see your skin becoming whole after it had been diseased for so long" (Day 2005:29). Even though she had not experienced this by herself, she could construct, by using other sense memories, pictures or images in her mind´s eye of her arm being transformed.

Day is interested in methods that help preachers experience the Bible imaginatively and express this in embodied language. Why is that important? Day argues that "the Word is more likely to be embodied in our preaching if it has first been embodied in our imaginations.

Seeing your diseased skin gradually (or instantaneously) changing into healthy flesh is an example of one way of encountering the biblical text. It´s clear that the woman who sat looking at her hand was entering the story rather than sitting outside it." (Day 2005:29).

One method that employs this kind of imagination is Ignatian bible-meditation. It has been around for about 500 years and is still going strong, even experiencing a kind of revival in some parts of the church family. In the sixteenth century the co-founder of the Jesuits (the Society of Jesus) Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) developed a set of exercises designed to help spiritual growth. It was while Ignatius was lying sick in bed, contemplating and daydreaming about the stories of the Bible and the saints that he discovered that these inner images and the emotions connected to them (peace, restlessness, fear or hope) actually were part of his transformation to become more Christ-like in a very concrete and powerful way. What part does imagination play in this Jesuit method? The reader, or, in this case, the preacher, enters the biblical narrative as a story, into "the lives of the characters and the unfolding of the scene" and find their own place there" (Day 2005:31). As Ignatius himself put it: "To view with the eyes of the imagination the synagogues, towns and villages through which Christ our Lord went preaching" (Ignatius 1998:25). If the preacher enters the text in this way it will affect the sermon argues Day. Why? To reach a deeper understanding of the text the preacher is open to be led deeply into the narratives images, to feel at home there and let the pictures, the smell, the touch and the taste be a part of searching the text for meaning and a message. The imaginative work the preacher does do not have to be explicit in the sermon, often, it should not, says Day, but nevertheless, the resulting sermon will often rely upon and awaken the imagination of its hearers (Day 2005:31).

But might this not be a dangerous kind of imagination? The preacher could possibly read in to the text all sorts of things that are not there, turning exegesis into eisegesis? Richard Lischer, professor emeritus of practical theology at Duke Divinity School, warns about the dangers of this kind of imaginary flight into the biblical world:

> True historical imagination, which often entails hard choices on soft data, is exchanged for a game of Let´s pretend. Let´s pretend we are with Peter in the courtyard or with Mary in the garden. Imagine that Jesus has invited you to walk on the water with him. The trouble with this approach is at least threefold: First, it skips historical and literary study and moves directly to psychologising or spiritualizing of texts. Second, it is exceedingly hard for even the most devout Christians to imagine that they are first-century Palestinians. Too much has come between! Third, effective preaching does not

bus twentieth-century Christians into the first century, but enables the events of long ago to live again in a new and different setting. (Lischer 2005:181).

For Lischer, this kind of imagination does not "freely dispense its treasures without historical and literary prying" (Lischer 2005:180). Imagination is helped by, and in some senses restricted by, knowledge of the historical situation, purpose, shape, and function of the biblical text. Lischer calls this a "theologically informed intuition, perhaps an intuition sparked by the preacher's imagination of how the text might have been preached" (Lischer 2005:180).

The first aspect in our framework is thus *imagination as images in the mind´s eye*, the ability to create images and language with the help of memories of perception.

3.3.2. Imagination as Empathy

The English philosopher Mary Warnock, following Sartre, argues that there is a strong affective component in any use of imagination: "There is a power in the human mind which is at work in our everyday perception of the world, and is also at work in our thoughts about what is absent; which enables us to see the world, whether present or absent as significant [...] And this power, though it gives us 'thought-imbued' perception [...] is not only intellectual. Its impetus comes from the emotions as much as from the reason" (Warnock 1976:196).

Imaginative activity often seems to have an affective tug that comes together with it; as John Stuart Mill put it: "the imaginative emotion which an idea, when vividly conceived, excites in us is not an illusion but a fact, as real as any other qualities of objects" (cited in Warnock 1976:206).

The homiletician Richard Eslinger regards the affective side of imagination as essential in preparing the sermon and preaching. When humans imagine how something would be, it is more than a mental rehearsal, it also "relocate ourselves creatively into the situation, the state of affairs of another person, social unit, culture, and so on" (Eslinger 1995:102).

But how can we know what it is like to be another person? We can never truly know in all its flavours and layers, but with the help of our imagination, Eslinger means that we can practise to come closer through an imaginative identification with another person or group. We actually do this all the time, when we look at a movie or read a book, identifying ourselves with the fictitious characters, being moved by the things they are moved by, feeling their hopes and fears. The power of affective imagination makes it possible to know about something that we have not experienced for ourselves. It is a kind of knowing that comes

through vicarious experience. It is an ability to enter in to the landscape of another, and through that, also changing our own perception of the world. Eslinger takes the ability to imagine someone else's pain and suffering as an example. The emphatic imagination "must be employed with care and precision since it is always couched within a hermeneutic and reaches out to other contexts, possibly with quite distinctive and different patterned images of self and world" (Eslinger 1995:103).

In Fred B Craddocks classical book *Preaching* he states that the minister comes to know the listeners by basically three methods; formal, informal and emphatic imagination (Craddock 1985:93). Emphatic imagination is described as the capacity to achieve understanding of another person's situation without having that person´s exact experience. Being a preaching pastor does not automatically mean he or she has emphatic imagination, as with other areas, preachers have to be intentional, "working past their own defences against being hurt by the hurt of others, past their own impatience and need to pass judgement, past their own agenda for success, which gets delayed by human misery. Until they have a clear focus on the relation between pausing to pick up strays and cripples and marching to Zion, no formula for maintaining empathetic imagination will really work" (Craddock 1995:96).

The preacher can exercise the empathetic imagination, argues Craddock, by pondering different versions of "What´s It Like to Be?",[17] scribbling every thought, recollection, feeling, picture, experience, name, place, smell, or taste that comes to mind (Craddock 1995:97). The deeper we go into the imaginative world, the more affect-laden the activity will become, says Warnock. She means that when we create the idea vividly, we experience the imaginative emotion, and that is why we can, and should, cultivate the feelings. We cannot teach children to feel deeply, but we can teach them to look and listen in a way that the imaginative emotions follow (Warnock 1976:206-207). Craddock follows the same line of thought and claims that the cumulative effect of exercises like the one he proposes can lead to a "noticeable reduction in the number of sermons that either make no contact with the listener or make contact in ways unintended and often counterproductive" (Craddock 1995:98).

The second aspect in our framework is thus *imagination as empathy*, the affective side of imagination, the ability to know about something even though we have not experienced exactly the same for ourselves. It is a kind of vicarious experience involving compassion and emotions, an imagination that can both produce and cultivate empathy.

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[17] Craddock suggest examples like "facing surgery", "living alone", "suddenly wealthy", rejected by a sorority", "arrested for burglary", "fired from one´s position", "unable to read", "extremely poor", "fourteen years old".

3.3.3 Imagination as Social Imaginary

Charles Taylor´s term *social imaginary* is interesting to introduce to the conversation between homiletics and imagination as it addresses several essential questions concerning both anthropology and epistemology. Social imaginary can be described as tacit images we have of ourselves, our situation in the world, our history and our future. Taylor is eager to make us understand that he is not talking about what people believe or theories, it is more like the way the universe is "spontaneously imagined and therefore experienced" (Taylor 2007:325). Emotions and our spontaneous sense of things are here taken to the foreground. If we describe the world as moving from one theory to another we will miss this deeper sense says Taylor. He is interested in "how our sense of things, our cosmic imaginary, in other words, our whole background understanding and feel of the world has been transformed". (Taylor 2007:325). What is this transformation Taylor is referring to? Well, one of his core questions is: "How did we move from a condition where, in Christendom, people lived naïvely within a theistic construal, to one in which we all shunt between two stances, in which everyone´s construal shows up as such; and in which moreover, unbelief has become for many the major default option?" (Taylor 2007:14). It was very difficult for an ordinary person living in the West in the 15th century to imagine a world without God, it was almost inconceivable. Seeing the world as transcendent, or enchanted, was the normal way of interpretating the world. Living in the late medieval society, it was not uncommon to have many competing visions of what Christianity ought to be like, or what it is about, but, no one had opened the door to a world where *no God* at all was present (Taylor 2007:26).

So historically, a large group of people have moved from a time in which *not* believing in God was virtually unthinkable, to a time when it is very hard to imagine the opposite. This is an example of the social imagery. The concern is not so much with what humans believe as much as with what is believable. The social imaginary is like a background we have become so accustomed to that we do not even notice it any longer, like the sound of a refrigerator. And this new background is not just true for exclusivist humanists, or atheists. Believers of all kinds have moved into this new imagery, this new background, which makes even believers believe in a new kind of way. That is what Taylor means when he says that we are all secular now.

Social imaginary is a way of talking about grand narratives, the existential and social map of where we are, where we are headed and what´s at stake. Noteworthy for this papers

questions and homiletical aim, is what Taylor says about language. One problem with the invisibility of the social imagery is that we do not have a language for it. We live in a construal, without being aware of it as a construal and therefore "without ever even formulating it" (Taylor 2007:30). We have indistinct rumblings in the background of our experience, but lack the words to describe what we are experiencing. The secular world does not give people a language for the "cross-pressured" situation we all are in says Taylor, hanging between the dissatisfaction of immanence and the memory of transcendence. A language is needed to give humans words and names for experiences that does not fit in an immanent frame.

The social imaginary is something we take for granted, a "take" on the world, so normal to us that we hardly notice it. When we are presented with an imaginary that is opposite to the prevalent, or dominant social imaginary, this can be called a *re-imagination*. It is a way of seeing the world that is an alternative to the imagination of the dominant culture. It is a surprising imagination that is in contrast with the ordinary and highly visible.[18]

Walter Brueggemann´s concept of "prophetic imagination" partly has connections with this kind of imagination. It is a disruptive imagination, in many cases even disorienting, before it can create a new kind of orientation. Brueggemann´s guiding thesis in the book *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination* is that:

> Prophetic proclamation is an attempt to imagine the world as though YHWH – the creator of the world, the deliverer of Israel, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ whom we Christians come to name as Father, Son and Spirit – were a real character and an effective agent in the world. I use the subjunctive "were" because such a claim is not self-evident and remains to be established again and again in every such utterance. The key term in my thesis is "imagine", that is, to utter, entertain, describe, and construe a world other than the one commonly taken without such agency or character for YHWH. Thus, the offer of prophetic imagination is one that contradicts the taken-for-granted world around us. (Brueggemann 2012:2)

What does this prophetic imagination look like? Brueggemann is describing the Israeli imagination before the exile as an example. It was utterly unimaginable for the Israelites that the Temple would be destroyed, that Jerusalem would be burnt down and that they would be

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[18] The theologian Urban T. Holmes describes this surprise as an "imaginative shock", a shock that awakens us to a striking awareness that the categories with which we navigate and interpret do not fit our experience. Something new and never-before-heard-of wants to be recognized. The temple being destroyed was an imaginative shock. People brought in to exile were an imaginative shock. Jesus is using the imaginative shock when he tells parables. Paul´s experience on the Damascus road was an imaginative shock. Jesus himself was an imaginative shock (Holmes 1976:100).

taken as slaves. It was simply not possible to imagine a world without the Davidic monarchy. Then destruction, defeat and exile came. It was devastating for the worldview (or "social imaginary" to use Taylors concept) and theology of the Israelites. Nothing made sense any more. Things did not add up. All the usual ways to interpret experiences halted or had simply vanished. When the prophets then come and interpret their experiences and paint pictures by re-narrating their story, it disrupts the dominant imaginations. This prophetic imagination, or poetic vision, summons the readers to reject the socially dominant imagination, the imagination of the "royal court" in all its forms.

Sometimes the prophetic imagination comes with judgement, sometimes with hope, but always with a radically different vision. The prophet is describing, painting and inviting hearers to imagine the world different than they do at the moment. This "imaginative work" is hard and dangerous. The prophetic task of "imagining YHWH" requires "courage and unfettered imagination as well as categories that are unsettling and subversive of the way we conventionally prefer to construe reality" (Brueggemann 2012:3)

The biblical world, and our own, can be described as a long, vigorous contestation between two narratives, imaginations or construals of reality. This "contestation between narratives is modelled in narrative simplicity and directedness in Elijah´s contest at Mt. Carmel in which he defiantly requires a decision between narratives and so between gods" (Brueggemann 2012:2) (1 Kgs 18:21). Prophetic preaching of an alternative imagination is difficult for many reasons. First, not even the points of tension between the dominant narrative and the gospel narrative are always acknowledged.[19] Secondly, the dominant narrative, or imaginary, is seldom "recognized as a social construction and is almost never lined out in its full clarity and claim" (Brueggemann 2012:3-4), a notion he shares with Taylor as seen above. Thirdly, the preaching is difficult because the YHWH narrative is rarely recognized as a genuine or real alternative, it is more like a footnote or a pin on the suit of the dominant narrative (Brueggemann 2012:4).

Talking about prophetic or social imagination makes us alert to the question of relationship between the world of the Bible and the world of today. Brueggemann, Taylor and Smith uses imagination-vocabulary to talk about counter-stories. Imagination-vocabulary can also be used to describe a creative translation and conversation, looking for connections and similarities. This can be seen for example if we compare Brueggemann with David Tracy. In

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[19] Brueggemanns example is the tension between the culture of military consumerism and the culture of justice and compassion in the gospels.

Brueggemanns book, *Cadences of Home – Preaching among Exiles*, Brueggemann goes into dialogue with David Tracy´s concept of the *analogical imagination*. Brueggemann describes Tracy´s book and public hermeneutical-political model as a daring and important text even though he doesn´t agree on some of Tracy´s ground epistemological assumptions (Brueggemann 2000:185).

Tracy describes analogical imagination, and analogical language, as a capacity to recognize and articulate similarity-in-difference. In *The Analogical Imagination*, written 1981, Tracy describes why and how theology must necessarily relate to the three public spaces of society, academia and the church. He wants to prevent theology from being isolated, warning theologians to withdraw to an inner-churchly sphere, and instead do theology in view of and in conversation with shared human experiences. Analogical imagination and speaking is essential for Tracy in an increasingly pluralistic world, as it is a help to engage in public conversation despite differences. Theology is to be conducted as a public conversation of reciprocal critical correlation. "This means that theology must also possess public criteria (not merely private or sectarian criteria) for what it may reasonably say and do" (Henrikson 2013:531).

Brueggemann acknowledges that there is a risk that the church withdraws. The sectarian temptation is real, but he nonetheless lands closer to Lindbecks postliberal cultural-lingusistic model that describes theology as the "grammar of faith". (Brueggemann 2000:185, Spjuth 2013:504-505). This "contrast" or "protest" tradition is the most developed in this study, but it is important to stress that Brueggemann, as well as Taylor and Smith, and Tracy on his part, agrees that this is not a question of either or and the preacher needs to be deeply aware of both aspect.

The third aspect in our framework is *imagination as social imaginary*, as described by Charles Taylor and partly paralleled by Brueggemann´s concept of "prophetic imagination" as a re-imagination.

3.3.4 Summary

The concept of imagination has a long and accumulated history of meaning. Imagination, and the word that for a long time was it´s close companion, *fancy*, has connotations that has grown and shrunk. The function and power of the imagination has changed in value, been looked upon with suspicion and hailed as the mark of a genius. Imagination is a vast word, and one

is inclined to agree with Peter Strawson´s claim that imagination is a term with a very diverse and scattered family-history, with complicated relationships of parenthood and cousinhood, impossible to entirely define.

Imagination has been described as the common and ordinary perception of images and interpretation, necessary for us to recognize things in the world as familiar, to enable us to rely on and take for granted phenomena in the ordinary world. Other aspects has to do with the inventive, creative, affective, novelty-filled and even transcendental quality ascribed to the imagination, a kind of outlandish imagination that sees something in the ordinary that has not been seen the same way before. The concept of imagination has gone from being described as reproductive to productive, from mimetic to creative and constructive power, from being a mediating courier to a transcendental inner faculty. We can conclude that imagination is a comprehensive concept, with many layers and diverse meanings in different contexts.

The aim in this chapter has been to do clarifying groundwork, a preparation for the conversation between imagination and homiletics. Starting in a historical exposé the chapter led to a tentative framework of imagination. Our tentative framework consists of three aspects; imagination as *images in the mind´s eye*; imagination as *empathy* and imagination as *social imaginary*. These three aspects relate to homiletical questions on several levels.

Images in the mind´s eye connect both to the preachers own experience in Scripture-reading and the actual language of the sermon, concerning the invitation of the listener´s imagination. The affective imagination is among other things attached to the question of the relationship and connection between pastor and congregation. The philosophical concept of social imaginary as the human taken-for-granted take on the word, the often sub-conscious existential and social map, awakens many homiletical questions, concerning for example formation, knowledge and language.

Chapter 4. Homiletics and Imagination

4.1 Introduction

"What Is the Matter with Preaching?" read the title of an article published in *Harper's Magazine* 1928. It was written by the renowned preacher from New York City's Riverside Church, Harry Emerson Fosdick. Almost a century later, Fosdick's words still dangle as a key question over the pulpit and in extension, hangs as a vital question over the homiletical classroom. Fosdick's short answer to his own question was that the sermon simply is boring. On a more elaborate note, he suggests that preaching experiences difficulties because sermons

do not address the deep and probing questions on people's minds and fail to engage the culture the congregation is living in. Other answers offered through the years are that preaching suffers because of preachers' loss of homiletic technique, rhetorical skill, exegetical knowledge or personal experiences and *charisma*. Even though a lot has happened since 1928 and homiletics has undergone major changes, the challenge still remains. What are the questions, apprehensions and concerns facing today's preaching, and subsequently homiletics?

Two major conceptual fields are having a conversation in this paper. The first is homiletics and the second is imagination, as seen in the question: how do James K.A Smith and Kate Bruce use the concept of imagination in connection to homiletics in *Imagining the Kingdom* and *Igniting the Heart*? To prepare for that conversation, we will now take a closer look at homiletics. What do we mean when we talk about homiletics? What are some emphases and moves through history? What are the *foci* of inquiry? What are some of the concerns in the current homiletical conversation? The homiletical map is vast, an extensive territory full of contrasting views, issues and questions. Acknowledging that the field of homiletical history, theory and method are immense, the format of this study cannot aspire to an exhaustive treatment but will only give permission for a short and in-complete survey and overview.

This short survey will land in an attempt to identify some *areas of concern* where homileticians are searching for ways of talking about the homiletical task. This search will be guided by both homiletical literature and my own experience as a homiletician, teaching students preparing for ministry.

4.2 Short Survey of the Field of Homiletics

When using the word *homiletics* today, it primarily describes the academic field of theological enquiry concerned with the study of preaching. This field encompasses the history, theology, theory and practise of preaching, as well as craft, composition, delivery and reception. Originally the term homiletics did not refer to the academic study but to the practise of preaching, how to craft sermons and deliver them. Today homiletics relates foremost to biblical studies but also rhetoric, communication theory, psychology, sociology and literature theories. The derivation of the term homiletics is from the Greek verb *homileó*, (ὁμιλέω)

meaning to consort with, having a conversation or commune with. The Latin word is *sermo*, from which the word sermon is derived.[20]

To understand the density of homiletics, one needs to ponder the complexity of the preaching event. Thomas Long asks: "What is preaching? That sounds like a simple question, but the more we think about it, the larger and more complex it becomes. Indeed, the event of preaching is so multifaceted we will never understand it fully, but we need to take a stab at naming what it is" (Long 2005:15).

In 1945, the book *A Brief History of Preaching* was published, written by the Swedish liturgical scholar Yngve Brilioth. The book, now a classic in homiletics, defines preaching by comparing it with a common public speech. Starting with Jesus' inaugural sermon at the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-30) Brilioth concludes that Jesus' preaching was *liturgical* —embedded in synagogue worship, *exegetical* —evoked and related to a text from the Bible, and *prophetic* —engaged with and directed towards a particular setting (Brilioth 1945: 246). What is preaching? With Brilioth´s definition, a sermon is a liturgical, exegetical and prophetic public speech.[21] This definition can, and has been, criticised. James R. Nieman for example, asks in the book *For Life Abundant*, whether you could not from the same Bible passage also conclude that a sermon is short, performative and has social consequences. The listeners apparently want to throw Jesus off a cliff (Nieman 2008:167).[22]

The discipline of homiletics was for much of its history viewed as applied theology. The "real" theology was acquired in the Bible courses and in the class of systematic theology. In the applied theology courses, like homiletics, this "real" theology was to be applied in the form of sermons. But as the understanding of practical theology changed, so did homiletics.

Instead of thinking of practical theology as merely applied theology, practical theology was beginning to emerge as a generative theological discipline in its own right. The

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[20] In the *Concise Dictionary of the Christian Tradition* from 1989, homiletics is defined as: "Homiletics is the branch of theology that suggests rules for the construction and delivery of homilies/sermons". "Homiletics is the art of preaching. The derivation of the word is from the Greek *homileticos*, from *homilein*, to consort or hold converse with. As taught to preachers, homiletics is concerned with the sources of sermons, their doctrinal and ethical content, progression of thought, structure, illustrative material, language, preparation for the pulpit and delivery. The subject cannot be taught with complete objectivity, for though the guidelines in the areas referred to can be invaluable, the preacher´s ability and temperament will considerably affect both the preparation and delivery of the sermon. Homiletics has a long history, and through-out it practitioners have not always felt it wrong to keep the rules in spirit rather than in letter." (entry Homiletics, *A new Dictionary of Christian Theology*. Edited by Alan Richardson and John Bowden).

[21] For other definitions of preaching, see for example Wingren 1949, p. 1 ff, Barth, 1991, p. 44-45, Lönnebo,1977, p. 11, Wallgren Hemlin 1997, p. 23-25, Buttrick, 1987, p. 451- 459, Eldebo 1995, p.9-19, Eldebo, 2005, p. 56.
[22] Nieman argues that careful attention "to the events in Nazareth leads to the conclusion that his preaching had public consequence...What if our teaching of ministerial practices and scholarship in practical theology always had as its horizon this question of public consequence?" (Nieman 2008:167). Eldebo criticises indirectly when he states that preaching does not need to be in a liturgical setting or part of worship to be defined as preaching (Eldebo 1995:9).

actual lived experience of faithful people – as individuals, in churches and other communities, through their religious rituals and practices, and in their engagement with society – was increasingly being seen as a *source* for theological knowledge and not just as a *target*, the place toward which one shot doctrinal arrows sharpened somewhere else." (Long 2005:ix, x)

Focusing on the more recent trends in homiletics, from a church history perspective, there was a major shift in homiletics during the seventies, what was later named the birth of the *New Homiletic*. "There is widespread agreement that the beginning of this revolution may be dated from the publication of Fred B. Craddock´s *As One Without Authority*. In that book Craddock set many hares running and homileticians have been in hot pursuit ever since" (Day 2005:1).

In Craddock´s book, published in 1971,[23] he initiated a move away from the so-called deductive, propositional approach in kerygmatic preaching to a more inductive concept. "In induction, thought moves from the particulars of experiences that have a familiar ring in the listener´s ear to a general truth or conclusion" (Craddock 1971:57). The goal was the creation of an experience in the listener which effects a hearing of the gospel. This homiletical turn followed the linguistic turn in philosophy.[24] Language came to be viewed not simply as *referring* to reality but as *determining* reality. "What has talk of language got to do with preaching? Much. Preaching can rename the world 'God´s world' with metaphorical power, and can change identity by incorporating all our stories into 'God´s story'. Preaching constructs in consciousness a 'faith-world' related to God" (Buttrick 1987:11).

Theology followed philosophy in this linguistic turn, and then homiletics followed theology. "In a genealogy extending from Heidegger through the New Hermeneutic to the New Homiletic, the power of language to shape, define, and even create reality has become a mainstay of homiletical discussion" (Allen 2005:54). Preachers become a kind of language teachers, who offer the vocabulary of traditional Christian language to inform the matrix of conversations in the congregations. These inductive, experiential, narrative approaches were developed by a host of homileticians, but Fred Craddock, Charles Rice, Henry Mitchell, Eugene Lowry and David Buttrick are often considered the pillars of this movement. These scholars were first placed side by side in a book by Richard L. Eslinger entitled *A New Hearing, Living Options in Homiletical Method*, published in 1987 (Allen 2010:1).

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[23] Craddock writes in the preface to the third edition: "I wrote these chapters when preaching was under unusually heavy attack from within as well as without the church. Such critical times can be occasions for re-thinking and reformulating the whole event of the sermon, the experience of hearing and speaking the gospel"

[24] The linguistic turn originated with Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921).

In the eighties and nineties there was a new interest in and emphasis on narrative, storytelling and imagination.[25] The shift which Craddock had begun was continued by David Buttrick, who in his influential work *Homiletic: Moves and Structures,* explored how ideas are formed and the role which language in the form of narrative and metaphor plays in the process. He argues that: "Christian preaching can transform narrative identity. By locating our storied lives within a framework of beginning and end, Christian preaching poses the possibility of faith" (Buttrick1987:13). Narrative homiletics was the child of its father narrative theology, and its mother, narrative hermeneutics.

This theme was expanded and explained in Richard L. Eslingers book *Narrative and Imagination: Preaching the Worlds That Shape Us.* By the nineties preaching started to be referred to as art, and there was a new interest in the literary and artistic character of the preacher (Childers 1998:11).

Imagination is thus no "new" concept in relationship to homiletics. It was part of a larger movement among theologians from all disciplines towards narrative and storied theology. Driven by an interest in the use of poetic and imaginative language more generally, imagination became a way of talking about the affinity between the "church at worship and the arts" (Rice 1991:94-95).

Since the sixties, a steady stream of homiletical books and articles including the word imagination were published, for example; *Creative Imagination in Preaching*, by Webb B Garrison (1960), *Prophetic Imagination*, by Walter Brueggemann (1978), *Telling the Story: Variety and Imagination in Preaching*, by Richard A . Jensen (1980), *Imagining a Sermon*, by Thomas H. Troeger (1990), *Narrative Imagination: Preaching the Worlds that Shape Us*, by Richard L Eslinger (1995) *Preaching and Teaching with Imagination: the Quest for Biblical Ministry*, by Warren W. Wiersbe (1997) *Naming Grace: Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination*, by Mary Catherine Hilkert (1996), *Imagination of the Heart: New Understandings in Preaching*, by Paul Scott Wilson (1988), *Voicing the Vision: Imagination and Prophetic Preaching* by Linda L. Clader (2003) *Reclaiming the Imagination: The Exodus as Paradigmatic Narrative for Preaching* by David Fleer and Dave Bland (2009) and *Imaginative Preaching: Praying the Scriptures so God Can Speak Through You* by New

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[25] The thought that narrative is a fundamental mode of human existence and universal condition of human consciousness had at this time a great impact in theology and other disciplines. One influential article was written 1971 by Stephen Crites: "The Narrative Quality of Experience", arguing that narrative is at the very heart of human life. Hans Frei's crucial work *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative (1980)* also became a major catalyst within theology.

Geoff (2105). Imagination in relationship to preaching is a well-explored area, but imagination in connection to homiletics is a rather weak researched field.

4.3 The Sermon, the Congregation and the Preacher

As mentioned above, the scope of this paper does not include an in-depth description of the history and different theories and trends in homiletics. However, for the structure of the paper, it could possibly be valuable to focus on and describe three important aspects, or areas, of investigation within homiletics; the *sermon*, the *congregation* and the *preacher*. Long, drawing on Von Allmen´s seminal essay *Preaching and Congregation*, present these three main *foci* of inquiry, along with the Bible and the presence of Christ, as the major ingredients of preaching, and thus, its identity (Long 2005:11). But how do these fit together? What are the connections of these elements in the event of preaching? What does the relationship between preacher, sermon and congregation look like? The preaching event is multifaceted and complex and the relationships between preacher, sermon and congregation are not distinct but intertwined and dependent upon each other. Even so we will look at them one at a time. It may seem counter-productive, but the division has been made for the sake of clarity and as a way of mirroring much contemporary homiletical textbooks.

4.3.1. The Sermon

Homileticians by and large agree what the sermon should *not* be. It should not be second-hand opinions on current political issues or ethical debate, it ought not to be spiritual pep talk, poetic life-advice, a debater´s rebuttal or a vaguely Christianized comment on contemporary questions. But what is it then ought to be? And what are some of the questions concerning the actual *crafting of language* in sermons? How important are the linguistic skills of the preacher to create a sermon that is formative?

Let us start with the latter questions, often labelled the relationship between homiletics and rhetoric. The aim of rhetoric is to persuade, how does this then relate to preaching and the performative function of the sermon, using words themselves as an active force?

This relationship, or tension, can be seen already in Augustine's work *On Christian Doctrine*, and has continued as a story with nonstop new chapters in the history of homiletics (Green 1995, Wallgren Hemlin 1997:44).[26] Augustine, who was a teacher of classical rhetoric before becoming a pastor and a theologian, wrote *On Christian Doctrine* in 397 AD and 426

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[26] For a short historic overview, in Swedish, see: *Att övertyga från predikstolen*, Barbro Wallgren Hemlin, p. 26 -45.

AD (or maybe 427 AD) and it is "generally considered to be the first sustained and comprehensive work in homiletics" (Long, in McFarland 2011:222). In *On Christian Doctrine* Augustine discusses and describes preaching by employing rhetoric categories outlined by Cicero, such as the *ethos*, *logos* and *pathos* of the speaker, different rhetorical styles and forms. Augustine considers the scriptural texts to be the *speech act* par excellence, and he tries to show the rhetorical styles and strategies of the different biblical writers and genres. The goal is to make Scripture both plain and compelling to the congregation and the ideal is to correct and transform the "secular and morally neutral Ciceronian rhetoric" (Long, in McFarland 2011:222). Rhetoric can be used to persuade both what is true and what is false. Rhetoric rules can be useful, but they are not indispensable for the preacher, especially not for "older men", with other words, experienced preachers (Sypert 2015:25).

The fear, or concern, that sustains this tension between rhetoric and homiletics is that "preachers might become fascinated by the techniques of secular rhetoric, thus replacing theological *substance* with homiletical *style*" (Long 2005:15). Even though the question of the relationship between homiletics and rhetoric is still alive, developments in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have changed the focus from classical rhetoric to hermeneutics as the academic framework for reflection on sermons and preaching (Long, in McFarland 2011:223).

Karl Barth had an enormous impact on homiletics with the idea that preaching is an *event* of the Word of God, and thus biblical hermeneutics (Scott Wilson 2004:60-61). Long explains that sermons "instead of being viewed as religious content arranged in patterns derived from rhetoric, could be understood to be reverberations generated and shaped by encounters with the biblical texts themselves" (Long, in McFarland 2011:223). The sermon, through the Spirit´s power, is described as a kind of resonance, an echo, a witness, and as such part of the continuing work of God in becoming incarnate. New emphases in biblical studies have had a great impact on the perception and description of the preacher´s task, with an emergent respect for the texts social context and literary character. According to Long there has been an "increased recognition of the social and political contexts of the biblical documents" (Long 2005:12). Moving away from disembodied and abstracted preaching, taking into account the sociological categories at work in the biblical text.

In this hermeneutic turn, the Bible does not only give the content of the sermon; the scripture can also be the source of the sermons form and the style of preaching. Long paved the way with his book *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible*, published in 1988. He showed the blind spot of much homiletic theory by pointing to the need for the preacher to

listen to the biblical text not only for the content, *what* it says, but also for *the way* it says it. Long argues that the shape of the sermon should reflect the shape of the scriptural passage. And not only as in a static shape, but in a process, like in Eugene Lowry's theory and stages of the homiletical plot (Lowry 2001:27-87). The sermon is in itself a movement, like a piece of music, and the message, or the meaning, of the sermon is not only carried by propositions and ideas but also by form, genre, sequence and linearity (Day 2005:3).

The development in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries with its focus upon language emerged partly from conversations between literary theory, poetics and homiletics. Inspired by theologians such as Amos Wilder, who emphasized literary imagination and the creativity of early Christian preaching, the homiletical discipline started integrating sermons "with features of other literary genres, especially narrative, parable, poetry, dialogue, and short stories" (Long, in McFarland 2011:223). This also had to do with a homiletical shift from being mostly interested in the *history* of a biblical text, to a concern with the *historical impact* of the text. Grappling with questions concerned with the consequences for the sermon if we do not only consider the meaning and history *behind* the text, but also the meaning *in front* of the text, what the text has done and does to and with the listeners (Long 2005:13). How is the sermon performative in the sense that it does not only to *say* what the text says, but also seeks to *do* what the text does? What languages and modes of speech support or hinder the transformative power of the biblical words?

A recurrent critique of contemporary preaching in both literature and congregational conversations connected to this is that sermons sometimes do "not intersect with our world in an important way" (Scott Wilson 2004:8). The sermons fall flat, do not matter to the listeners, or in more plain words, are simply boring. Books like *Surviving the Sermon*, *100 Things to Do During a Boring Sermon*, stereotypical illustrations in social media and entertainment draw on a common understanding of sermons as tedious, full of platitudes, trite and insipid.

This dullness can be described on two levels, first boring in a more direct way, simply not interesting, irrelevant or hard to listen to. Second, the sermon can be described as dull and flat in a more composite way. In the words of Walter Brueggemann, the sermon is *reduced* (Brueggemann 1989:1-11). For Brueggemann the sermon in the language of prose is the language of foreshortened vision, in contrast to the imaginative nature of a poetic language. He is here using the word prose to describe the flattened language of "pervasive reductionism" and "settled truth" (Brueggemann 1989:1-11). Brueggemann describes the dominant scripting of reality as rooted in the enlightenment, a text of reality that is permitted to describe the world leading to autonomy in knowledge and "self-preoccupation that ends in

self-indulgence, driving religion to narcissistic catering and consumerism" (Brueggemann, in Day 2005:19) The result is that the language of the sermon has been trivialized. The good preacher for Brueggemann is a kind of poet, the prophet who shatters the "dread dullness" of the prose world. Working with sermon language, argues Brueggemann, is not only a question of making the sermon more interesting, attention-grabbing or relevant. A poetic language is an antidote to flattened language, mirroring a flat worldview or reduced social imaginary. But what does this language look like? Brueggemann does not write extensive about this, but calls for *alternative modes of speech*, which means language that is imaginative, creative, tensive, invitational, prophetic, dramatic and artistic (Brueggemann 1989:1-11). Brueggemann doesn´t clearly spell out what this looks like or how the preacher can learn or train these alternative modes of speech. As Craddock wrote in As One Without Authority: "To ask, "How is it done?" seems so proletarian, so mundane, almost vulgar. Those who ask such questions would put shoes on larks, and chop the forest into firewood (Craddock 1971:51-52)

4.3.2. The Congregation

What does the congregation have to do with homiletics? The people in the pew have been quite invisible in the history of homiletics, but since the 1940s and 1950s there has been a growing awareness and interest in integrating knowledge from psychology and sociology with homiletical theory. Homiletical scholars were increasingly inclined to see the people listening as active participants in the sermon enterprise rather than passive recipients (Day 2005:2). Preaching and the community of faith are progressively seen as reciprocal realities (Long 2005:51).[27] The sermon cannot be understood without the worship context.

The Swedish practical theology scholar Sune Fahlgren has in his thesis *Preachership and Church: Six Case Studies of an Ecclesial Fundamental Practice within Free Church Traditions in Sweden*, coined the term preachership (cf. leader – leadership) to get at this ecclesial character of the preaching event. Preachership is an ecclesial practise with four elements; the sermon, the listeners, the preacher and the situation.

Fahlgrens hypothesis is that different kinds of preachership create diverse kinds of ecclesial communities, and also the other way around, various sorts of ecclesial communities generate different kinds of preachership. "The Church has a fundamental communicative character, and in one sense the Church arises from listening. The sign and instrument for this

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[27] Books about how to listen to sermons have consequently also been published, for example David J. Schlafers book *Surviving the Sermon, a Guide to Preaching for Those Who Have to Listen (1992)*. He writes: "Those who listen to preaching can learn to engage it, and the transforming power that comes through it, more actively and intimately as they come to understand it more reflectively and analytically. Helping those who listen to participate more fully is the purpose of this book". Some chapters are nonetheless directed to the preacher.

is an ecclesial practice – preachership" (Fahlgren 2006:13). David Day similarly emphasises that each listener in the congregation hears and processes the words in a way formed by prior experiences, understandings, emotional colour, personality and circumstances. But this is not only happening on the individual level, the whole congregation is a kind of collective "co-artist", creating images and understandings, together with the preacher in the sermon event (Day, Astley & Leslie 2005:5). Consequently, the preacher must not only exegete the text; the preacher must also in a sense "exegete the congregation" as Leonora Tubbs Tisdale puts it (Long & Tisdale 2008:76). The preacher becomes a kind of amateur cultural anthropologist, studying the sub cultural identity, affections, situations and existential questions of the listeners (Day, Astley & Leslie 2005:5). Are the gathered people full of hope, or burdened by despair? Is confusion, anger or happiness the defining emotional state of most of the people in the pew? But how is the preacher to know this, and is this something that can be learnt and practised in the homiletical classroom? What language can be used to talk about this emphatic understanding? This is a question I, as a homiletical teacher, have asked myself many times, bothered by the lack of connection between preacher and congregation, originating in the apparent deficient listening on the part of the preacher. I have heard these sermons, and I have held my share of them too.

4.3.3 The Preacher

The role of the preacher is a classical homiletical question, and the subject of many contesting accounts. What role does the preacher have in the preaching-event? The function of the preacher concerns complicated questions with reference to, among other things, the knowledge and exegetical skills of the preacher, the integrity and character of the preacher and the experiences and pictures of God that the preacher has. It is also concerned with questions about the preacher´s communication skills, the ability to exegete not only the Word but also the world and familiarity with cultural phenomenons.

Another field of concern is the relationship between preacher and congregation, do they have a long or short history together, what do the levels of trust between pastor and congregation look like? To what degree, and in what way, does the congregation know the strengths as well as the woundedness and vulnerability of the preacher?

Many different metaphors have been used to describe this complex role of the preacher. Long uses the images of a herald, a therapeutic pastor, a storyteller and a witness (Long 2014). The preacher as a teacher is a well-known picture and Lowry uses the image of a musician. For Long, the one metaphor that mirrors the task and role of the preacher the best is

witness, to be a preacher is to be a witness to God's word and work in the world. A person sent from the congregation to God's word, then comes back to witness, to "tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about what is seen".

The preacher is sent from the church into the world of the Scripture, and the sermon is seen as that witness to what has been discovered and an invitation to see for oneself. Interesting to note is that this analogy is an example of the development of stressing the inductive approach in crafting sermons, not presenting faith as a finished and packed content, but rather as a journey of exploration. The preacher is a witness, one who sees and experiences the text and then tells the congregation about that. The biblical truths and dimensions are, to be sure, larger than the preacher´s experience, and it is partly the experience of "being in the presence of that ineffable truth which forms the content of the witness" (Long 2005:16). Somewhere along the way, a "leap of imagination on the part of the preacher" is needed to affect a fresh hearing of the text for a specific congregation (Day 2005:4). But the image of the preacher as a professional witness, a herald, an artist has been critiqued because it portrays the preacher as "the solitary hero", making the congregation and the ongoing conversation invisible (Ottensten & Johansson 2010:28).

Another way to describe the preacher and the preaching task is the one earlier mentioned, launched by Old Testament professor Walter Brueggemann. He describes the preaching task as one of *prophetic imagination*. What does this mean? Brueggemann explains that this preaching is defined by "a sustained effort to imagine the world as though YHWH were a real character and the defining agent in the life of the world" (Brueggemann 2012:132). Prophetic preaching is an invitation to re-imagine the world. What if God, and not the market or the military powers of the world is the defining agent in the world? What if God is not a "pet who is preoccupied with our well-being"? What if God is not a remote God "who is not involved in the world and who could not intervene"? What if God is neither the "cosy immanence" nor the "irrelevant transcendence" that God so often is diminished to? (Brueggemann 2012:3)

Brueggemann´s preacher is a person with prophetic imagination who will focus on proclamation of Gods reign, and that God does not forget or abandon humans. This narrative is a counter-narrative to the dominant narratives of technological self-sufficiency and invulnerability through military power. This preaching task requires "courage and unfettered imagination as well as categories that are unsettling and subversive of the way we conventionally prefer to construe reality" (Brueggemann 2012:3).

Preaching as a re-narration of the world, or a contest between narratives is modelled in Elijah´s contest at Mt. Carmel, the people must choose, what story, what God, do they want to belong to? "How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kgs 18:21) sums up this contestation between two different construals of reality, or social imaginary (Brueggemann 2012:3). To preach is to be in this contestation, to offer an invitation to a God-centred imagination that can out-imagine the dominant imagination (Brueggemann 2012:28). This prophetic re-imagination contains both a judgement and a hope. A judgement of the trust that humans put in the powers of the world, but also always a movement towards hope. Hope is "intrinsic to the prophetic message" and new possibilities are always on the horizon for prophetic preachers (Brueggemann 2012:111). After destruction comes restoration, after crucifixion comes resurrection.

4.4 Summary and Homiletical Areas of Concern

As a way to prepare the ground for conversation between imagination and homiletics, using texts by James K.A Smith and Kate Bruce, we have in this chapter made a short survey of some homiletical historical moves and core questions and at the same time been trying to identify areas of homiletical concern, especially ones that seems to be speaking to the different aspects in the framework of imagination. The preaching event has been looked at from three perspectives: the sermon, the congregation and the preacher.

"What is the matter with preaching?" is still a relevant question in the contemporary homiletical conversation, with suggested answers concerning how to do more effective expository preaching, the need for in-depth illustrations, adjusting the length of the sermon or the focus and form of the sermon, how to increase the involvement of the listeners and so on. Out of the perspectives of sermon, congregation and preacher, I have tried to identify some *areas of concern* in the current homiletical conversation, being especially on the look-out for questions concerning language and images to talk about these concerns. These areas are in no way the only ones, or even for certain the most pressing ones, many other areas could have been chosen, but these three areas were identified and chosen because:

1) They seem to be "on speaking terms" with the different aspects in the framework of imagination, hopefully creating a space for conversation.

2) They seem to create a space of intersects between the homiletical literature visited and my experience and questions as a homiletician.

4.4.1 Linguistic Craft

A contemporary concern which resonates with questions rising from my own experience, is the enquiry of the actual *linguistic craft* and skills of the preacher and the concrete language of the sermon. Knowing the risk of replacing theological substance with homiletical style, as we saw above, how can homiletics talk about how to construct and create sermons where form and content are in harmony? The sermonic craft is then not only a question of talking clearly or truthfully, even if that is essential, but also a question of how to preach in a way that is performative, in the sense that it does not only say what the text says, but does what the texts does?

The apprehension is linked to the experience of the dullness of the sermon on two levels. On the first level, it is concerned with the sermon that is boring in the sense that it is simply not interesting. On a deeper level, the dullness has to do with a flattened and reduced vision of reality. This reduced vision is mirrored in flattened language and the preacher lacks the tools to create and use language that correspond to a more enchanted social imaginary. How can the homiletician talk about these alternative modes of speech, using language that supports the transformative power of biblical words? The remedy suggested by Brueggemann is *alternative modes of speech*, language that supports the transformative power of biblical words.

4.4.2 Connected Relationships

The congregation has historically been quite out of sight in homiletical theory but has been gaining more and more interest. Using the new concept of *preachership*, Fahlgren elevates the ecclesial character of the preaching event. The listeners are active participants in the sermon enterprise rather than passive recipients, and the community of faith and the preacher act reciprocally. How can this relational connection and emphatic understanding be named, talked about and practised in the homiletical classroom? The second concern is thus related to the relationship between the preacher and the congregation. How to talk and teach about this connection or relationship between preacher and congregation? How to practise this kind of deep emphatic understanding in a homiletical context?

4.4.3 Holistic Formation

The third concern is related to the complex role of the preacher and formation. Different contesting images of the preacher are correlated to different understandings of the aim and goal of preaching. This complex identity has been described as a kind of witnessing, as the work of a herald, an artist, a musician, a poet, a storyteller, a therapist, an explorer, being a

prophet presenting a re-narration leading to a new imagination or construction of reality. All of these images are connected to a particular understanding of the task and *telos* of preaching. At the core, it concerns question of formation, epistemology and anthropology.

Formation in a theological context can be defined and described in many different ways, for example as "renewing of the mind", "a change of heart", "imitation of Christ" "spiritual maturity", "discipleship training", "hoped-for change" , "motion in an intended direction", "change of world-view perspective", "moral development", "growth", "progress", "pilgrimage" or "sanctification". [28] Some of the concepts offered to describe formation seem to be too thin, superficial or narrow to get at the depth and intricacy of human formation. Drawing on Brueggemann and his description of preaching as being one voice or force in the contest between diverse ways to narrate and construct the world, how can the preacher talk about formation that goes against the status quo and the normative social imaginary? How can the language in the homiletical classroom talk about holistic human transformation in a way that embraces, but also goes beyond, rational worldviews and emotions? Is preaching to be understood as being part of a contest between different ways to narrate and construct the world? What does the actual formation of the listeners look like and how does it happen? Homiletics seems to be searching for language and concepts to describe *holistic formation* that contains, but goes beyond rational worldviews and emotions.

To sum it up we have arrived at the end of this chapter with three homiletical concerns related to finding adequate homiletical language:

A. The search for language and images to talk about the *linguistic craft* of preaching. Language concerned with methods, form and technique, creating and using alternative modes of speech to escape a flattened linguistic.

B. The search for language and images to talk about the *connected relationship*s and interdependence between sermon, preacher, worship and congregation.

C. The search for language and images to talk about the *holistic formation* and role of preaching.

We will return to these concerns in chapter 6.

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[28] Examples taken from Long 2005:109, Hull 2006:28, Dykstra 1981:68

Chapter 5. Research Results - Igniting the Heart

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this exploratory study is to investigate some preliminaries for a conversation between the concept of imagination and homiletics. The problem formulation reads: *What are some possible strengths and weaknesses of using the concept of imagination in relationship to homiletics?* We will now look at Bruce´s text, and the findings will be mapped and organized by using four key questions.

A. How does Bruce define and use the concept of imagination in relationship to homiletics in *Igniting the Heart*?

B. How does this relate to the tentative framework of imagination as images in the mind´s eye, as empathy and as social imaginary, looking specifically at the sermon, the congregation and the preacher? The texts will thus be analyzed with the help of the three aspects, or circles, of imagination, on the levels of sermon, congregation and preacher.

C. What metaphors does Bruce use when talking about preaching and which ones does she seem to prefer as the most fruitful and sustainable?

D. And finally, does she suggest any implications her view on imagination might have for homiletical teaching?

5.2 Background Kate Bruce

In 2013, Kate Bruce completed her PhD: *The Vital Importance of the Imagination in the Contemporary Preaching Event*, at Durham University. With inspiration from and using material from her dissertation she then wrote the book *Igniting the heart, preaching and imagination*, which was published 2015. Already at the outset Bruce is using a controlling image, that of preaching as *igniting the heart*. What is to happen in the preaching event? Ignition. Where? In the heart (and life) of the listener, and in the same way in the preacher. Bruce herself suggests that it gives a sense of "words pulsing with revelatory potential, leaping out and sparking connections in the imagination of the hearer" (Bruce 2015:xiii). Igniting speaks of sudden power and illumination, the moment when "the switch flips, the light go on and we see anew" (Bruce 2015:xiii). Ignition has to do with sparks and connections, linking different pictures, experiences, thoughts and emotions in an "aha-

moment". To achieve such connections in the preaching event "requires the active engagement of the imagination of the preacher and hearer" (Bruce 2015:xiii).

Who is Kate Bruce? Reverend Dr Katherine Bruce is Director, Centre for communication and Preaching, at St John´s College, Durham University which incorporates Cranmer Hall. Kate became Deputy Warden and Tutor in Homiletics in April 2014; having up to that time held parish and chaplaincy posts after ordination in 2001, coming from a background as a secondary school teacher. Kate organizes and teaches on the Durham Preaching Conferences, day conferences designed to inspire, support and enable preachers. She founded the Durham Preaching School for younger preachers in 2015.

5.3 Bruce´s Definition of Imagination

The first question I want to look at is how Bruce defines and uses the concept of imagination in relation to homiletics in her book *Igniting the heart*. Throughout her book Bruce argues for the vital importance of imagination for the preacher, but how does she define and use the word imagination? Bruce offers more of a framework of different aspects of the function of imagination than a straight definition. The range of possible definitions shows that it is a complex concept and Bruce focus primarily on the *function* of the imagination, drawing from the philosopher Mary Warnock. The core definition, or framework, of imagination, is taken from Warnock's book *Imagination* (1976).

> "There is a power in the human mind which is at work in our everyday perception of the world, and is also at work in our thoughts about what is absent; which enables us to see the world, whether present or absent as significant, and also to present this vision to others, for them to share or reject. And this power...is not only intellectual. Its impetus comes from the emotions as much as from the reason, from the heart as much as from the head." (Bruce 2015:3, quoting Warnock 1976:196)

From this definition Bruce draws four areas of imaginative function (Bruce 2015:3):

1. The sensory function; everyday perception.

2. The intuitive function; seeing patterns and connections beyond the literal, conventional and literal.

3. The affective function; emotional experiences.

4. The intellectual function; rational thought.

The sensory function enables formation of *images* in the mind, processing all the incoming sensory data, looking for similarities and categories. Bruce makes a connection to the Bible meditations of Ignatius of Loyola where he encourages an imaginative approach, drawing on sensory details in the exercise. "It is worthwhile to try to read the ancient text of the Bible with the sensory imagination fully engaged. What would it mean to walk the landscape of this world? What would we see, taste, touch, smell and hear?" (Bruce 2015:5). Bruce´s definition of imagination in this sense comes close to *attentiveness*. It means to live and to read with the senses on high alert, with an eye for detail and impressions.

The intuitive function uses the perceptions of the sensory function to form new connections, combining substance, thoughts and images to forge new and sometimes surprising pictures. This function of imagination is flexible, seeing new possibilities, relationships and links and can thus form figurative language, metaphors and poetic insight (Bruce 2015:8). Bruce´s definition of imaginations intuitive function can be described as a kind of *combining*. It is similar to the concepts of "seeing as" or "aspect seeing" proposed by Wittgenstein. In the same way as we can see the duckrabbit either as a duck or a rabbit (see figure 1 below), words can be seen to have different meanings, depending on the context and language-world. Words and images take on different meanings in relationship to the words and images they are combined and used together with. Imagination and interpretation are thus closely linked, for example in the preaching event when the preacher or the listeners first see something one way, and then, suddenly or slowly, shift to see something altogether different and something new emerges.

The task of the homiletical imagination in this sense is to break the habitual seeing and invite to a new kind of interpretation, fusing the horizons of the biblical text and the contemporary situation. Bruce describes this intuitive imagination as a kind of sacramental seeing, apprehending the divine in the ordinary.
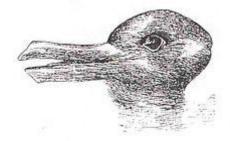

Figure 1

The affective function of imagination embraces both the near-by affect of sympathy and the inside affect of empathy. Bruce describes it as an imaginative identification, getting as close as possible to another person´s point of view and experience. Empathy "opens up the potential for vicarious experience, which carries with it the possibility of increased knowledge and understanding." (Bruce 2015:13). Empathic imagination is for example exercised by the preacher as a tool to reach the depths both of the scriptural text and the living conditions of fellow church-members and neighbours.

Once again Bruce returns to Ignatian prayer techniques, which draws heavily on affective imagination. "Central to Ignatian spirituality is the view that imagination has revelatory potential" (Bruce 2015:14). In affective imaginative engagement with the biblical text there can be a deeper understanding, as the listener links their own feelings of, for example, shame, hope or forgiveness, with the persons in the narrative. This can be powerful, and Bruce offers a warning here, inviting the emotional imagination should never make the listeners feel like they have "been emotionally manipulated or exploited" (Bruce 2015:15).

Bruce´s definition of the affective function of imagination in the homiletical context can be summed up as an important and powerful tool that has to be used with caution. Her definition of this role of imagination can be described as a kind of sparks or arrows directed towards the emotional centre of both the preacher and the listener. It is a kind of invitation, implicitly asking someone to stand in another person's shoes for a while, feeling what they feel, thinking what they think, seeing what they see, hoping what they hope, and believing what they believe.

The intellectual function of imagination is described by Bruce as a resource that reason can employ, for example in hypothesizing, " a reasoned step-by-step process, constructed around an "if...then" model of supposition, involves the imagination in a projection of what might happen and what could be possible" (Bruce 2015:18). When the preacher is structuring a logical reasoned argument, the imagination is a helpful tool to identify cracks and anomalies in the argument, address possible objections from the sermon listeners and see the flow of the discourse.

Bruce strongly argues against a view of imagination that is disconnected from the intellect and stresses the importance of imagination in research and science. Polarizing of imagination and intellect is misconceived claims Bruce, "Some sermons, drawing on the logical skills of the intellectual imagination, will employ reason, supposition and hypothesis, marshalling thoughts to present an argument, anticipating and countering objection in the quest to persuade the hearer." (Bruce 2015:19). With the help of intellectual imagination

humans can explore possibilities in a suppositional engagement; *what if* Jesus really lived, died and rose again? *What if* God exists? *What if* God loves us? These are imaginative questions. "What goes on in imagination affects who we are and how we live. One of the tasks of homiletics is to encourage suppositional questioning in the fields of faith and ethics with the aim of opening up the potential for transformation." (Bruce 2015:19).

5.4 Three Aspects and Levels of Imagination in Homiletical Context

The second question we want to look at is how does Bruce´s definition of imagination relate to the three different aspects of imagination as *images in the mind´s eye*, as *empathy* and as *social imaginary*, looking specifically at the *sermon*, the *congregation* and the *preacher*. The texts will thus be described with the help of the three aspects, or circles, of imagination, on the levels of sermon, congregation and preacher. The four categories that Bruce employs to describe a framework of imagination partly overlaps and partly differentiate from the three different aspects of imagination as images in the mind´s eye, as empathy and as social imaginary. Bruce´s categories focus on function, the *sensory* function, the *intuitive* function, the *affective* function and the *intellectual* function (Bruce 2015:3).

5.4.1 Imagination as Images in the Mind´s Eye

Imagination as images in the mind´s eye as described above is equivalent to the sensory function. The body and the brain has received perceptions of images and when the preacher says: "Imagine Mary on that donkey, riding on a gravel road, being at the end of her pregnancy, feeling the baby move inside her, looking at Joseph and wondering what he is thinking" the listeners in the congregation all have a warehouse of perceptions, images, memories collected through the senses to use. Not from that exact experience of riding a donkey in the Middle East in ancient times, but from experiences that are related, like maybe riding a horse, feeling uncertain and becoming a parent. The sensory function of imagination thus creates images in the mind´s eye.

On the level of the concrete *sermon* Bruce advocates a generous use of images that invite the listener´s imagination. The preacher should paint both the biblical world and the present world with colours and narratives that evoke images and visions. The ideal for Bruce is sermons that cause the heart to catch and the imagination to soar, sermons that help the congregation to see anew (Bruce 2015:55). This is what she calls *preaching in the lyrical voice*. This is an alternative mode of speech, a speech that is dramatic, artistic and invitational.

Bruce argues that this mode of speech draws on Walter Brueggemanns concepts of the prophetic and poetic preaching (Bruce 2015:55). The opposite of preaching in the lyrical voice is for Bruce the dull, boring, thin and tedious preaching, full of clichés and platitudes, with the language of a foreshortened vision. Bruce, again like Brueggemann, is using the word *prose* here, to point to the flattened language of settled truth and pervasive reductionism. Preaching in the prose mode of speech is a kind of trivialized and packed down preaching.

What is the antidote? Bruce suggests a preaching which is marked by "a desire to grasp the disclosure of the gospel imaginatively and communicate that by drawing from the craft of poetic expression" (Bruce 2015:56). Bruce wants to demonstrate that Brueggemann´s vision for alternative modes of speech is met in lyrical preaching and that engagement of the imagination is vital and necessary for preaching in the lyrical voice, "lyrical preaching is fundamentally dependant on the employment of imagination in all its functions" (Bruce 2015:84).

But what does this *preaching in a lyrical voice* actually look like? And what does it has to do with image´s in the mind's eye? In the world of radio-talk there is an expression, to talk so that the listeners "see through their ears". Bruce uses this expression to describe how the preacher is to use language to evoke images in the minds of the listeners. "At the heart of lyrical preaching is the concern to construct sermons that enable people to ´see through their ears" (Bruce 2015:56). This means that in the construction and construal of the sermon, as well as in the communication of the sermon the preacher needs to use multisensory language. With visual speech the preacher helps the listeners to imaginatively see, hear, smell, touch and taste the good news (Bruce 2015:58). This can happen through a broad variety of linguistic tools and strategies, Bruce mentions these eleven:

1) Attend to details in the Scriptures with full sensing imagination

2) Make use of imagery, employing a variety of analogy, metaphor and simile

3) Weave imagery into the flow of conversational language

4) Layer description for cumulative effect

5) Draw on observation of the everyday to offer instances, or earthed examples of more abstract ideas

6) Use repetition and contrast

7) Employ the musicality of language, for example onomatopoeia and alliteration

8) Consider rhythm in the language

9) Vary sentence length

10) Engage affective imagination

11) Take into account the relationship of sermon form and content

(Bruce 2015: 61-62)

All of these concrete tools, or hallmarks of the lyrical sermon, aims at evoking images and pictures in the listeners mind. Not only because it is easier to listen to, but also because Bruce believes such "preaching is laden with transformative potential, alive to the revelatory power of the Word pulsing through our human language" (Bruce 2015:55). The lyrical preaching-voice also has to do with the delivery of the sermon, ensuring that content and the performative aspects of preaching support each other. Bruce mentions vocal intonation, volume, pace, gesture and eye contact (Bruce 2015:62).

Bruce is eager to stress that preaching in the lyrical voice does not mean that sermons should be like poems, and it is not preaching for especially arty or lofty occasions. But it is preaching that seeks to be *artistic* in the sense that it wants us to see something from a new and sometimes surprising perspective. It is *invitational* in the sense that the images demands participation. It is *dramatic* in the sense that it uses contrasts, conflicts and paradoxes as a way of helping the hearer to hear the "same old" with "new ears". It is *poetic* in the sense that it is highly aware about nuances in language and words, creating echoes, associations and opening up bigger dimensions (Bruce 2015:55, 61).

Lyrical preaching is in this sense a kind of verbal icons. The images the words of the preacher evoke create internal imagery in the listeners, and such language has the potential to create alternative imaginative worlds, claims Bruce. Preaching in the lyrical voice also has to do with the preacher´s task to connect images, minting new metaphors that invite the listeners to see the world in new ways (Bruce 2015:57). For Bruce, this means that one essential task of the preacher is to train and practise finding new imaginative associations between the word of God and contemporary images in everyday life that surrounds humans (Bruce 2015:57). And this is ultimately the goal, that the sermons will be part of a constructing imaginations shaped by biblical truths. Here she is moving from talking about imagination as pictures in the mind´s eye, to the broader sense of imagination as a way to see, interpret and judge the world (Bruce 2015:58-59).

Preaching in the lyrical voice also has another dimension for Bruce. The poetic language in the sermon is a way to point at, discover and give language to the *more* beyond what we directly experience. It is a sermon language that tries to "open windows into new vistas of possibility" (Bruce 2015:57). This kind of preaching as poetic and existential speech is trying to avoid the flattening, reduced language into a language that opens up to the multilayered and unspeakable. Bruce is convicted that language has the power to lift and

reshape human vision and outlook on the world, and how people listening to sermons interpret their lives. Sermons can serve a theological or philosophical seeing anew which is hard to describe, but it is not achieved through a secret mumble jumble technique, but rather quite concrete and earthed literary techniques and tools (Bruce 2015:58).

What part does the *congregation* have in this description of imagination in the mind´s eye for Bruce? The willingness of the members of the church to let themselves be drawn into a biblical vision or imagination is of vital importance according to Bruce. The preaching event rests on the ability of the preacher to paint and invite the listeners and the readiness of the listeners to trust the preacher enough to let themselves be drawn into that biblical painting.

The role and the skills of the *preacher* to preach in a way that invites the imagination thus become imperative for Bruce. The question for the preacher is – how can I find and develop a language that renew and deepen the vision of our life and the universe. The preacher should go to the poet and ask to borrow some literary tools, like strong metaphors for example: "The imaginative eye will always note that there is more to be said and more to be said in better ways. Metaphor leaves room for mystery and at the same time invites encounter with that mystery: the encounter of disclosure, discernment, commitment and faith" (Bruce 2015:83-84). Bruce stresses that "lyrical preaching is a homiletic strategy that seeks to evoke, intimate, gesture and co-operate with the disclosive impetus of God" (Bruce 2015:58). Bruce also connects this function of the imagination with spiritual discipline and listening to God, "This kind of deep listening requires the sensing imagination to be on high alert" (Bruce 2015:60).

5.4.2 Imagination as Empathy

The role of imagination that Bruce calls the affective function is corresponding with imagination as empathy. Bruce develops the thought of imaginations affective function in relationship to sermon, congregation and preacher. The affective imagination can for example make present what is absent in terms of the perspective, understanding and feelings of another. She writes "For example, the preacher at a funeral – assuming they have no connection with the deceased – is likely to have a sympathetic approach to the mourners but not necessarily an empathetic connection. In sympathy, grief is witnessed from more of a distance" (Bruce 2015:13). If sympathy and empathy is operating on a continuum, sympathy has more of a "near-by" affect and empathy more of an "inside" affect. Empathy is to climb into someone else's shoes and see the world from that point of view.

On the level of the *sermon* Bruce stresses the importance of finding language that engages the emotional, "If preaching is to ignite the heart, it must appeal to people´s affective capacities, and this is an inherently imaginative undertaking" (Bruce 2015:15). But Bruce is well aware of the risk of emotionalizing the sermon. She is advocating a balance in preaching, between affect, reason, emotions and logic. People should never leave a service feeling they have been emotionally exploited or manipulated. "Wise and healthy affective engagement can build up the sense of continuity between the individual, their community and wider contexts. Such imaginative function is the antidote to a fragmented, myopic individualism that stunts vision, damages identity and community and destroys the impetus to engage in a life founded on the ethic of neighbour love" (Bruce 2015:15).

The empathic imagination can be a part in creating unity, solidarity and practical care about other people. If the sermon is inviting and encouraging empathetic imagination it can generate a deep compassion for other people, who from one side might seem very different from the members of the congregation, but seen from the other side (and this is one of the tasks of the sermon) shares the same human existential terms, and an emotional link is thus possible.

What does it mean on the level of the *preacher* to engage empathetic imagination in preparing and delivering the sermon? In order to preach in a way that also emotionally connect with the listeners the preacher needs to draw from their own experiences of human emotions such as happiness, grief, sorrow, longings, anger, guilt and love, stresses Bruce. If the preacher is to listen to the text with the ears of the congregation, it is necessary to exercise the affective side of imagination, asking questions such as: what objections might this text generate? How might the people in church feel about this idea or illustration? Drawing on the work of Richard Eslinger, Bruce argues that empathy is essential in preaching as it enables and invites the preacher to live into a context that is not the preachers own, which can lead to transformations of attitudes and understandings (Bruce 2015:13).

But this affective imagination is not only important in relationship to the congregation, it is also vital in the textual exploration and exegetical work, says Bruce. Here she refers to Ignatian prayers and spirituality, with the view that imagination has revelatory potential. "Employing the affective imagination allows the preacher to stand in the shoes of the biblical characters and consider the text from the perspectives of the hearers" (Bruce 2015:84).

How does this empathetic imagination look like on the level of the *congregation*? Bruce stresses the importance of a willingness to engage emotionally with the narrative and the biblical characters: "In imaginatively considering the experiences of the characters, new

insight can be experienced. In affective imaginative engagement with the text, sympathy can move into empathy as we shift from imagining – for example, Peter´s desolation following his denial, as if we were Peter in the biblical narrative – to feeling our own guilt and shame connected with the stories of our own denials of Christ" (Bruce 2015:14). Sympathy is important, but empathy "goes deeper", having a more "inside affect", says Bruce. When the congregation engages in imaginative empathy they practise seeing, hearing, feeling and experiencing the world from someone else´s point of view, it might be Moses', Ruth´s, Matthew´s or the teenager sitting in front of the listener in the church pew.

5.4.3 Imagination as Social Imaginary

This is the aspect of imagination that Bruce mentions the least. Her perspective is more focused on imagination as images evoked by words and emotional connections with other people. Imagination as social imaginary is hinted, or vaguely pointed at in some passages of her book. She writes for example that imagination has the ability to reconfigure reality by seeing it through an "alternative lens" (Bruce 2015:105). Talking about on-looks, Bruce writes that our "perceptual filter affects our vision but sometimes our on-looks are so engrained we barely notice them. With a different filter we see anew and different questions arise" (Bruce 2015:147), but this change in on-looks does not seem to be as radical and encompassing as changing social imaginary.

Effectively, she is arguing that "inherent to preaching is the prophetic ability to make connections between God´s past faithfulness, his continuing fidelity and the promise of hope" (Bruce 2015:105). It takes imaginative, or prophetic, insight to see and make those connections between the depth experiences of humans (doubt, fear, hopelessness and confusion for example) and connect that with the hope of the biblical story. There needs to be a kind of imaginative vision on the part of the preacher, to be able to discern Gods work in the suffering of the world (Bruce 2015:105).

This social imaginary is in Bruce´s text described as both contemplation and action, being able to move beyond naming into shaping and suggesting active response, in political and ethical action for example (Bruce 2015:105). Bruce does not relate to or refer to Charles Taylor, the one she is in dialogue with concerning the wider social and political aspects of imagination, is Walter Brueggemann. Her way of talking about language and new ways of seeing "how things are" resembles Brueggemanns concept of prophetic imagination. The poetic and prophetic imaginative language Bruce and Brueggemann are trying to get at has

certain qualities. It is a shattering language, evocative speech. It is a kind of language that breaks ordinary conclusion and commonplace rationality about "how things are". It is a language that presses people toward new possibilities. Possibilities people need their imagination to see, trust and follow. This is also dangerous possibilities, because it is in contrast with the status quo. It is a re-imagining, a re-orienting. It is a language that surprises, subverts and provokes (Bruce 2015:105).

Compared to Brueggemann Bruce seems to have a somewhat more narrow focus, more concerned about the life-stories of the people in the congregation than societies collective social imaginary. Bruce focus is not on the *conflict* between different social imaginaries, or modern idols like the empire, nationalism and the weapon-industry that Brueggemann cast light on. Bruce´s focus seems more concerned with hopelessness, despair and the awakening of hope in the individual or in a congregation. Her focus is also more on the concrete craft of sermon-making. What does a prophetic preaching *really* look like? "He (Brueggemann) often speaks of the imagination in relation to preaching, though he says little about either the nature of imagination or the craft of such preaching. The question remains: how can preachers create such alternative modes of speech? What approaches will help the sermon to sing a new song?" (Bruce 2015:56).

5.5 Metaphors for Preaching

The third question I want to look at is what metaphors Bruce use when talking about preaching, and does she emphasize some of them as more fruitful and sustainable? Rhetorically, Bruce asks, "who do you think you are as a preacher?" (Bruce 2015:107). The answer to that question might be more important than we think, says Bruce, because the metaphors that master the preacher shape their practise. Engaging with the task of preaching, Bruce describes six metaphors. The preacher as *teacher, spiritual director, herald, artist, jazz musician* and *jester*. What will be the implications for the actual preaching event if the preacher looks upon their role from these different aspects? Bruce does not want to come to a conclusion which one of these metaphors is the best or more fruitful, but she wants to describe them and through them help her readers to get to see different aspects of the role of the preacher and ultimately, the role of preaching itself. "The contention here is that the preacher needs to evaluate how they imagine their role as preacher, because these internalized models carry theological freight and will have practical outworking" (Bruce 2015:107).

Analyzing Bruce's text we can see all of these metaphors being used, but the metaphors that are most commonly used are closest to the images of the preacher as a spiritual director and an artist. The spiritual director-metaphor can in a close reading be even more specified. The preaching pastor has the task of seeing, naming and inviting listeners into the grace of God, what Bruce herself calls "the sacramental potential of preaching" (Bruce 2015:85). Bruce describes the sermon as an event to discover the "more" present in the everyday and to get a new vision. Preaching for Bruce, is noticing and naming Gods grace and presence in the ordinary, so that the mundane and ordinary get another glow, or are opened into the transcendent. But what does she specifically mean by this sacramental *potential*?

Bruce is not arguing that preaching should become a new sacrament in her tradition, but she wants to lift up the thought of sacramentality that sees "all reality as potentially acting as bearer of God´s saving presence" (Bruce 2015:86). Her aim is to explore the possibility that preaching might have a sacramental function and structure, introducing this as a ground-, or guiding metaphor.

How can the sermon have a sacramental potentiality? Well, in one sense, Bruce argues, it has this potentiality because all created things, everything within creation has sacramental potentiality in the sense that it can to talk to us about God. For the sermon to be a sacrament it requires both the action of God and the response of humans, the response being secondary but still essential (Bruce 2015:88). Bruce connects sacramentality with imagination in the sense that imaginative preaching enables people to see and experience God. It thus becomes a sacramental imagination that keeps the door open to the possibility of finding and being found by God in and through the preaching, even though there is no guarantee. Here Bruce comes close to the biblical texts. She does not cite abundantly from the Bible in her book, but in this area she connects imagination and revelation, with texts about the Spirit, for example John 14.26 and 14.16-17 and 15.26. Bruce explains that Christ´s presence in Spirit will continue to guide, teach, comfort and help, enabling a seeing that is beyond physical sight; a perception of deeper knowing. Drawing from Janowiak, Boff, Schwöbel, Loades and Farley, Bruce finds theological support for the view that preaching has a sacramental potential (Bruce 2015:97).

She goes on to suggest that even the preacher him/herself might be a sacramental image. If the preacher has a deep love and desire for God for example, a love that is reflected and visible in preaching, that can become a sacramental image. Not because of any moral superiority on the part of the preacher, but because of the willingness to pay attention to God in the Scripture and Gods gifts in life, in the "day-to-day muddle of life" (Bruce 2015:100). But doesn´t this view carry some great risks? Connecting imagination so close to revelation

and sacramentality? Yes, acknowledges Bruce, there are great risks, language can always be used to manipulate and enslave and the sermon can become even an anti-sacrament. But she stresses that this sacramental potentiality both requires a *holy speaking* and *a holy listening*. The responsibility is both in the giving and in the receiving. The language and sermon experience can either be a distraction or a help. For Bruce, it is not so much a question of on or off, yes or no, but more a question of degrees. There are always different degrees of possibility to experience the depths, or to stay at the surface.

5.6 Implications for Teaching Preaching

The fourth, and final, question I have asked to the text is what implications Bruce´s thoughts on imagination might have for homiletical teaching. Bruce addresses preaching, but also the teaching of preaching – homiletics. She wants to influence preachers who read her book, but also show possible implications for theological homiletical education. Her argument is, not surprisingly, that imagination should have a more prominent role in homiletics, ”If imagination is a gift given, which can be nurtured and shaped to help us to apprehend the divine, then it should be a vital element in theological education” (Bruce 2015:155).

In the final chapter of *Igniting the Heart*, with the title *Lighting the Blue Touch-Paper*, Bruce´s focus is on implications for the practice and teaching of preaching (Bruce 2015:143). Her question throughout the text is, if imagination has this vital role in preaching that she has been arguing throughout the book, how then should the homiletical classroom, the literature, the nature of the curriculum design and the sermonic structures be affected?

But before she goes into these areas, she wants to answer an objection that often surface in these discussions. Can imagination really be a subject at a university? Imagination isn´t something that can be taught or tested. Either you have it or you don´t. To these objections Bruce answer by emphasizing that imagination is a gift given, but shaped by the way a person, in this case a student, develops it. The imagination is not something static but can become strengthened through practice. When Bruce meets the disclaimer: "I don´t have any imagination", her response is that from her experience, the main obstacle is not a lack of imagination but an inability to contact imagination consciously and exercise it productively (Bruce 2015:155).

Drawing from Anna Carter Florence article *The Preaching Imagination* in *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice* Bruce stresses that imagination is not a fixed ingredient to add to the sermon, imagination is rather a muscle the preacher develops (Bruce 2015:143).

So, if imagination has this vital role in preaching that Bruce suggests, how should the subject of homiletics be affected by this? How can theological educations be places that cultivate, encourage and equip the imagination of the students? (Bruce 2015:155). Bruce stresses the importance of *creating an environment and structure within the institution that foster and support development of imaginative expressions*. This concerns all subjects, but here she focuses on homiletics. But how does this environment and structure that foster and support a development of homiletical imagination look like, more concretely? How is this conviction to land in the classroom and curriculum? "A full answer would require an entire book! At the very least, preaching within the worship of the institution needs to *model* an imaginative approach, avoiding the pitfall of assuming that theological students and staff need, want or even like heavyweight theological lectures in the place of the sermon. This is not an argument for dumbing down the intellectual weight of the sermon, rather a call to preach deep, profound and thoughtful sermons that are daring, artistic and risky".

One of the ways to inculcate new vision is to show rather than tell. Given this, the powerful potential of the sermon needs to be *demonstrated* in the preaching happening in theological institutions" (Bruce 2015:156, italics added). First of all, Bruce stresses the importance of *modelling* how the imaginative sermon looks like and that the teachers embody this imaginative approach in the actual classroom-situation, "teachers of homiletics need to model imaginative engagement in the way they approach the subject of preaching. Imagination needs to be part of the cargo of the preaching curriculum, a subject for theological discussion in its own right. It is also the vehicle that enables the communication and reception of curriculum content" (Bruce 2015:156).

If the homiletics classroom "is to inspire spiritual discipline, theological faithfulness, rich scriptural engagement, openness to the sacramental nature of life, a willingness to play with language and risk performance then the teaching of preaching *must* be rooted in imagination (Bruce 2015:156). This kind of imagination is not some magical ability that some have and other´s don´t, it is more like a habit, a muscle that can be trained by long-term discipline and regular practice.

Secondly, Bruce advocates that the homiletical curriculum entails a framework of imaginative function, like the model with four different functions she is proposing. "*The framework of imaginative function is a heuristic tool* to enable discussion of imagination in the homiletics classroom" (Bruce 2015:159, italics added). It is imperative to help students think clearly about what they are talking about when they talk about imagination, says Bruce,

and for that end the framework can work as a heuristic tool that gives a sense of coherence and structure around the broad spectrum of definitions of imagination.

Thirdly, Bruce highlights the importance in homiletics to *teach and practice imagination as a spiritual sensory discipline* for the preacher. "If preaching is to have depth and resonance, the preacher needs to develop their sensory imagination as a spiritual discipline, resisting the lure of worthy busyness" (Bruce 2015:145). Bruce argues that the student studying homiletics needs to see, discover and practise sensory imagination through genuine seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling, as opposed to passive, superficial sensory skimming.

What does this mean? A spiritual sensory discipline has to do with engagement with the details of the everyday and having the senses alert, paying attention to both the landscape of the Scripture and the environment. "A stunted sensory imagination offers little to the other functions of imagination, resulting in vapid description that does not resonate with the hearer's ´context, lack of precision, weak affective connection and a paucity of detailed data to offer to the intellectual imaginative function." (Bruce 2015:145). Homiletical teaching should entail reflections on and practising's of *sacramental alertness*. This means looking for Gods revelation in both Scripture and creation, in the lives of the people in the Scripture and people in church and in the neighbourhood, making "connections between Scripture, theology and everyday life, looking to name God in the world" (Bruce 2015:103). In this sense, preaching can be described as the art of giving name to grace found in the human experience (Bruce 2015:103).

But how is this focus on sensory, contemplative and sacramental alertness or awareness to land in the actual classroom situation? Bruce does not offer a wide range of examples or methods connected to the homiletical situation, but mentions that students can practise how to be attentive to details of creation and of people´s stories in the process of creating sermons. She also suggests that students should be encouraged to develop this awareness and contemplation as part of the personal spirituality practices. Here Bruce mentions Ignatian bible-meditation as a helpful and valuable exercise, as it invites the student to locate themselves within the passage "noting details of the unfolding scene with the eye of imagination" (Bruce 2015:146).

The fourth area Bruce focuses has to do with the *affective imaginative function*. This has implications for how the teacher is sensitive to student´s emotions, like fear of failure when it comes to preaching, or apprehension when it comes to "thinking right theologically", or anxiety when it comes to working creatively. The teacher's task is to create a safe space for

students to think critically, reflect freely, experiment, take risks and dare to have a playful relationship to language (Bruce 2015:157). When it comes to how the affective imaginative function should be used in the actual creation of the sermon, Bruce mentions several concrete practises and aspects. The homiletical teaching is to stress that images and instances are not to be drawn repeatedly from the same sphere of life as this "shows a failure to consider the range of experiences of the hearers and reduces the potential for affective engagement across the congregation. There are only so many football references the average congregation can take!" (Bruce 2015:150). Questions that can be asked when evaluating a sermon in this area are for example: Is the sermon inward-looking or opening up horizons to experiences from different lives and parts of the world? Is the sermon helping the congregation to stand in someone else's shoes for a while, the stranger, the refuge, the enemy? Does the sermon help the listeners to be affected by the experiences of others?

Fifthly, homiletical teaching should focus more on how to *find*, *develop* and *use* the lyrical voice, as opposite to a flattening, fixed language. "Student preachers need to be exposed to the power of poetic language and given opportunities to play with figurative language, identifying and discussing the effective use of the lyrical voice in sermons" (Bruce 2015:163).

How does this happen? One way is to do close studying of sermons that are good examples and embody the ideals and tools of preaching in the lyrical voice. Bruce is following her own advice and has integrated her own text with examples of sermons that she defines as sermons preached in a lyrical voice. It is Bruce's conviction that students need concrete examples of sermons to see what lyrical preaching actually look like and analyze on a very detailed level how the language is working, what it does and how it moves.

The last area Bruce suggests to be developed in homiletical teaching is connected with the *logic of eschatological hope,* using the intellectual function of imagination to see that "*if* God has promised redemption, *then* redemption will come"(Bruce 2015:151). Homiletical teaching needs to be well grounded in the biblical story with its beginning and "end". Bruce writes that she calls this the intellectual imagination as it is not based on feelings but on the promises of God. The label of intellectual, rational imagination on God´s promises can be questioned, but Bruce´s point here is not that it is provable, but that it is a biblical truth that goes beyond the circumstances, experiences and feelings that might look like opposite to God´s promises. Intellectual imagination can sustain emotions that are fatigued and intuition that is weary with an insistent grasp on the eschatological hope in God´s promises (Bruce 2015:151).

5.7 Summary

Bruce does not give a short and concise definition of the word imagination in her book *Igniting the heart*, what she gives is instead a skeleton, a frame where different aspects of the imaginative function is described. She describes the sensory function dealing with our everyday perception, the intuitive function that helps humans to see patterns and make creative connections, the affective function that invites empathy and sympathy in meeting with other people and stories and finally, the intellectual function, helping persons to imagine rational consequences.

Bruce´s text relates quite closely to two of the chosen aspects of imagination, as images in the mind´s eye and as empathy, but relates quite briefly to imagination as social imaginary. Her focus is more on the intuitive and the intellectual function of imagination. Bruce is aware of the big picture of social imaginary and is influenced by Brueggemanns wider perspectives, but in this text her focus seems to be more on the individual and on the people in the church as a group. Her concern is the how-to-questions. How is the preacher supposed to preach sermons that wrestle honestly with language and seek words that can enable and invites to a new seeing? She stresses the importance of the engagement of both the preacher and the congregation in the preaching event, but what she writes most detailed about is the sermon, and especially the language of the sermon, how to find the lyrical voice. Bruce puts the case that God fits none of the conventional theological categories we use. The imaginative openness to the Spirit in accord with the lyrical voice is one way of helping humans opening up the secure and ready images of God and enables a new seeing.

Bruce is convinced that conscious or unconscious metaphors that master the preacher shape their practise. The preacher needs to take a close look at the way their master metaphors influence the way they think about preaching, and foremost, how they preach. She describes both the weaknesses and the strengths of six different metaphors; the preacher as *teacher, spiritual director, herald, artist, jazz musician* and *jester*. All of these metaphors complement each other and stresses different important aspects according to Bruce. The one she develops most is the preacher as spiritual director, exploring the possibility that preaching might have a sacramental function and structure.

In the final chapter of her book, Bruce draws a picture of homiletical teaching formed by a conviction of the vital importance of imagination in theological education. It is an imaginative pedagogy of homiletics. Both the focus and form of homiletical teaching can be

formed by a more imaginative pedagogy, for example by creating an environment and structure within the institution that foster and support development of imaginative expressions, using the framework of imaginative function that Bruce is introducing as a heuristic tool, practice imagination as a spiritual sensory discipline, develop the lyrical language in the sermon and root the preaching in the logic of eschatological hope. All of this is part of creating an environment where the students can develop "the muscles of imagination". For Bruce it is important that the homiletical teachers, as well as the institution as a whole, models imaginative approaches to preaching and creates safe spaces for students to experiment, reflect, try and practise their imagination in all its functions in a serious playfulness.

Chapter 6. Research Results - Desiring the Kingdom

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter we will continue by looking at James K.A Smiths text and ask the same questions as above.

A. How does Smith define and use the concept of imagination in relationship to homiletics in *Desiring the Kingdom*?

B. How does this relate to the tentative framework of imagination as images in the mind´s eye, as empathy and as social imaginary, looking specifically at the sermon, the congregation and the preacher? The texts will thus be analyzed with the help of the three aspects, or circles, of imagination, on the levels of sermon, congregation and preacher.

C. What metaphors does Smith use when talking about preaching and which ones does she seem to prefer as the most fruitful and sustainable?

D. And finally, does he suggest any implications his view on imagination might have for homiletical teaching?

6.2 Background James K. A. Smith

James K.A. Smith is currently professor of philosophy at Calvin College where he holds the Gary & Henrietta Byker Chair in Applied Reformed Theology & Worldview. Trained as a philosopher with a focus on contemporary French thought, Augustinian tradition and associated with radical orthodoxy, Smith has written several books, including *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?: Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* (2006), *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy* (2010), *How (Not) To Be*

Secular: Reading Charles Taylor (2014) and *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (2016). His work is situated at the borderlands between philosophy, theology, ethics, aesthetics, science, and politics. As the first volume in a series of three, *Desiring the Kingdom*, was published 2009. The second volume in Smith´s Cultural Liturgies series, *Imagining the Kingdom*, *How Worship Works* came 2013 and 2017 the third and final volume, *Awaiting the King, Reforming Public Theology* was published. The three volumes together want to present a comprehensive theology of culture, with focus on Christian education, formative processes and worship as pedagogical practices.

6.3 Smith´s Definition of Imagination

The concept of imagination occurs frequently in Smith´s book *Desiring the Kingdom*, and in the sequel the word imagining has even made it to the title, but how does he define and use the concept of imagination in relationship to homiletics? Before we attempt to answer that question, it is essential to note that the focus of Smiths book is not the sermon in particular, as is the case with Kate Bruce, but worship and liturgy in a broader context. Smith is not a homiletician; his entrance is through the door of philosophical systematic theology, with the aim to provide a comprehensive theology of culture. In his own words, Smith envisions the book as "a corrective supplement to the 'worldview' approach of the Reformed tradition" (Smith 2017:xiii).

Desiring the Kingdom focuses on formation, liturgy and desire, with the purpose of re-visioning and re-imagining Christian formation and education as a formative maturing that learns to direct the desires of the members of the Christian community towards God´s kingdom. One of the aspects of this project is re-visioning Christian worship as a pedagogical practise. And within this aspect is the even smaller part of sermons and homiletics. So, for Bruce, preaching and imagination is the whole forest, but for Smith sermon is only one of many trees in the forest. With this in mind, let us now look at how Smith defines and uses the concept of imagination in relationship to homiletics.

Smith unambiguously suggests and presents a corrective of the worldview approach that has been dominant in the Reformed tradition, with a "somewhat reductionistic account of the human person" that "fails to accord a central role to embodiment and practice" (Smith 2009:45). Smith proposes a shifting of the center of gravity of human identity "from the cognitive to the affective, from minds to embodied hearts" (Smith 2009:65). In this shifting he

suggests a "(temporary) moratorium on the notion of 'worldview' and instead suggests adopting Charles Taylor´s notion of 'the social imaginary'" (Smith 2009:65).

To understand culture and identity Taylor suggests that one must give up fixations on ideas and theory and instead look at the imagination, or deep understanding that is embedded in human practices (Smith 2009:65). In the same way as Smith is trying to move the readers look and attention from "ideas" to bodily formation, Taylor introduces a shift from theories, what humans think or believe, to a *social imaginary* that is much broader and deeper than intellectual schemes, that is "something else and something more rumbling beneath the cognitive that drives much of our action and behaviour" (Smith 2009:65). This *something else* and *something more*, is what Smith wants to focus on. This will be further developed when we look at imagination as social imaginary in relationship to sermon, congregation and preacher.

But the question at hand takes the inquiry one step further. How does Smith define and use the concept of imagination *in relationship to homiletics*? Smith´s definition of imagination in the context of homiletics means that the sermon and the preaching event can be seen as a way of forming human imagination. Preaching for Smith is being engaged in a re-narration of the world with the ultimate goal of forming a Christian imagination. Imagination in relationship to homiletics is thus a way of *re-naming, re-telling* and *re-narrating*. Different imaginations about the world's telos are standing against each other, and in the sermon the preacher is painting and inviting the listeners into a different story than the dominant. The Christian imagination runs on the fuel of the narratives of Scripture (Smith 2009:195).

6.4 Three Aspects and Levels of Imagination in Homiletical Context

The next question we want to look at is how Smith´s definition of imagination relates to the three different aspects of imagination as *images in the mind´s eye*, as *empathy* and as *social imaginary*, looking specifically at the *sermon*, the *congregation* and the *preacher*?

6.4.1 Imagination as Images in the Mind´s Eye

From the start it is important to notice that Smith clearly refers mostly to the aspect of imagination as social imaginary, it is hard to find examples of imagination as images in the mind´s eye, but there are a few occasions. When Smith writes about imagination as images in the mind´s eye it is connected to social imaginary. The social imaginary partly consists of images, even though they are often precognitive and prereflective. Smith says, drawing on

Taylor, that the social imaginary is carried "in images, stories, myths, and related practices" (Smith 2009:133). When Smith engages in cultural exegesis of different "secular" liturgies, reading culture through the lens of worship, he concludes that the mall for example, is full of visions of a good life, antithetical to the biblical vision of the kingdom of God, and this secular vision is carried in images and advertisement.

Implicit in these images and practises of consumption is a deep understanding of what it means to be fulfilled, joyful and content with life. Images of happiness and pleasures constantly communicate with the people entering a mall. These images shape persons love and desires, they work on the imaginary, operating on the level of the adaptive unconscious. These visual icons capture people´s imaginations and tell the visitor´s what they should desire, love and worship, and what it means to be really human (Smith 2009:94-95). For Smith "a particular vision of the good life becomes embedded in our disposition or 'adaptive unconscious' by being pictured in concrete, alluring ways that attract us at noncognitive level. By 'pictures' of the good life I mean aesthetic articulations of human flourishing as found in images, stories and films" (Smith 2009:58).

In the same way, the social imaginary formed by the kingdom of God is partly carried in images. Looking at visual and verbal images in Christian worship can give clues to the shape of the Christian social imaginary. These images can range from the architecture in the worship room, art on the walls or the ceiling, images carried in biblical stories or concept´s, for example images of the Kingdom of God, or shalom. The biblical texts are full of images that through repetition becomes part of a counter- social-imaginary, like in this example when the future is described "The future we hope for – a future when justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream – hangs over our present and gives a vision of what to work for in the here and now as we continue to pray 'Your kingdom come'" (Smith 2009:158).

This description of imagination as images in the mind´s eye doesn´t go in to separate detail when it comes to sermon, the congregation or the preacher. For Smith, the question is not whether the sermon is full of images and stories that carry a social imaginary, but to what degree these images are in accord with the images of the kingdom of God and God´s shalom vision for the world. The congregation as well as the preacher are in the same way formed by their social imaginary, which is carried in images, stories and practices. Listening to sermons is being part of re-imagining, changing some images for others, where "the narrative of Scripture is a primary fund for the Christian imagination" (Smith 2009:197). The whole

church´s imagination needs to be converted to see the world and life in a radically new way (Smith 2009:197).

6.4.2 Imagination as Empathy

As noted before, Smith defines and uses the concept of imagination primarily in relationship to Taylor´s notion of social imaginary. But even though Smith doesn´t use the term empathy, there are clear connections to the affective side of imagination. Already in the word imaginary there is a "shift to the center of gravity from the cognitive region of ideas to the more *affective* region, which is 'closer' to the body, as it were – since the imagination runs off the fuel of the body" (Smith 2009:65, italics added).

Smith´s model of identity is affective, focusing on *kardia*, the heart, or with another word, the gut. Smith writes that a translation "of kardia (heart), one that will shock us out of our familiarity, is 'gut' – which captures both a sense of this bowel-level center of gravity of our identity, as well as the grittiness of its embodiment. We fell our way around the world more than we think our way through it. Our world view is more a matter of the imagination than the intellect, and the imagination runs off the fuel of images that are channelled by the senses" (Smith 2009:57).

What humans ultimately desire and hope for, what the good life looks like, is closely connected to emotions and affections in the social imaginary that person find themselves part of, whether it is articulated or not. The human disposition is thus more affective and noncognitive than the modern social imaginary would have us believe, says Smith (Smith 2009:57). Imagination has an emotional power that language of worldview and intellect lack. The pedagogy of the consumerist mall, the university or the liturgy in church does not primarily take hold of the human head, it aims for the heart, for the *kardia*. Smith does not want to abandon worldview-talk, but he wants to show that it has a quite "heady" or cognitive image of humans and that the place of battle between different ground-motives is located in the realm of ideas, beliefs and thoughts. Smith argues that the church need a more holistic, embodied anthropology, and an important part of this is affections, creating language to talk about the pedagogy of desire.

How does this relate to sermon, preacher and congregation? Smith doesn´t answer specifically on these levels, but he makes it clear that if the sermon is to have any impact, it needs to reach the heart, the *kardia*, the gut, the deepest desires. How? By addressing humans not only intellectually but also on the affective level. For Smith this does not have so much to

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do with the pastor´s, or preacher´s, ability to feel where the congregation are at, even though this is not unimportant, but the focus is to invite and stress the affective dimensions of the social imaginary. Even though he does not equate heart with emotions, and warns for emotionalism, the notion of formation primarily through ideas and knowledge is challenged (Smith 2009:58). Smith argues that this is a question of awareness of a biblical anthropology. Sermons, and all other parts of the liturgy, should be addressed towards not only the head and cognitive beliefs, but also the heart, the desires, the feelings of the congregation. What´s at stake for Smith "is not primarily ideas but love" (Smith 2009:27).

6.4.3 Imagination as Social Imaginary

Smith is, as we have already seen, proposing a shifting of the center of gravity of human identity and formation from the cognitive to the affective, "from minds to embodied hearts, I want also to suggest that we consider a (temporary) moratorium on the notion a "worldview" and instead consider adopting Charles Taylor's notion of 'the social imaginary'" (Smith 2009:65).

Why is Smith critical of the concept of worldview? Is it not important that the preacher and the sermon is reflecting and preaching a Christian worldview, so that the congregation also can be formed by, and develop, a Christian worldview? Smith does not dismiss the cognitive material, like Christian ideas and beliefs, they are important, but he says they are not enough, they are to narrow. Talking about the Christian way of life and discipleship as worldview "ignores the centrality of distinctly Christian practises that constitute worship" a focus on beliefs is also inattentive to "the pedagogical significance of material practises" and shows a kind of tunnel vision that is to narrowly focused on the head and the mind. Worldview excludes the body, and with that practises and imagination (Smith 2009:64).

Smith defines imagination as partly ingrained habits of perception, and in the end they are taken to be "just the way things are" (Smith 2015:28). The different configurations of the social imaginary that humans live with and are guided by become so dominant and usual that it is very hard to see them as construals. This kind of imagination becomes self-evident and it is difficult to see that they are *one* out of many possible social imaginaries. It is like a cultural ontology, so dominant that it has become invisible. Living inside a dominant social imaginary makes it very difficult to imagine any other.

If we see worship, and the sermon as part of it, as part of a battle between different social imaginaries (the dominant, or modern, and the Christian), the focus of the sermon

cannot be on ideas and theories, it is too slim and thin of an approach. People are not oriented and driven by theories, but something broader and deeper. What people think about is just the tip of the iceberg "and cannot fully adequately account for how and why we make our way in the world. If the sermon is to be a part of the formation of the congregation, it has to address this "*something more* rumbling beneath the cognitive that drives much of our action and behaviour", in other words, the social imaginary (Smith 2009:65).

Smith does not promote an anti-intellectual model, but it displaces the fixation on the rational and cognitive and questions the modern notion of knowledge. As the social imaginary is carried in stories, legends and images, the preacher needs to trust and use stories and metaphors in the sermon, not only as "illustrations" of the real thing (the ideas or beliefs) but as essential and vital in themselves.

Smith is trying to give words and language to something like intuition, something that often "eludes propositional articulation" (Smith 2009:66). This intuition or orientation in the world can never be adequately expressed in explicit doctrines. "A social imaginary is not how we think about the world, but how we imagine the world before we ever think about it; hence the social imaginary is made up of the stuff that funds the imagination – stories, myths, pictures, narratives" (Smith 2009:66). Such narratives are communal and traditioned. "There are no private stories: every narrative draws upon tellings that have been handed down (tradition). So the imaginary is social in two ways: on the one hand, it is a social phenomenon received from and shared with others; on the other hand, it is a vision *of* and *for* social life - a vision of what counts as human flourishing, what counts as meaningful relationships, what counts as "good" families, and so forth (Smith 2009:66).

Talking about sermon in the context of social imaginary helps to see that aiming only at cognitive ideas or theories is not getting at the know-how and deeper layers of the congregational listeners. The preacher must have a biblical anthropology that is more holistic and involves the body, argues Smith, realizing that the sermon is aimed not only at the brain, but the imagination, and in this way able to capture the heart of the listeners. If the focus of formation is the cognitive and rational, the sermon will become the natural focal point of the service. But if rituals and practices are seen as equally important in the formation of the congregation, there will be a more evenly distribution of "weight" on all parts of the service. The rituals of worship "form the imagination of a people who thus construe their world as a particular kind of environment based on the formation implicit in such practices. In just this since Christianity is a unique social imaginary that 'inhabits' and emerges from the matrix of preaching and prayer" (Smith 2009:69)

6.5 Metaphors for Preaching

Let us now look at what metaphors Smith uses when he is talking about preaching and which ones he seems to prefer as the most fruitful and sustainable? In the chapter *Practicing (for) the Kingdom*, Smith makes an exegesis of the social imaginary embedded in Christian worship. What metaphors does Smith use when looking at the sermon? He uses three main pictures for describing what the sermon is and does in the liturgy. First, the sermon is like a competing *story*. Second, the sermon is like a *constitution* of a city. Thirdly, the sermon is like the *fuel* of the Christian imagination (Smith 2015:195).

The sermon as a *competing story* means for Smith that it is a kind of narrative script, a guiding and formative re-telling and re-narrating. What does he mean by this? Throughout the book Smith describes humans as liturgical animals. He argues that all humans are formed by the liturgies we take part in, and implicit in all liturgies is a *story*. The story, with its narrative arc of beginning, middle and end, with its plot and climax, gives us answers to our ultimate questions. The Christian congregation is a story-formed community. Smith relates to Alasdair MacIntyre and his claim that we can only answer the question "What am I to do?" if we can answer the prior questions "of what story, or stories, do I find myself a part?" (Smith 2015:195). Humans think in a narrative mode, as it were.

We are surrounded by narratives, on smaller and bigger scales, an entire narrative can be operative in a commercial for a shampoo, telling us what life is about, what the problem is and how it can be solved, what we ought to desire and how to reach that goal. When we gather to listen to a sermon we are presented with God´s story about the world, with a different framing of the human dilemma, the solution, what we ought to desire and what our ultimate destination is. Humans are living in a storied world, and are constantly absorbing these stories, more or less consciously. The sermon is the Christian story being more explicitly articulated. "Though the entirety of Christian worship inscribes the story of God in Christ into our imaginations, the moment of Scripture reading and proclamation of the Word in preaching is the most intense or explicit moment for the articulation of this story" (Smith 2015:195). Smith uses words like *absorption* of the story, *ingesting* the story, evoking pictures close to the biblical images of "eating the book". The congregation get the story under their skin and it becomes an ethical compass, not because it contains abstract moral principles, but because it narrates the *telos*, or end, of creation. Sermons open up the

possibility of imbibing the story of Scripture so as to aim the listener's desires at the kingdom of God.

Listening to sermons is a slow learning, a long-term absorbing of the biblical plot and story into the personal and communal stories. What does this absorption look like? Smith describes how listeners to biblical sermons begin to see themselves as characters within the story, the practices of its heroes and heroines start to function as actions to identify with, the story provides guidance and help in the training and rehearsal of virtue, showing ways of becoming a people with a disposition to "the good" as it is told and envisioned in the story (Smith 2015:196).

Secondly, Smith describes the role of the scriptural sermon in the liturgy as something like the *constitution of a city*. If the church is the new polis – "a new socio-political community constituted by God in baptism" (Smith 2015:196) – then it will have to be defined and structured by a constitution. Scripture, and the proclamation of it in preaching, can be likened to the function of a city´s constitution, in this case the heavenly city´s. What does a constitution do? It outlines the good of the polis, what counts as virtue, habits and dispositions that are highly valued and the end to which all the citizens of the city are to be directed. Preaching is telling and explaining the constitution of God´s city. It specifies and describes what the kingdom of God´s people looks like, the *telos* of virtue and the kind of people the community is called to be. The churchgoer will (or should, according to Smith) experience a tension between these two citizenships in two different cities. Listening to the exploration of scripture is to be reminded of the constitution of the city of God, to be invited to re-direct the heart and desire towards this constitution instead of the secular city´s constitution.

Finally, Smith describes the role of Scripture and preaching in the liturgy as the *fuel* of Christian imagination. What does the Christian imagination run on? The narrative of Scripture, says Smith (2015:197). As Smiths anthropology makes clear, he sees humans as liturgical, affective animals and our constitution and construal of the world is shaped primarily by the imagination. When we read and listen to Scripture there is a *conversion of the imagination* going on (term borrowed from Richard Hays). To see things in a new way, the imagination has to be involved, making room for new pictures, perspectives and connections.

This conversion of the imagination can be called a kind of re-imagination, or re-narration. Why is it a *re*-imagination, a *re*-narration? It is a return to something genuine. It is not only something new coming from the future, it is also a connection with the beginning, the ancient story, on the other end of the Christian telos. "This conversion of the imagination by listening to Scripture in the liturgical setting happens primarily and affectively when

Scripture is encountered in worship". When the congregation encounter Scripture in worship, "we are invited into its performance and thus initiated into a way of reading the world" (Smith 2015:197).

6.6 Implications for Teaching Preaching

Smith has education in mind when he writes *Desiring the Kingdom*, one of his goals is to "rearticulate the *end* of Christian education by re-visioning both the *telos* and the practice of Christian education" (Smith 2009:34). Formulated as a rhetorical question: "What if the primary work of education was the transforming of our imagination rather than the saturation of our intellect? And what if this had as much to do with our bodies as with our minds? "(Smith 2009:18). Or to put it in a typical Smith-like way: What if Christian education isn´t first and foremost about what we *know*, but about what we *love*?"

A small but important note as we continue is that Smith, in contrast to Bruce, is not addressing only theological educations, or seminaries, but writes with Christian Universities that educate in all kind of professions in mind.

Smiths description of the dominant paradigm in the universe of Christian education is that the goal of a Christian education is to "produce professionals who do pretty much the same sorts of things that graduates of Ivy League and state universities do, but who do them "from a Christian perspective", and perhaps with the goal of transforming culture or redeeming society" (Smith 2009:218). Smith´s central critical question to Christian Education is: What if it is not enough to educate student´s with a *Christian worldview*, seeing the world and their vocations from a *Christian perspective*? Or, even worse, "what if a Christian perspective turns out to be a way of domesticating the radicality of the gospel? What if the rather abstract formulas of a Christian worldview turn out to be a way to tame and blunt the radical call to be a disciple of the coming kingdom?"(Smith 2009:218).

Calling an education Christian but only focusing on thought-formation is to thin according to Smith. Such an education reduces Christianity to the intellectual elements. A "Christian perspective" doesn´t touch the human desire, and misses the depths of personhood, character and the deepest loves. A Christian education might foster students who *think* about the world from a Christian perspective, but at the end of the day, and when allegiances are tested, does the students *desire* and *love* the kingdom of God or the kingdom of the market? Smith calls this a kind of intellectualization that *unhooks* practices from knowledge, an approach that "reduces Christianity to a denuded intellectual framework that has diminished

bite because such intellectualized renditions of the faith doesn´t touch our core passion. This is because such intellectualization of Christianity allows it to be unhooked from the thick practices of the church" (Smith 2009:219).

Christian worldview is then presented as something that is available without meditation by the church, and a gap opens between university and the believing community. This kind of unhooking of a Christian worldview, or true beliefs, from the church´s worship, creates a kind of free *idea-Christianity* that can be hitched to your favourite ideology or political view, other dominant visions of the good life, whether it´s liberal or conservative, populist or traditional. When education does this unhooking, it creates, or keeps, a distance from the "radical re-visioning of society that is implicit in Christian liturgy" (Smith 2009:220). Smiths critique is that universities present Christian discipleship in a way that is not thick and deep enough to embrace the whole radicality of Christian faith and discipleship. By doing this, students leave university with the feeling that they have matured in their faith, but Smiths says that maybe the students instead have been served a domesticated and tamed version of the gospel, a version that is adapted more to the secular agendas and kingdoms than Gods. "To be blunt, our Christian colleges and universities generate an army of alumni who look pretty much like all the rest of their suburban neighbours, except that our graduates drive their SUVs, inhabit their executive homes, and pursue the frenetic life of the middle class and the corporate ladder 'from a Christian perspective' " (Smith 2009:219).

Smith repeatedly comes back to his core question: what is the goal of Christian education? What is it for? Is it to "produce honest, cheerful, grateful, and pious producers and consumers? Or does the Christian story narrated in the practices of Christian worship paint a very different picture of human flourishing?" (Smith 2009:33).

What then should Christian education look like? First of all, Christian education has to reclaim an identity and self-awareness of itself as a place of formation, and a counter-formation at that. Smith shows that Christian colleges have been reticent too name and see themselves as engaged in a more holistic formation. One reason is that such talk seems to come "with the baggage of fundamentalist pietism" (Smith 2009:219, note 6). Christian Universities want to show that they are (no longer) Bible schools, or Bible colleges. Another reason is a worry that it will blur the distinction between church and college. Those belong to different spheres and a clear distinction needs to be drawn so that the education can be kept *professional*, and not to *confessional.* A third reason also has historical echoes, some are hesitant to talk about Christian college as a site of formation because spiritual formation on campuses has often been "Configured as anti-intellectual – the sort of warm and fuzzy stuff

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that goes on in student life (and that can, admittedly, militate against the rigors of intellectual pursuit)". (Smith 2009:219, note 6). On top of that, faculty sometimes makes a contrast between spiritual formation and critical thinking, as if those two were not compatible or opposite. Smiths´s radical suggestion is that "if Christian colleges are not about Christian formation, there´s really no reason for them to exist" (Smith 2009:219, note 6)

But what should this counter-formation look like? What should the pedagogy and educational practises look like to be counter-formative? First of all, the anthropology needs to be right, says Smith, because "behind every pedagogy is a philosophical anthropology" (Smith 2009:27), or in other words, at the back of all educational models and practices is a set of assumptions about the nature of human persons and how change and formation takes place.

Following Smith´s argument´s, a pedagogy that is aimed mostly at the head (assuming a rationalist, intellectualist and cognitive model) is too thin, and a thicker pedagogy is needed. This kind of pedagogy assumes that the human cognition arises from a precognitive orientation to the world, the social imaginary, and this orientation is formed and shaped by material, liturgical and embodied practices, aimed at "the heart" and the imagination.

So, what does these embodied pedagogies for the education of desire actually look like? Smith does not deliver any "tips or tricks, no nifty methods or alliterated formulas on handouts that you can tale home and try out in your classrooms" (Smith 2009:217) and he does not talk explicitly about homiletics. Smith realises that his description of education describes a university that doesn´t exist, what he offers is some concrete suggestions and possibilities for educational practices, summarized under two headings, the first being: *Ecclesial education, reconnecting church, chapel, and classroom.* Smith suggests that Christian education ought to be specified as *ecclesial* education, connected to and nourished by the thick practices, liturgies, of Christian worship (Smith 2009:223). "While not being a church, or a substitute for the church, but rather an extension of it (a chapel connected to the nave of the cathedral), the new monastic university will be an institution of Christian formation, intentionally drawing on and incorporating the range of Christian practices that form desire and fuel the imagination" (Smith 2009:222).

If the learning is to be informed by Christian accounts and stories of the world, the imagination has to be shaped and fuel by a vision of God´s kingdom, based on Scripture. Such formation of the imagination takes place in the practices of Christian worship, which in turn carry a particular and peculiar understanding of the world. If the Christian university, with a worldview-paradigm, has as its motto: "I believe in order to understand", the ecclesial university´s motto is "I worship in order to understand". Here the Christian social imaginary

precedes and encompasses a Christian worldview. And the Christian social imaginary is absorbed through long-term participation in the church´s liturgy (Smith 2009:230). In this way the classroom is connected to church and chapel. One risk, as Smith sees it, is that the chapel and the classroom are divided, building on a distinction between nature and grace, or the secular and sacred, the natural and the supernatural. Another risk, is that the shape of worship in the chapel "might be little more than a Jesufied" version of various secular liturgies, thus unwittingly reinforcing the liturgies of the mall and the market rather than contributing to any kind of counter-formation" (Smith 2009:224). But when the chapel and classroom are connected in a fruitful way, it provides opportunities to form and reform students and faculty's imaginations. The second heading reads: *Embodied pedagogy, reconnecting body and mind*. The pedagogy of the ecclesial university needs to be radically formed by the anthropology implicit in Christian worship, that humans are embodied, material creatures, whose orientation to, or take on, the world is governed by the social imagination. A pedagogy that "will extend and amplify the pedagogical genius that is implicit in the practices of Christian worship as well as other Christian practices. It will not be sufficient (or effective) to deliver Christian content in pedagogies that are designed for thinking things. If the practices of Christian worship attest to the fact that we are embodied, liturgical animals whose desire is shaped by material practices, how odd it would be to think a distinctly Christian education could be effected by what Bradford Hadaway calls "read and talk" courses" (Smith 2009:228).

A liturgically informed embodied pedagogy should create classroom environments where Christian practices are extended and improvised, intended practices that have as their goal to form imagination in a kingdom-like shape and shape character. Smith offers several concrete examples of ecclesial pedagogies that incorporate embodied learning, I will describe one of these here to give a picture of what it might actually look like connected to a real educational situation. In a course studying continental philosophy, the class investigates questions concerned with hospitality, particularly as explored in the work of Emmanuel Lévinas and Jacques Derrida. Parallel to this reading and discussion, the syllabus requires students to select an intentional practice of hospitality throughout the semester. Some students work in restorative justice programs for ex-convicts; others work with a refugee ministry at a local church; others at a homeless shelter. The students keep a journal all through the semester where they put in writing their experiences from the practices as well as notes from the philosophical texts about hospitality they read and discuss in the seminar. Many of the students "are surprised to find that though they went to the poor, homeless, and needy to

"show hospitality," they were the ones who were welcomed." (Smith 2009:229). The concrete and practical exercise of showing and receiving hospitality and welcome, also gave the students a critical perspective on the texts and literature that they would not have in the same extent without the intentional practice.

6.7 Summary

To sum up, Smith defines imagination primarily as a philosophical and sociological concept, drawing on Taylor´s notion of social imaginary. This imaginary consists of images and is located close to the affective region and the body. Smith describes imagination as embedded (and made visible) in practises, but the content of the imagination is often very hard to completely and adequately describe as it is moving beneath the surface of the conscious. To preach is to be involved in an on-going, faithful, persistent, re-imagining, what could also be called a *re-naming, re-telling* or *re-narrating* of the world by.

The three aspects of imagination as *images in the mind´s eye*, as *empathy* and as *social imaginary*, are intertwined in Smiths definition and description of imagination. Social imaginary is the focus and controlling aspect in his text and he relates this to worship as a whole, with only a few references that can be tied to the *sermon*, the *congregation* and the *preacher* specifically. Concrete images and affections are part of Smith´s definition, as the social imaginary is carried in stories, legends and practises, but at the same time it is hard to really grasp these images as they are often unarticulated and unconscious. Imagination is defined as something partly hidden. Humans cannot fully, or even sufficiently, account for the deep reasons behind actions, language and behaviour. The imagination is an iceberg, where only the tip is visible and conscious.

Consequently, the *preacher* needs to preach *sermons* in such a way that the *congregations* imaginations are caught, addressed as whole persons, with a deep and broad understanding of knowledge and formation. In Smiths anthropology, the imagination lies closer to the human heart, the gut, than the head. That is why liturgies and sermons should invite, address and be directed more towards the imagination, with its more holistic, bodily and affective dimensions.

Smith uses three key images as metaphors when describing what the sermon is and does in the liturgy. The sermon is like a rival *story*, competing against other stories about the world, where humans come from, the telos of humanity, definitions of the ground problem of the world and where to look for salvation. The sermon is also like the function of a city´s *constitution*, in this case the heavenly city´s. A constitution of the church as a new polis, a

socio-political community constituted by God. Thirdly, the sermon is like *fuel*, words that the Christian imagination runs on (Smith 2015:195). All of these images are connected to social imaginary, Christian practices and preaching as an alternative foundation and energy to a different narrative.

In Smiths final chapter he returns to the questions that opened the book: What is education for? And in this case, what is a distinctly Christian education for? Smith is not addressing only theological educations but Christian Universities that educate in all kind of professions. What he is proposing is a rearticulating of the *end* of Christian education by re-visioning both the *telos* and the practice of Christian education. If the end of education is formation, the Christian education should not be satisfied by only giving more knowledge and Christian perspectives, but should have as its goal to form the students by getting hold of their deeper imaginations, their ground-orientation and love. "What if Christian education isn´t first and foremost about what we *know*, but about what we *love*?" Smith describes his vision of Christian education as a kind of counter-formation, aware of the battleground of the social imaginaries prevalent in the world today. For this to happen the pedagogies must be embodied. A pedagogy resting on a mostly cognitive model is too thin, and a thicker pedagogy is needed. Smith proposes an *ecclesial* education that reconnects church, chapel, and classroom, an *embodied* pedagogy, reconnecting body and mind. He does not write explicitly about implications for homiletics, but gives examples of what it might look like concretely in a course or seminar in other subjects.

Chapter 7. Implications for Homiletical Teaching

7.1 Introduction

In the last two chapters the question "How do James K.A Smith and Kate Bruce use the concept of imagination in connection to homiletics in *Imagining the Kingdom* and *Igniting the Heart*?" was answered and their use of the concept of imagination was described on their own terms as research result. In this chapter, the texts will be engaged in a constructive interaction with each other and the homiletical areas of concern. Tentative implications for homiletical teaching will be suggested, limitations of the study and further research questions will be presented.

The aim of this study has been to prepare the ground for a conversation between the concept of imagination and homiletics. This kind of exploratory research sets an agenda by identifying possible problems and areas of concern. In this chapter I will try to give some

suggested answers to the research question: *What are some possible strengths and weaknesses of using the concept of imagination in relationship to homiletics?* I will be focusing on the homiletical concerns to see what aspects of imagination in the tentative framework that could be relevant and useful language when teaching about linguistic craft, relationships between pastor and congregation and holistic formation.

a) *Homiletical linguistic craft*. Talking about the concrete language-skills that are not only connected to rhetoric, but also anti-flattening ways to speak about life and shape of reality. Or with the words of Brueggemann, alternative modes of speech in preaching – speech that is dramatic, artistic and capable of inviting persons to join in another conversation. (Brueggemann 1989:3) What are some possible strengths and weaknesses of using the concept of imagination when teaching about linguistic craft?

b) *Connected relationships between pastor and congregation*. Language to talk about the ability on the part of the preacher to emphatically relate to the whole range of experiences in the congregation. What are some possible strengths and weaknesses of using the concept of imagination when teaching about relationships between pastor and congregation?

c) *Holistic formation*. Language to talk about the aim of formation through preaching. A way to talk about formation that is holistic, embodied and connects to a biblical anthropology and epistemology. Language to clarify what is going on, giving vocabulary to articulate, reframe and analyse experiences. What are some possible strengths and weaknesses of using the concept of imagination when teaching about holistic formation?

As I described in the introduction, one of the reasons for doing this research was questions arising from teaching homiletics. I sensed that my pedagogical vision was at risk to erode into a pragmatic and secular method focused on how to tackle a list of tasks and check the next box. The categories I was habitually thinking and teaching in had worn thin and I was searching for renewed language, images, metaphors and concepts to work with in the homiletical classroom to get at the complex questions concerning preaching in our times.

As Bruner and Dykstra remind us, one of the tasks of the teacher is to find words which clarify what is going on, giving vocabulary to articulate, reframe and analyse experiences. In what sense do we clarify what is going on in the homiletical work and process when using the word imagination? Acknowledging that this is a very complex question, and that the scope of this study does not entail any attempt to a definite determination of the valuableness of the concept of imagination, let us nonetheless look at some tentative answers, with some methodological help from Swinton and Mowat. Their presentation of practical theology implies a method that is "hermeneutic, critical, correlation and theological" (Swinton &

Mowat 2006:76). These criteria will be used as a lens and tool to look at and evaluate the concept of imagination in the homiletical classroom.

The *hermeneutic* lens and awareness is evidently present in this study, as interpretation is at the heart of knowledge and imagination has so many and diverse meanings and connotations depending on context.

Imagination is looked at with a *critical* lens, in the sense of searching for significant objections and doubts from other disciplines.

The *correlational* lens is used as an evaluative tool in the sense of looking for relevance for contemporary challenges and concerns in the homiletical conversation.

The *theological* lens is applied in the sense of searching for significance to grasp, name and enable deeper theological understanding.

7.2 Implications for Homiletical Teaching

As we listen to and analyse Bruce's and Smiths books, we need to acknowledge that they work better as more complementary than comparable texts. Bruce focuses more on the actual language of the sermon and the relationship between preacher and congregation, while Smith focuses more on formation, learning and liturgy as a whole. If Smith is the philosophical architect, Bruce is the skilled carpenter.

With risk of disturbing the dramaturgical nerve, I will start with the most apparent finding concerning possible problems when setting the agenda for a conversation between imagination and homiletics. This finding is not surprising, but perhaps the most significant. This finding relates to Swinton and Mowats criteria or method, as it is at its core a hermeneutical awareness. I have found that there is an urgent need for clarifying definitions when using imagination-language in the context of homiletics. This observation seems almost too obvious and plain, and therefore the more surprisingly little discussed and practised in the homiletical literature.

7.2.1. Definitions and Pre-fixes

Imagination as a concept has, as we have seen, a broad history of meaning. Repeatedly it becomes apparent that this extensive array of meanings and connotations becomes a disadvantage when using the concept of imagination. If all conversation has to start with a long and detailed explanation of what exactly is meant by imagination in *this* instance and *this* context, is not some of the usefulness of the word lost already there?

Looking through the hermeneutical lens we can see that the strength of imagination as an evocative and open word is also a weakness. When the word is used in a slipshod and undefined way, assuming that the readers have a common intuitive understanding of the notion, there are considerable risks for misunderstandings and impreciseness. This is the first, and maybe the most central of the disadvantages of using the concept of imagination that I want to draw attention to. If imagination as a concept is to be useful it must be defined thoroughly first. Countering the uncertainty and sliding definitions, I agree with Bruce when she advocates that the homiletical curriculum entails a *framework of imaginative function*.

This framework could be a supportive and important resource when talking about imagination in the homiletical context. The framework could ideally work as a heuristic tool that gives a sense of coherence and structure to the broad range of definitions of imagination. It could also be helpful in giving students a model, which enables more advanced discussions.

Another way to counter the broad spectrum and amorphous quality of meaning I have seen examples of and want to suggest is the use of pre-fixes. This kind of qualification, by using an adjective, can be of help in the definitional disarray. Using the critical lens we can draw examples from how it is used in other disciplines, for instance when defining imagination as: "passive imagination", "active imagination", "creative imagination", "practical imagination", "aesthetic imagination" (Liao and Gendler 2019:2).

In some theological texts, this is already the case, for example when talking about "pastoral imagination", "ecclesial imagination", "creative imagination", "affective imagination" and "prophetic imagination". Smith writes about both imagination in a more general sense and social imaginary in a more specific sense, with a precise definition from Charles Taylor.[29]

After a close reading of Smith and Bruce it becomes clear that what at first might seem like different aspects of imagination is actually a fundamental difference in meaning. Smith mostly focuses on the *content* of the imagination, which is partly subconscious, and Bruce focuses more on the *functions* of the imagination and *how much* the imagination is involved. In Smiths world there is a contest between different imaginations, and they have to be valued out of their proximity to the Kingdom of God. This is of course important for Bruce as well, but something that seems to be taken for granted, her spotlight is more directed towards to what *degree* the imagination is involved and developed. For her, imagination is a skill that can become strengthened and widened through practice, a muscle the preacher develops.

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[29] Imagination and imaginary is not the same word, but they are close enough to be comparable.

To conclude, one of the possible weaknesses of the concept of imaginations is its lack of clarity. There is a critical and urgent need for clarifying what kind of imagination we are talking about in the homiletical classroom. One way to meet this need in the homiletical classroom is to use Bruce´s framework of imaginative function, developed to include aspects of social imaginary. Another way could be to more consistently work with defining prefixes. With this hermeneutical ground-note on the risk of misunderstandings and the importance of clarification before using the concept of imagination, let us now turn to the question of some possible strengths and weaknesses of using the concept of imagination in relationship to teaching about linguistic skills in the craft and construction of the sermon.

7.2.2 Linguistic Craft

The sermon has a haunting reputation as being tedious, dreary, unexciting and dull. Homiletical textbooks almost mandatory mention the crisis of preaching. This crisis is described differently depending on theological tradition, but as we saw in chapter 5, two common aspects of this sermon-critique is first of all that it simply does not captivate the interest and secondly that the insipidness in flattened and reduced language mirrors a reduced, disenchanted and flattened vision of reality.

The concrete wordings are thus connected to a deeper seeing and the homiletical search is for alternative modes of speech. As we saw earlier, Brueggemanns critique of language in modes of utilitarian technology and flattened reality is moving both on the concrete level of actual wording and on the level of alternative universes of discourse. For him, the mission of preaching is to open out the good news with dramatic and artistic counter-speech. So, what could be some possible strengths and weaknesses with using the concept of imagination when teaching about linguistic craft?

From my experience, talking about the actual wording in a sermon can be quite a delicate question. This has to do with both a well- motivated concern that the sermon might be rhetorically persuasive and eloquent, but lacks in-depth biblical substance, as well as a conviction that the style of the sermon language mirrors personality and therefore doesn´t have so much to do with a rehearsed and practised skill. This sometimes surfaces as a lack of understanding concerning the laborious work with language behind sermons that seem to be extempore.

In what ways could Bruce's and Smiths understanding and description of imagination offer guiding concerning this search for alternative modes of speech, language that supports

the transformative power and enchanted vision of biblical narrative? Smith does not write elaborately on the language of the sermon, but preaching for him is framed as a re-narration that is formed by and embedded in language and practices. The goal of the sermon, and in a broader sense, the liturgy, is to re-name the world and re-form the human imagination. Which words and images are used thus becomes very important. If vocabulary from the producer-consumer relationship or language from the entertainment industry is used in sermons, the logic of those dominating worlds is brought in to the service.

Smith argues that if different imaginations are competing to tell the story of who we are, where we are headed and what our lives should be aimed at, the narration in the sermon becomes a battleground. The linguistic skill of the preacher consequently becomes a question of attention and discernment. The question preachers have to ask themselves is which imaginations or narratives are these specific words part of? As the social imaginary is carried in stories, legends and images, the preacher needs to trust and use metaphors and stories in the sermon, not only as illustrations of the real thing, idea or belief, but as essential and vital in themselves. Smith himself uses the metaphors of a competing story, a constitution and fuel to describe of the Christian imagination.

Important to note is that part of novels and some pieces of art are part of Smiths text. Even though he doesn´t write extensively about modes of language, the actual form of his book points to the fact that he sees the advantage of a more poetic and narrative mode of language.

The importance of the use of linguistic imagination is one of the major arguments throughout Bruce´s text and in my view, her strongest and most original contribution to the conversation. She doesn´t leave the readers to figure out by themselves what this imaginative preaching looks like, but goes into particulars and specifics concerning the craft and construction of the sermon. Bruce shares the concern that a flattened and reduced language in sermons mirrors a reduced and flattened vision of reality. This condition has to be met at both the level of language and the level of vision of reality, the sacramental seeing, and for Bruce they are intertwined.

Part of the remedy is practising linguistic imagination to find what Bruce calls *the lyrical voice*. Influenced by Brueggemann Bruce offers two contrasting concepts, *the prose mode of speech* and the *lyrical mode of speech,* or *the lyrical voice*. The prose mode of speech in the sermon has a flattened language. The truth is settled and categorized, the meaning and the mystery of the text reduced. In the end, this creates a trivialized, packed down, dull and thin preaching, with the language of a foreshortened vision. The lyrical mode of speech on the

other hand is marked by a desire to grasp the revelation of the gospel imaginatively and communicate that by drawing from the craft of poetic expression. These alternative modes of speech "assaults imagination and push out the presumed world in which most of us are trapped." (Brueggemann 1989:3).Preaching in the lyrical voice is closely affiliated with Brueggemanns vision for alternative modes of speech and the prophetic imagination. It is a language, or mode of speech, that is what Brueggemann is searching for, artistic, dramatic, poetic and invitational.

Bruce's explanation and concrete examples of this lyrical voice seems to me to be a helpful tool in the homiletical context. The lyrical voice is a sermon language that aims at breaking the habitual seeing and invite to a new kind of interpretation, new vistas of possibility. This preaching mode is poetic and existential speech, trying to steer clear of a flattening, reduced language and opens up to the multilayered and unspeakable. Yes, it is difficult to describe exactly how and why some language serves this new kind of interpretation and seeing better than others, but students should not be left to figure this out all by themselves, or be allowed to stay in the misconception that this is achieved through secret mumble jumble techniques or some kind of spiritual ability that some have and others don't.

Bruce doesn´t leave the readers with only a call to use poetic and prophetic imagination in the sermon, she actually presents linguistic tools and strategies for that end. Tools that train "the muscles of imagination". Talking about the imagination as a capacity makes it possible to use language in the homiletical classroom about how to train the imaginative eye for the "more", the "mystery". She also quite convincingly shows that preaching in the lyrical voice is a homiletic strategy that relies on a deep listening to God in and through the scripture, where imagination and revelation works together to co-operate with the revealed impetus of God. The newness, or rather, the surprising quality of the sermon, with aha-moments, and revelatory insights are in Bruce´s model closely connected to the actual language. There is a correlation between the imaginative lyrical voice quality, and the revelatory and sacramental power of the sermon. Where other stays at the call to use imaginative language, Bruce actually goes to look at and try to describe the particulars and details of a re-enchanted speech. Not afraid to "ruin the magic", she shows how the students can be given language, concrete examples, literary tools, techniques and opportunities to practise this mode of speech. A risk, or possible weakness, with using the concept of imagination when teaching about linguistic craft is that students might connect imagination to tight to creativity and fantasy, hindering identification (I´m not creative!) or trust (Is it really biblically faithful?).

Preaching in the lyrical voice seeks to be *artistic* in the sense that it wants the listeners to see something from a novel and sometimes surprising perspective. Talking about linguistic imagination aspires to be *invitational* in the sense that the verbal images or icons demands participation. The aim is to evoke images and pictures in the listeners mind. Not only, or even primarily, to make the sermon easier to listen to or remember, but to get at the transformative potential and revelatory power of the Word pulsing through the human language. Introducing the concept of preaching in the lyrical voice will help students look for the *dramatic and paradoxical*, to hear the "same old" with "new ears". Talking about the lyrical voice will also highlight the *poetic* quality of the sermon as it is aware about nuances in language and words, creating associations and opening up bigger dimensions. A possible risk in this area might be some students´ apprehension in relationship to what seems to be too creative or fanciful, fearing that one is moving away from "truth".

One of the advantages I can see of using the concept of linguistic imagination in the homiletical classroom is that it highlights the weight of what *kind of language* sermons are made up of. Some modes of language opens up for a deeper resonance in a way that other kinds of language just doesn´t. Bruce´s thorough investigation of the lyrical voice is a concrete and practical antidote to a flattened language, mirroring a flattened reality. Bruce shows in a convincing way that language can have the power to reshape human vision, desire and direction.

You could question if it really is necessary to talk about linguistic imagination and not go straight to the lyrical voice? Is it not enough to describe it as detailed, creative multisensory language? Bruce´s tools reminds me of books on creative writing, could we not skip imagination-language and head straight for the concrete models?

I would argue that a benefit of keeping the linguistic-imagination-language is that it widens the landscape and highlights the need for imaginative attentiveness to the biblical text. An attentiveness which give an eye for detail and specific features, which in turn will make the language more concrete and evokes images and colours. Only talking about the lyrical voice possibly has the disadvantage of being misused as a "kit" without a deeper understanding of the underlying values and purpose. The concept of imagination might then help to keep together language and vision. To get at a reduced, disenchanted and flattened vision of reality, one needs not only a toolbox like the lyrical voice Bruce presents. If engagement of the imagination is crucial for preaching in this alternative mode of speech, then I would argue that the concept of imagination cannot simply be replaced by lyrical voice.

One of the four key questions that were used to map the material has been hanging a bit loose and needs to be addressed here. The question in mind is: "What metaphors do Smith and Bruce use when talking about preaching and which ones do they seem to prefer as the most fruitful and sustainable?". This seemed to be an important question at start, and it helped exemplify by showing the power of language by the use of different metaphors. But as it turned out, which *specific* metaphors Smith and Bruce seemed to prefer didn´t contribute as much as the realisation of the *power* of those metaphors. These images have power through the theological freight they carry and the practical outworking in the concrete work with preparing sermons.

7.2.3 Connected Relationships

The second area of homiletical concern is related to connected relationships between congregation and pastor. As we saw in the section about homiletics, textbooks describe the quite real and common risk of the preacher and the sermon words loosing contact with the reality of the congregation. David Day writes: "We need to stay in touch with reality or our listeners will sense that life and sermon inhabit parallel universes." (Day 2005:10)[30]

The gap between preacher and congregation can take different forms, sometimes it´s mostly a question of difference in age or experience and sometimes it is an inability on the part of the preacher to relate to life-situations different than their own. In some cases there´s a lack of emotional connectedness and in other cases there´s a lack of ability to translate and find language and images where the biblical stories merge with ordinary life.

What are some possible strengths and weaknesses with using the concept of *affective imagination* when teaching about the relationship between pastor and congregation? How could it contribute to the homiletical conversation in this area? Homiletical teachers would probably agree that there is a need to address this issue and welcome ways to practise it, but in what way is the concept of affective imagination more helpful than say, for example, emphatic identification?

Bruce doesn´t argue for using affective imagination over other possible concepts, but she does stress that if the preacher is to talk from their own affective capacities and reach the congregations affective capacities, the imagination has to be involved, as this is an inherently imaginative undertaking. Using affective imagination-language could be helpful in the sense

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[30] This is both a question of shared understanding and affections, as Karl Barth said: "Preachers must love their congregations. They must not want to be without them. They have to realize: I am part of them, and I want to share with them what I have received from God. It will not help to speak with the tongue of men or angels if this love is missing." (Karl Barth *Homiletics* p. 84)

that it helps students see their own affective *involvement* in the identification. It is something the preacher actively has to practise and engage with. Sympathy depends upon the ability to put oneself in the place of others, and this involves imagination

Another contribution could be that it invites the students to not only change their intellectual point of view, but to stand in someone else's shoes in a more embodied and affective way, to see, hear, feel and sense from that place. It is not only a matter of understanding how the congregations thinks or feels about specific questions, but to get an understanding of their sense of life and the world, the possibility of vicarious experience. This might contribute to making the sermons more embodied as well, as imagination runs off the fuel of images, and images are channelled through the senses. This comes close to Smith´s argument. He does not write specifically about the relationship between preacher and congregation, but in Smiths holistic and embodied anthropology, affections have an important part, as he argues that they guide us to a much greater extent than we normally acknowledge.

A preacher that wants to connect to the congregation has to talk both from the gut (*kardia)* to the gut as well as from the intellect to the intellect, addressing humans not only intellectually but also on the affective level, inviting that nod of recognition. The ability to address humans on the affective level should therefore be practised in the homiletical classroom and given a language for. Bridging the gap between preacher and congregation is not just about understanding someone else's worldview, there needs to be a more embodied image or concept that involves also the affective capacities.

Using Smiths line of argument, one could propose that using affective-imagination-language in the homiletical classroom could be helpful if one wants to signal a shift in the centre of gravity from the cognitive region of ideas to the more affective regions of desire. As a way to indicate an alteration in balance between the intellectual mind and the heart. For Smith, the language of imagination also has an emotional power and energy that the language of worldview and intellect lack.

An advantage with using the concept of affective imagination instead of, for example, emphatic identification, is that affective imagination, in Bruce´s definition, also entails finding words and images to describe experiences and emotions. To engage in affective imagination is also to search for and give names to vague rumblings which the congregation might lack words for. Or, to borrow an image from Smith, to get the feel that the pastor has been reading our inner mail. The preacher should work to find words that will make people make that nod of inner recognition, yes, I haven´t put it into words before, but that feels real.

Preachers and members of the congregation sometimes talk about whether they were *touched* by the sermon or not, often as a way of evaluation. What is it to have been touched by a sermon? I think it entails, among other things, a sense of having been addressed, moved, enthused or stirred. Something has been caught, or given. Some kind of connection between the world of the listener and the words of the sermon has occurred. Often the emotions are involved. As the sermon sometimes is accused of "stirring emotions", maybe talking about the affective imagination instead of emotions, both on the part of the preacher as well as the person in the pew could help balance this risk of being accused of emotionalism. Smith uses heart as a metaphor, but is keen on stressing that heart does not equate only emotions.

Using the *critical* lens by drawing from philosophical and psychological views one might argue that using the concept of affective imagination could be a complement to words such as being touched. By using it, the homiletician is pointing at something deeper than emotions on the surface, getting at the human controlling centre, the gravity of the desire. The concept of affective imagination could thus be helpful by stressing that if the preacher is to connect to and reach the congregations affective capacities they need to talk from their own affective capacities, which is an inherently imaginative undertaking. It can also be helpful by highlighting the need for active involvement and practise. Another contribution could be that it signals a shift to a more holistic and embodied anthropology. It might endorse a language with more energy and recognition, focusing not only on speaking from the head to the head, or even from the head to the heart, but from the preacher´s centre to the centre of the listener.

Looking from the other side, what could be some of the weaknesses with using affective imagination? The greatest disadvantage, as I see it, is that it is a concept that has to be described and defined at length before it can be used in a helpful way. Affective imagination as a concept is not as established as the words empathy, compassion or identification for example. One might argue that using new glossary is helpful in the sense that it sometimes breaks the habitual understanding and opens up for a deeper knowledge. That is true, but in this case I would argue that the familiarity with concepts like emphatic identification probably outweighs the advantages of using the concept of affective imagination mentioned above. This critique could in turn be met by the argument that there could be a difference between language used in the classroom and concepts that are helpful for the homiletician. Thinking in terms of affective imagination could possibly contribute to a more holistic understanding and anthropology on the part of the teacher, without necessarily using the concept of affective imagination in the classroom.

7.2.4 Holistic Formation

How are we to talk about the transformative aim of preaching in the homiletical classroom? Formation in a theological context has been defined and described in many different ways, Are there ways in which the concept of imagination, and specifically the notion of social imaginary, could be helpful when trying to look at formation from a more holistic perspective? The third area concerns the search for adequate language to talk about formation in relationship to homiletics. We have described this concern as a search for language and concepts to discuss formation in a way that get at the depth and complexity of human formation in a non-reductionist way. How are homileticians to talk and teach about a formation that contains, but goes beyond, rational worldviews, biblical propositions, emotions or "being touched"? In what ways could the concept of imagination contribute to the homiletical conversation in this area? What are the strengths and weaknesses of using imagination-language in relationship to formation? I will discuss these matters under three headings:

1) Definitions and differences
2) Perceptual filters, social imaginary and formation of love
3) Reconnecting body and mind, embodied formation
4) Disadvantages and risks

7.2.4.1 Definitions and Differences

Questions concerning formation have multifaceted perspectives and intricate levels, depending on for example anthropology and epistemological framework. The experiences of formation are often more complex, concrete and deep than our definitions can handle. Homiletical teachers would be in agreement that formation is in some sense an aim of preaching, but the ideal shape, telos and tools for this formation depends on what kind of theological epistemology and anthropology one claims. The advantages or disadvantages of using imagination-language will to a certain degree depend upon what kind of understanding one has of what knowledge is, how human change takes place and where the orienting human center is located. The format of this work does not allow a thorough description of different anthropological and epistemological perspectives, but will discuss the question from the point of view of Smith and Bruce and the place of conversation opening up between them.

Analyzing their texts, we will first look at some possible advantages and then what might be some of the disadvantages of using the concept of imagination when teaching about holistic formation through preaching. This aspect of imagination is the main focus in Smiths

text, his goal is a re-visioning of Christian formation and education. Formation is important for Bruce as well, but it is not articulated in the same comprehensive and systematic way as in Smith´s text, which makes them somewhat difficult to compare and also explains why Smiths arguments will be given more room than Bruce´s in this section.

It is important to note that Bruce talks about imagination in relationship to formation in a more general sense, whereas Smith sometimes talks about imagination in relationship to formation in a broader sense, but the core concept for him is *social imaginary*, a philosophical term we looked into in an earlier chapter. Imagination and imaginary both have wide-ranging definitions, and the need for definition is, as we have discussed, vital and central. When writing about Bruce we will talk about formative imagination in a more general sense, when writing about Smith, we will be discussing the concept of social imaginary. Another difference between Bruce and Smith I would like the reader to note is that they focus somewhat differently on the individual and the group. In comparison with Smith, Bruce's conversion of the imagination seems to be more concerned with individual persons breaking up old, secure and conventional images of God. The "reconfiguration of reality" Bruce is talking about is mostly a personal change on a more psychological level, as in "my personal life story, seen from a different perspective". Smith on the other hand stresses the collective aspects more than Bruce, arguing that the whole church´s imagination needs to be converted to see the world and life in radically new ways. This can be compared to the relationship between ecclesial imagination and pastoral imagination, expounded by Dykstra (Dykstra & Bass 2008:43). As we saw earlier, Dykstras point is that pastoral and ecclesial imagination live in a dynamic and perpetual process of mutual interdependence. They are caught up with each other in virtuous sequences.[31]

7.2.4.2 Perceptual Filters, Social Imaginary and Formation of Love

Bruce and Smith share their critique of how human formation often is described in church in a modernistic way as a didactic endeavour and an intellectual project. Their argument is that if the sermon is seen as formation mainly through depositing new and better ideas in the mind, it will not get to the core of the human identity and desire. This human core, or orienting centre, where thoughts, emotions, will, behaviour and desires meet, is where formation takes place.

This core could be called the heart, or our love, if love is defined as our deepest desires and as a virtue, a habit. Smith´s argument is that we are what we love, but what we think we

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[31] Dykstra goes on to argue that one of the main purposes of practical theology is to nourish, nurture, resource and discipline this interdependent pastoral and ecclesial imagination (Dykstra & Bass 2008: 43).

love might not always be the same as what we actually love. Why? Because our true love is not all-together conscious and explicit to ourselves. Smith's use of the notion of social imaginary gets at these fundamental levels of our consciousness and sub-consciousness, the place where humans shape and reshape the way they see and understand the world. I can see the advantages of Smiths suggestion that we consider a (temporary) moratorium on the notion a "worldview" and instead consider adopting Charles Taylor's notion of 'the social imaginary'. Talking about social imaginary could be helpful in the theological conversation by clarifying the many levels in the conflicting views of worship and sermon.

Bruce does not argue for a change of formation-vocabulary with imagination at its center, but she is convinced that the event of the sermon is aimed at many levels in the person at the same time, and some of these levels are what she calls 'perceptual filters'. These perceptual filters are so engrained that the listeners barely notice them, they are more or less invisible, governed by the person's desires, longings, wants, fears and hopes. The preacher needs to both be aware of and address these perceptual filters.

In my view, Smith and Bruce description of sermons as being part of a reconfiguration of reality through re-narration is helpful in describing what is really going on in the sermon, making its density justice. Imagination-language make dimensions of formation visible that are otherwise often left out. The concept of social imaginary could possibly be helpful in the quest for finding language that talks about formation in a way that get at the complexity of human formation in a non-reductionist way. Whether in Bruce´s more individual take, or Smith´s more cultural and social, leaning on Taylor's philosophy, talking about formation of the imagination could be part of replacing narrower, more reduced and thin understandings carried in concepts like change of "world-view".

By using imagination-language one could signal a shift in the center of gravity of human identity, a shift from the mainly cognitive to include also the affective. I would propose that by using the notion of social imaginary, you get a concept that encompasses intellectual schemes but also encompass something more that is rumbling beneath the cognitive. As this kind of social imagination becomes self-evident it is difficult to see that they are *one* out of many possible social imaginaries, it is so dominant that it has become invisible. Formation needs an element of breaking free, as living inside a dominant social imaginary makes it very difficult to imagine any other. A possible advantage of using imagination-language when talking about formation in the homiletical classroom might then be described as a help to shed light on human unconscious layers and filters. Imagination-

language could possibly be helpful as a way to signal that formation happens in the heart as our orienting center, both on conscious and subconscious levels.

7.2.4.3 Embodied Formation, Reconnecting Body and Mind,

In our search for a more holistic way to talk about formation, can the notion of imagination be helpful as a move towards embodiment? Using the definition offered by Dykstra, used by Bruce and drawing from Warnock, imagination is an integrating process that provides the link in the individual between the body, the mind and the emotions. This process shapes the human take on the world, character and provides the foundations for all seeing, believing, feeling, and action.

The use of imagination-language to describe this process could then possibly help make the sermon more incarnational. As the imagination is closely connected to the senses, my reflection is that it might remind the preacher of the homiletical principle of incarnation, to witness about the word made flesh, that what has been seen, heard and touched. Here we see again the connection between formation and the actual sermon-language. With the visual speech offered by Bruce the preacher will help the listeners to imaginatively see, hear, smell, touch and taste the good news. Smith is also highly critical of notions that are too narrowly focused on the mind and excludes the body. The notion of social imaginary can be used to describe a deep kind of understanding, a broader and more complex knowledge that is embedded in and includes bodily and material practices. Smith´s criticism of the worldview approach is that it doesn´t give embodiment and practice the role and place they should have, whereas social imaginary draws on a more holistic and integrating image of change as it offers a way to get out of the polarisation between body and mind, intellect and feelings.

7.2.4.4 Disadvantages and Risks

What could be some of the risks and disadvantages of using imagination and specifically social imaginary when teaching about formation? First of all, it is worth noticing that it is not a concept that connects to biblical language about formation. Using the lens of theological perspective, valuing imaginations ability to grasp, name and enable deeper theological understanding, I observe that imagination does not readily bond with biblical concepts. As we saw in chapter three when looking at imagination in the Bible, it is mostly used in negative circumstances, as human sinful thinking outside of Gods boundaries, and is not a theological category that Jesus or Paul use. The Christian imagination draws on Scriptural narratives, says

Smith, then why not try to find and use a biblical concept that is closely linked to what we call formative imagination?

Another disadvantageous aspect in my view is once again that it is a concept that has to be described and defined at length before it can be used in the classroom. Mentioning imagination gives all sorts of associations and connotations as Bruce showed in her opening chapter. Some of these associations have to do with a perceived lack of intellectual vigour, others with a lack of action and some with the connection to fancy.

One of the strengths of using the concept of social imaginary can also be a weakness. As it is a multifaceted philosophical notion with many trains of thought connected to it, it helps to foster a more holistic anthropological and epistemological thinking. Homiletics, as part of an academic education, have to work with complicated and multileveled concepts to get at complex phenomenon's, and if students are familiar with Taylors and Smiths work, it will work nicely in the homiletical classroom. But this requires that they have either studied this in another course or that it is given room in the homiletical class. If students are unfamiliar with the concept of social imaginary it will be quite a long distance to travel before it becomes a useful concept when talking about what formation is and does. In my view, social imaginary is both a helpful and fruitful concept to use in the homiletical classroom when talking about formation, but it cannot be used without a thorough description and definition to meet the wrong associations and connotations connected to the term.

7.3 Limitation of Study and Further research

The limitations in giving definite answers and results in a study like this is obvious. The aim is to prepare for a conversation, and the approach is tentative. Some areas where the limitations of the study can be seen are for example in using only two texts by two authors. A deeper understanding could have been possible by looking at more texts by Smith and Bruce, and using a text from a different sphere of culture could have given interesting aspects. Had I included another author, for example a Swedish theologian, more nuanced and relevant results for my own context could have been revealed. The relative lack of earlier specific research concerning the relationship between homiletics and imagination also limited the scope of this study.

I would like to propose further research suggestions that partly address these limitations. First of all, it would be interesting to continue investigating by looking at the Swedish context and culture, for example by interviewing homileticians and analysing the curriculum of different theological universities with regard to the different aspects of imagination. This

could, in turn, be compared with similar investigations at theological institutions in different parts of the world. Secondly, I would propose further research that focuses on imagination and the linguistic tools and skills of the preacher, how is this taught and practised? The same question could be asked concerning affective imagination and social imaginary, can this be taught and practised in the homiletical classroom? If so, how?

7.4 Summary

It is not possible to give a short and definitive answer concerning whether imagination as a concept is helpful or not in the homiletical context. But it is possible to look at some tentative strengths and weaknesses of using the concept of imagination in relationship to homiletics. In this chapter we have been looking at implications for teaching homiletics, using the areas of concern as conversational circles to gather around. With the help of hermeneutical, critical, correlation and theological criteria we have been looking at some tentative answers.

a) What are some possible strengths and weaknesses of using the concept of imagination when teaching about linguistic craft?

Some possible strengths with using the concept of imagination when teaching about linguistic craft can be seen when connected to concrete tools like the ones Bruce is introducing in her *lyrical voice*. Talking about imagination and linguistic skills in the same sentence might for some students create pressure, a risk that is reduced by giving students actual examples, suggestions and practises. At the same time, there is a risk that by presenting concrete tools. But these tools can also be misused so that the students miss the deeper and more philosophical take, ultimately about giving voice to a different world that is not flattened by reductionism. If the sermon continues to be moral coaching, problem solving, good advice, doctrinal explanation or the pastor's best thoughts so far, in the form of lyrical voice, it has missed the deeper resonance.

By using the correlational lens we can conclude that a concept like linguistic imagination has relevance for contemporary challenges and concerns in the homiletical conversation. As a homiletical teacher, I daily need concrete tools and language to talk about the connection between the actual wording of the sermon and the reality and different construals of the world, how word-worlds interact and how specific words subtly form understandings. The concept of linguistic imagination is in this form quite helpful. The re-imagining, *re-naming, re-telling* and *re-narrating* that goes on in the sermon becomes then not only metaphors but reflects an actual change in language and signals that a special care for and attention to words is needed.

b) What are some possible strengths and weaknesses of using the concept of imagination when teaching about relationships between pastor and congregation?

In this chapter we have seen that Smith and Bruce do not advocate using the concept of affective imagination over other possible concepts, and Smith does not focus on the pastor´s ability to identify with where the congregation is at, but they both highlight the need to invite the affective dimensions in the preaching event. The concept of affective imagination is helpful in the sense that it signals that sermons need to be addressed towards not only cognitive beliefs, but also the heart and the desires. The preacher needs to actively practise affective imagination to create a connected relationship between themselves and the congregation, because what's at stake is not primarily ideas but love. Imagination-language might have the advantage of not being trapped in the dichotomy head or heart. Affective imagination-language indicates an embodied and incarnational understanding and could possibly be helpful as a remedy for bridging the gap between preacher and congregation. Nonetheless, all advantages considered, I wonder if the disadvantage of being an unfamiliar concept that needs a lot of explanation possibly outweigh the advantages.

c) What are some possible strengths and weaknesses of using the concept of imagination when teaching about holistic formation?

There is a homiletical search for language and concepts to discuss formation in a way that gets at the depths and complexity of human formation in a non-reductionist way. We have been looking at how the concept of imagination, and also more specifically the notion of social imaginary, could contribute to the homiletical conversation in this area. In both Bruce's and Smiths definitions of formation the subconscious parts of humans need to be involved in the Christian formation. Bruce calls this the perceptual filters, while Smith uses the more elaborate philosophical term social imaginary, a take on the world that is carried in stories, myths and images, and therefore not fully visible to us. If real formation is going to take place, it needs to get at the human heart, *kardia*, and recalibrate our love in the right direction (towards the Kingdom of God). Using the language of social imaginary is helpful in the sense that it gets at the many complex layers of formation, and also show the social aspects, we are all part of a common imaginary that is so engrained that it is hard for us to see and make assessment of it. Talk about imagination as a controlling center, or link in the individual between the body, the mind, and the emotions, is supportive when teaching about a formation that contains, but goes beyond, rational worldviews, biblical propositions, emotions or "being touched". It could therefore be helpful in reconnecting body and mind for a more embodied

formation, as it would shift the centre of gravity of human formation from the cognitive to the affective, from minds to embodied hearts.

Some of the disadvantages and risks of using imagination-language when teaching about formation in the homiletical classroom is that it is not a term that connects to biblical language about formation. The concept of imagination runs the risk of being associated with fancy, falsehood and irrationality and it needs thorough definitions before it can be used.

Chapter 8. Conclusions and Some Final Reflections

8.1 Language in the Homiletical Classroom

A teacher needs vision. A teacher needs language that is deep and complex enough to talk about a world that is intricate and multifaceted beyond our descriptions. A teacher needs vocabulary that includes, but goes beyond, mere ideas, beliefs and techniques. What is really going on when we preach or when we teach? We will never be able to completely track that down, but we can be on the lookout for concepts and images that will help us describe reality and create a narrative that gives coherence. This work is in a way such a lookout.

My doors into this subject were questions arising in the homiletical classroom and a need for renewed pedagogical vision. I knew Brueggemann was on to something when he wrote about prophetic imagination, but I also knew I was not getting the entire significance and a picture of what this might look like concretely.[32] I was searching for language that was not flattening reality, words and images wide and deep enough to open up to the vast biblical vision and at the same time could talk about and name the particulars and concrete skills in homiletics.[33]

This exploratory research has its value in being groundwork. This study has been trying to identify some of the relatives of imagination on the homiletical side of the family, to use Strawsons metaphor, critically preparing for a conversation. The fields of imagination and homiletics have been explored to search for historical trends and movements relevant for this conversation and creating a framework of imagination. Two quite different texts by Smith and

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[32] Even Brueggemann himself seems not to have thought it all through, he writes in the preface to the revised edition: " I must admit, however, that the phrasing for the book was entirely happenstance, a title decision made late in the publication process. It is nonetheless, a fortuitous one because prophetic faith in a flat, confrontational mode, without imagination, is a non-starter" (Brueggemann 2001:xiv)

[33] A difficulty I am fully aware of, but have chosen not to develop in this work is the differences in meaning between the English word *imagination* on the one hand, and the Swedish equivalent *fantasi* or *föreställningsförmåga* on the other hand. Wordbooks offer the words: "fantasi", "inbillning", "föreställning", "inbillningsförmåga" as translations and these words tend to point in the direction of fantasy and fancy, something that is not true or real.

Bruce were investigated and analysed. Revisiting our problem formulation: *What are some possible strengths and weaknesses of using the concept of imagination in relationship to homiletics?* we can among other things conclude that:

Imagination-language connected to linguistic craft needs to be defined and land in concrete tools, like for example Bruce's *lyrical voice*. This might be Bruce´s most important contribution to the conversation, hands-on implements to use in the homiletical classroom. A concept like linguistic imagination has relevance for contemporary challenges and concerns in the homiletical conversation, especially when connecting this imagination with the tools of lyrical voice. My assessment is that talking about linguistic imagination is helpful in the homiletical classroom by creating a robust link between theological buzz-words like re-imagining, re-naming, re-telling, re-narrating and the actual construal of the sermon. How to create, show and practise this link between abstract ideas and the concrete proficiency and ability is a vital and recurring homiletical question.

I have been searching for a vocabulary that can encompass and bridge the gap between the concrete skills, practical craft and *techne*-dimensions of homiletical knowledge on the one hand, and the open-ended and partly precognitive vision on the other hand. I often find that as a homiletician I talk about skills. And I talk about vision. But not in the same sentence. What vocabulary could work as a kind of stairway between the actual linguistic and communicative skills, the affective depth and direction of the preacher and the eye for the seen and unseen Kingdom-of-God-narrative? My suggestion is that imagination-vocabulary might offer a way to talk about that connection. The concept of imagination could be seen as a flight of stairs which offers a link between the detailed skills, as seen in the lyrical voice, as well as the existential vision and take on the world, as seen in the social imaginary. Homiletical pedagogies could then be described as a way of learning to take the stairs, moving freely up and down the stairs (with no implicit judging that up would be better than down).

Possible weaknesses with the concept of linguistic imagination are, as I see it, ambiguity in definition and the risk of concrete tools eclipsing the deeper eschatological take. The task of giving voice to a different world that is not flattened by reductionism must not be confused with the concrete apparatus. On this basis, some suggestible questions to bring to the conversation are: What could a homiletical curriculum that includes linguistic imagination look like? How are the students to practise the lyrical voice? What measures needs to be taken so that the students do not reject the tools by dismissing them as too "poetic" or "fanciful"? What are some of the ways that the lyrical voice can be discovered in the Bible and connected to exegesis?

Imagination-language connected to relationships between pastor and congregation also needs clear definitions. The concept of affective imagination could be helpful by emphasizing that if the preacher is to reach the congregations affective capacities and desires they need be at home in a broad range of human affections, which is an inherently imaginative undertaking.

One of the weaknesses I can see with using affective imagination is that it is not as established as a concept as for example empathy. Familiarity with concepts like emphatic identification probably outweighs the advantages of using the concept of affective imagination. Questions I would be interested in bringing to the continued conversation are: How is the identification and relationship between preacher and congregation talked about in current homiletical dialogues? What does the focus on the relationship between "pausing to pick up strays and cripples" and "marching to Zion", to quote Craddock, has to do with empathetic imagination? Is this something that can be trained and developed in the homiletical classroom? If so, how? Is the concept of affective imagination better used in the context of *lectio divina*? If so, why?

Homiletics is intrinsically concerned about questions regarding formation. The language used by both students and teacher runs the risk of mirroring a flattening image of humans, reduced to "head and heart", "the mind" or "the will". Imagination-language used in the context of formation could be a valuable help to talk about Christian formation in a more holistic and embodied way if it is clearly defined. Using Taylor's definition of the social imaginary and describing it as conceptual filters is one possible way. The constructive contribution to the homiletical conversation could be the ability to get at the depths and complexity of human formation in a non-reductionist way, highlighting the subconscious and not fully visible parts of humans. Social imaginary embraces the body, the mind, the emotions, the unconscious, the will, the heart, the "gut". In my view, the language of social imaginary might also be helpful in the sense that it reminds us that we are all part of a social understanding that is engrained in our perceptual filters. There is not only one social imaginary, but many, and some of them are in conflict with each other. Preaching, or listening to sermons, is an invitation to biblically informed social imaginary, a countercultural consciousness, to use Brueggemanns language. A weakness, in my judgment, is that social imaginary doesn´t have a natural connection with biblical vocabulary. Imagination is not a clear "biblical concept". As we have seen, it is mostly used in a negative context in the few biblical texts where it is mentioned.

So in what way could the concept of imagination be helpful when grappling with biblical texts and concepts? I do not have an exhaustive answer, but I would like to offer a suggestion. I suggest that imagination-vocabulary could help us to re-define and restore the biblical meaning of the heart, *kardia*. The current definition of the heart has been flattened and become thin, mostly symbolizing feelings, intuition or romantic love, even in church-contexts. This is not wrong, but knowing with the heart in a biblical sense is broader and deeper. Maybe imagination-vocabulary could help us restore a more theological understanding of the heart? And maybe a more theological understanding would include aspects of the heart as a human orienting center or a capacity?

This kind of understanding of the heart could both work as a resistance to the immanent frame as well as giving us a language to talk about formation in education. Education that is embodied, aims our desires, primes our imagination and orients us in the world. Imagination is not inherently good, it can be both sacred and secularized, but imagination-vocabulary might enlarge our understanding of the heart as a place for the vision that determines how we see reality. Imagination-language opens up possibilities. It helps us to think "what-if" and remind us that there are forces that can burst through the constraints of the taken-for-granted. Martello, the young man with the grand piano, was using Lennon's lyrics and music to invite people to see another, possible world without borders, without war or greed, in the midst of the dust of the terror-attacks.

This vision of possibilities might be another way of talking about what Ephesians 1:18-19 reads: "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe." In closing, I want to ask if maybe it could be worth trying to link social imaginary with an adjacent biblical term? In line with Dykstras description of the teacher's task to find words which clarify what is going on, and with Swinton and Mowats criteria to name and enable deeper theological understanding, I would like to offer a contribution to the conversation by suggesting a fusion. What would happen if we took the biblical concept of eyes of faith and combined it with imagination?

Maybe talking about *eyes of faithful imagination* could be helpful when trying to understand this elusive perception of an enchanted counterculture, the capacity to see beneath and beyond the surface, to embody the Kingdom of God and to attend to the deep meanings always present?

"Whatever is foreseen in joy, must be lived out from day to day"

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