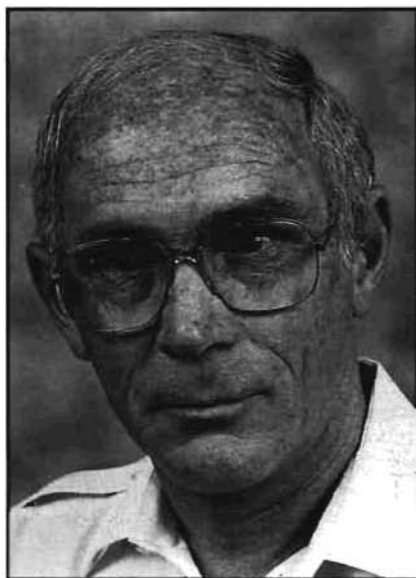


Science as Effective Social Communication: Subjectivity and a “Possible World of Common-Sense Reality”

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Social scientists have by and large alienated the rest of society from science, and in this process have removed themselves from the daily mundane matters and demands of social life, through the theoretical objectification of society. People constituting society, on the other hand, are subjectively engaged in everyday social life. In its application of objective theory, science fails to share meaning with human beings who find meaning in terms of subjective experience. This article pursues the notion that perception plays a crucial part in communication; that perception is shaped by experience; and that experience is historically and situationally specific. Objective theory, being a deliberate attempt to transcend specific instances of subjective experiences both in time and place, is incompatible with the contingency inherent in subjective experience. In trying to say too much by encompassing too much of mankind, objective theory has very little to say to people in real situations.

Science depended, in other words, on the descriptive adequacy of language that could enable consensus in the community of scientists. In the end, science failed because it could not reconcile the competing demands of representation and communication.



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Every move to enhance representation threatened communication and every agreement in communication was the sign of a new failure in representation. (Tyler, 1986:123)

Social scientific discourse, by and large, is well known for its exclusivist scientism, or scientific monologue. Inherently, though there is no logical reason why it should be so in every instance. Whether or not it is true that the exclusive boundaries created by scientists in their written

or oral texts are created with the aim to serve the various interests of scientists, rather than those of the wider public or of science itself, it has that effect in reality. Whilst scientists were communicating amongst themselves for decades, ordinary mortals became alienated from science by scientific jargon and analytical instruments; and scientists alienated themselves from society. The reasons for the many failures of social science are many and complex, but I suspect scientism, for its infatuation with objectivity and the language it employed to this end, to be a crucial element in this regard. Scientific discourse, by and large, has lost contact with society at large because it has lost the ability and/or the willingness to facilitate shared meaning in relation to a public audience - shared meaning now mostly exists amongst scientists themselves. All will agree, presumably, that science has to come out of society, for the sake of society, in order to justify its existence. A science unable to communicate its knowledge and insights to the society it supposedly serves, surely must have become a burden to that society."

Science adopted a model of language as a self-perfecting form of closed communication that achieved closure by making language itself the object of description and as science communicated better and better about itself, it had less and less to say about the world. In an excess of democracy, agreement among scientists became more important than the nature of nature. (Tyler, 1986:124)

If social science is to achieve any relevance at all, the members of society should be given the opportunity to identify intuitively, i.e., subjectively, with the content of scientific discourse. It has to evoke dialogue, rather than alienate it. At least it should be such as to be subjectively recognizable by the average member of society, given his/her particular experience and subjectively meaningful frame of reference. If the content of the discourse is to be recognized, the scientist has to be a recognizable social mem-

ber of society, in as much as s/he succeeds in revealing the subjective experience of the people s/he studied - rather than explaining them in terms of universally applicable, objective theory. When, as has become clear, "that" every version of an 'other', wherever found, is also the construction of a 'self' (Clifford, 1986:23), then the 'self' has to be a socially recognisable person. Philosophy of science, the scientific discourse about science itself, when social scientists contemplate the logical sensibilities of their scientific tools, naturally is a different matter. But in matters pertaining to social situations of society per se, scientific discourse needs to be freed from its alienating, exclusivist monologue, and to invite dialogue with society at large within specific social contexts.

An appropriate critique of scientism has come from post-Modernism: a "post-scientific" critique, as Scholte (1987) has called Tyler's paper, inasmuch as it strives to be "evocative and normative rather than merely analytical and descriptive", and to the extent that "Discourse takes precedence to text; dialogue to monologue; cooperation and collaboration to the 'ideology of the (solitary) transcendental observer' . . . emergence to registration; 'perspectival relativity' . . . to 'synoptic transcendence'" (Scholte, 1987:41). Of evocative, post-modern ethnography Tyler (1986:130; see also Scholte, 1987:41) says: "The whole point of 'evoking' rather than 'representing' is that it frees ethnography from *mimesis* and the inappropriate mode of scientific rhetoric that entails 'objects', 'facts', 'descriptions' 'inductions', 'generalizations', 'verification', 'experiment', 'truth' and like concepts that have no parallels either in the experience of ethnographic fieldwork or in the writing of ethnographies". Scholte speaks of a "literary turn" which, briefly, "consists of a crucial shift from an observational and empirical methodology to a communicative and

dialogical epistemology (which may, of course, entail observational moments and empirical descriptions)" (Scholte, 1987:35). Contemporary social scientists, he says, "no longer seek a privileged or foundational discourse that is in principle adequate to describing and understanding a visible and knowable universe; rather, they experiment with multiple universes of discrete discourse that are in fact capable of expressing and illuminating those diverse possible worlds that can be meaningful to and for us" (Scholte, 1987:34). Tyler spoke of "a possible world of commonsense reality" (1986:125). I believe these viewpoints concur with the widely accepted definition of communication by communication scientists as the deliberate effort between at least two persons to share meaning, where the sharing of meaning presupposes, *inter alia*, subjective experience, or at least knowledge, of subjective matters such as culture and perception (cf. Tubbs & Moss, 1983).

This article is therefore an attempt to contribute to a broader application of the concept of shared meaning; an attempt, in the tradition of reflexive science, to argue that meaningful (i.e., socially accessible) science is equally subjected to the demands of effective communication. In particular, I shall emphasise the critical importance in scientific discourse of "connotative" meaning, as developed in social psychology and communication science (cf. Osgood *et al* (1957); Barthes (1979); Roelofse (1982)). Connotative meaning being largely the result of personal experience, perception and cultural knowledge, operates in all social situations (including scientific ones) and is mostly situationally unique. Consequently it is a social reality which scientists cannot escape, except at the cost of social isolation and responsibility.

Failing to quote a respectable number of texts and concepts relevant to communication science may hamper my effort to share meaning with communication scientists. But I do not wish to address

a predominantly communication science audience because I imagine that I know something about that discipline. I attempt to do so because I believe that communication in a society with disparate perceptual styles requires a multi-disciplinary effort (an effort which requires common ground in terms of an agreed thematical problem, and by definition not disciplinary fusion). However, I neither assume nor wish for general agreement on my viewpoints. Because truth is a "fuzzy" thing inasmuch as truth is that which works for specific, subjective situations (as Rorty (1980, 1986), a philosopher of science, has said), I cannot claim subjective knowledge to be appropriate for all situations and occasions. I merely wish to argue for a place for subjective knowledge and discourse. Together with Rorty I want to argue for a sense of the contingency inherent in human experience as "products of time and chance" (Rorty, 1986:6); for a sense of conversation as against mere inquiry, which requires protecting the "plurality of voices" and the practices which they express; and for an "openness to strangeness which initially tempted us to begin thinking" (Rorty, 1980:9).

As an anthropologist I am bound to restrict myself to ethnographic material pertaining to social experience, perception and cultural knowledge. To this end, I am concerned with language and communication, inasmuch as language is taken as "constitutive and expressive of that partial segment of the real that can be made intelligible and meaningful to us within the cultural confines of a specific language game" (Scholte, 1987:34). In the practical sense this article is concerned with the "scientific" mediation of meaning between parties with divergent perceptual styles. I shall use a conflict situation in the Mlungisi township of Queenstown in 1985, which led to the "necklacing" of a girl, the imprisonment of a few residents of the Mlungisi township, and a mitigation trial in which I gave evidence as an "ex-

pert witness" for the Defence, to argue that an objective scientific explanation of the conflict situation in Mlungisi is inappropriate in the social situation of a court hearing where the mediation of shared meaning between parties with divergent perceptions is of crucial importance.

A visit to a South African township broadly speaking reveals two clearly visible phenomena. The one is profoundly depressing, and the other quite pleasant indeed. The depressing one naturally is the widespread poverty and appalling lack of facilities. The pleasant one is the vibrant social life and people's obvious enjoyment of it. Despite conflict and violence (where and when it occurs), townships, with their streets and public places packed with intensely interacting people, visibly display much more human warmth and social vibrancy than "white" suburbs filled with gardens and walls, but empty of people. Residents of places suffering the most appalling conditions imaginable, widely express strong affection for their township or squatter camp. Obviously they do not refer to the physical conditions of the townships, but to the people or the social quality of these places. The question then is: Given the obvious, almost tangible, vibrancy and human warmth of township, squatter camp or settlement, why are these qualities not noticed by social scientists, or, rather, why do they not feature in scientific report? Broadly speaking, there are expectedly two reasons. Firstly, at a scientific level, it may result from notions of scientific purity or objectivity steering clear of subjective observations. Secondly, at a social level, it may be a function of divided social experience: a "white" scientist and his/her "black" objects of study occupying separate social contexts, and the consequent inability to grasp intuitively (intersubjectively).

Next I shall elaborate upon the social and other conditions which existed before and after 1985 in the township of Mlungisi (separated from Queenstown by

about 200 metres of unoccupied land), a township which presented extreme examples of abject poverty and a severe lack of public amenities on the one hand, and intense social vibrance and solidarity on the other hand. Unfortunately the one was as much a part of the other as vice versa.

During 1985 Mlungisi township had an estimated population of 45 000. With an estimated 3 970 dwellings (including shacks), the dwelling:population ratio was 1:11.3. A major grievance was the total lack of private toilets and taps. Water was obtained from public taps outside public toilets. There were only 24 public toilet buildings with holes in the floor for toilets. The "holes" of some of these toilet buildings were partitioned with low walls, whilst others were not partitioned at all. With a ratio of roughly 1 875 persons per public toilet building, or roughly 550 persons per "hole", inevitably the toilets became clogged and utterly repulsive. As it was generally expressed by the residents: "We had to queue to relieve ourselves." Other grievances included a severe shortage of educational, health and recreational facilities, and low wages paid by Queenstown employers. In addition, the deprived conditions of the township resulted in very poor marriage and family stability.

Mlungisi also had some typical as well as unique social qualities at least up to the end of 1989 when research was concluded: infants in constant physical contact with other persons, carried on the back or hip of their mothers and other female relatives; children forming social groups to cope with the fact of poor and/or absent parents (as these groups provided much needed security to its young members, they yielded more, or at least as much, authority over children as did their families); the streets of the township regularly packed with socializing people of all ages after school and working hours, and during weekends (living and meeting one another in the streets for

a large part of their lives, indicated the extent to which residents lacked self-sufficiency in individual family life, the extent to which those economic and social mechanisms which may set individual families apart from one another, were lacking - it was common practice to borrow food and even clothes from neighbours and friends, and residents regularly shared their homes, meals and beds or blankets; residents sweeping the streets during the early mornings in front of their houses, a common sight on weekend days in the township (the streets were certainly cleaner than one would expect of a township as deprived as Mlungisi); church services lasting a whole day, and much of the service conducted outside church buildings, indicating both people's indifference to privacy and their need of belonging and being together in a close-knit context; the residents' capacity for collective action demonstrated by two very effective consumer boycotts and a mass funeral attended by 25 000 people; monthly prayer meetings, for members of the township who were in detention or serving a sentence, similarly attended in large numbers; the Mlungisi residents' almost tangible affection for their township - the collective supportiveness of the township community clearly provided much needed security and comfort.

Against the above background, I shall next describe processes and incidents which occurred prior to, and during 1985 in Mlungisi, and which culminated in the tragic death of a girl by "necklacing".

On the 12th of August 1985 the residents of Mlungisi initiated a consumer boycott against white-owned businesses in Queenstown in reaction to the lack of facilities, increased home rental, lodger tax, and the alleged harassment by municipal police in the township. (The residents argued the validity of their grievances eventually with the benefit of hindsight after 35 small businesses in Queenstown had to close down as a result of the boycott, stating that Mlungisi

had contributed significantly to the economy of Queenstown through their custom, but received very little by way of public services in return from that town.) Other alleged grievances included the eviction from their homes by the Public Administration Board of two pensioned families in the Newtown and New Brighton neighbourhoods of Mlungisi, families which could no longer manage to pay their rent (as a result of the consumer boycott, the families were at a later stage allowed back into their houses).

The Residents' Ad Hoc Committee, which represented residents in negotiations with the town council, chamber of commerce and other external bodies, reported back to the residents during mass, street or area meetings on Sundays, from August until the "massacre" in November 1985. "Street" and "area" committees were formed as communication channels, and to organise public and social services carried out by "marshals".

Since the abuse of alcohol was particularly severe before the boycott, it was banned at the onset of the boycott, *inter alia* to protect the township's ability to resist attempts at breaking the boycott. The police allegedly tried to persuade the residents verbally to buy in town, or by pamphlets distributed by helicopter (or light aircraft), advising people to stop the boycott as they would only hurt themselves; and that those who wished to buy in town would receive police protection. Opposition against the boycott, however, merely served to enhance the solidarity of the residents of Mlungisi.

Various other incidents further contributed to solidarity in the township. During August/September a private home in the township burnt down. It was alleged that it caught fire after teargas was shot into the house (how the teargas caused the fire, was not clear). Subsequently all the black members of the local police force living in Mlungisi, were driven out of the township by the residents who burnt down their houses.

Though in practice "policing" was

mainly carried out by the youth, it was said that every resident was regarded as a marshal. People who broke the boycott were punished, particularly those who used alcohol. They were forced to take Sunlight soap and Omo, called "cheese and coke", in order to make them vomit the alcohol they drank. Some were forced to go naked in the streets. As some residents could not resist buying liquor in town, "perpetrators" were at a later stage also sjambokked, or their wrists and ankles burnt with plastic. Marshals patrolled the town and whenever someone was caught buying at a shop which was boycotted, s/he was escorted back to the township where the purchases were thrown out, or burnt, and the culprit punished. In addition, some eight "informers" were burnt during 1985.

"It rested upon" the street and area committees to coordinate the cleaning of the township and other public or social duties. Because municipal services were terminated as a result of the unrest, the public toilets, streets and "freedom squares" (public spaces) had to be cleaned by the community itself. Marshals assisted elderly people with whatever they needed assistance for. The residents actually enjoyed working "for the community" and they were proud of themselves as a community. Despite the dangers, hardships and violence of this period, people enjoyed being in Mlungisi.

On the 26th and 27th of September, 1985, almost 500 people were arrested under section 50 of the Internal Security Act, and detained for 14 days. Some of the members of the Ad Hoc Committee were not released after 14 days, but charged with treason and released after a trial in East London in September 1986. After the arrests of the members of the Ad Hoc Committee, area and street committees assumed an even more important role in the community, also because mass meetings were soon prohibited under the emergency regulations (permission was obtained, though, for the mass meeting at which the "massacre" oc-

curred because the Ad Hoc Committee was to report back to the residents about the negotiations with the chamber of commerce - but people would have feared mass meetings after the massacre anyway). At a later stage additional members were co-opted to the Ad Hoc Committee in the place of those in detention. But before that was done, there was no proper Ad Hoc Committee to negotiate with representative bodies in Queenstown, or to report back to the residents. It therefore became the responsibility of the street committees to "educate the people on the aims of the community".

So solidarity gradually grew and reached tremendous proportions in Mlungisi during the boycott. Even residents who were previously punished for breaking the boycott, were swept up by the growing wave of solidarity in the township. Some of them were seen punishing perpetrators as well. Residents started experiencing a surge of good spirits, well-being and optimism. Many, it was said, became new persons. Those who were almost permanently drunk before, changed into sober persons as a result of the ban on liquor. Rude persons, it was said, became agreeable ("nice") persons. Residents started enjoying each other tremendously, and were pleasantly surprised with one another's new, healthy and handsome appearances and friendly faces - they discovered new people in one another. A brand new community of people emerged out of the mess of the township. Though the crime rate was very high before the boycott started, it went down completely during the boycott. It was also a law of the community that stealing and shop-lifting both in the township and in town had to stop, as persons who bought in town could claim that they had stolen the items in town. "Then the people started feeling free in the township" because they could walk until late at night without being raped or robbed. "It was only the police who disturbed us at night and even during daytime.... they

kept on coming into our township. So we decided to fight the police with stones. But the more we fought them, the more they kept coming to the township and in greater numbers. Then they brought in Inkatha during September-October, that is Zulu police (after we had driven the black police from the township), and put them up at the show grounds [on the border between Queenstown and Mlungisi]..... [we were told] not to associate with Inkatha, because there were rumours that girls were sleeping with Inkatha police. As the boycott went on the people started with necklacing, they necklaced those who were informers or who betrayed the community in any way."

Then came the day of the "massacre". A meeting was scheduled by the Ad Hoc Committee for the 17th of November 1985 at the Methodist Church at which they would report back to the residents about their negotiations with the town council, chamber of commerce and the commanding officer of the police. "During this time the people craved for the meetings. Even if you arrived early at the venue for the meeting, you would find the place already packed." On this day also the church was filled to capacity and residents started filling the premises of the church, inside the fence. "As we were listening to the report back from the Ad Hoc Committee, there came the "System" [white police and "Inkathas"]; and they gave us five minutes to disperse. They arrived with Hippo's, and a white policeman said over a loudspeaker we are given five minutes to disperse. They parked a Hippo in front of the gate of the church and started shooting first teargas, then birdshot and live bullets into the church and into the crowd outside." Those outside frantically tried to get into the church, and those inside clambered over each other to get outside - through the windows and through the doors. One of the members of the Ad Hoc Committee who was addressing the meeting,

was hit by a bullet and fell down. People ran to the clinic next to the church building for water to wash the teargas from their faces, and into the township. Nine people were shot dead. After the departure of the police, the wounded and the dead were taken to a sympathetic medical doctor in Queenstown.

A contingent of policemen in armoured vehicles then withdrew to the entrance to Queenstown, on the main (Victoria) road connecting Queenstown and Mlungisi. A crowd of Mlungisi residents also gathered on Victoria Road, facing the police in their casspirs. About 200 metres apart, the crowd and the police started exchanging challenges. At that moment a casspir came out of the township down Victoria Road, and surprised the crowd from behind. The details of what happened next, are not clear. According to the residents, the crowd scattered and fled in all directions into the township when they noticed the casspir behind them, but it is also possible that they ventured to confront the police. In any event, the police opened fire "into the fleeing crowd", killing two young men and wounding a boy with birdshot. Again vehicles were organised and the victims taken to the medical doctor in Queenstown.

The residents then went home and when darkness came, they attacked the police. The fighting against the police with petrol bombs (always thrown from safe places) under cover of darkness was to last for about a week. During daytime nobody tried anything with the police because "they were quick to shoot". The youth dug trenches in the streets to prevent the police from entering the streets, and in order to throw petrol bombs at them when they were halted by the trenches. In the beginning, tyres were burnt at the trenches to lure the police. Wire traps were set up across the streets to catch police on casspirs on the head or throat. Later the police went from home to home in the streets where trenches were dug, and took out residents to fill up the trenches.

Night vigils for the victims of the massacre started the day after the massacre at the home of each of the deceased and lasted for 19 days until the mass funeral on the 7th of December. These separate, individual vigils which lasted for about an hour and a half, were widely attended and apparently deepened the bitterness of the residents. The individual night vigils culminated in a final, all-night mass vigil at the Apostolic Church for all the victims of the massacre, on the night before the mass funeral.

After the massacre there were rumours that girls from the township had affairs with the Inkatha police and secretly visited them at night at their barracks at the show grounds. At meetings held at area and street level, residents were instructed to search for these girls and to punish them. The area committees also held meetings to set up marshals (most of the youth, actually) from every street who would be responsible for organising the meals and accommodation of visitors who would come for the mass funeral from elsewhere. The marshals were also given duties for the final night vigil on the 6th of December and the funeral the next day.

The night vigil started at about 18:00 at the Apostolic Church. The attendants sang and listened to speeches and sermons. The marshals looked out for those who were sleeping, woke them up and took them outside for fresh air, or told them that they were not there to sleep but to listen to what was being said. They also had to see to it that younger persons were not sitting on chairs whilst there were older persons without chairs.

From about 7:00 the next morning, when the vigil ended, the marshals were on duty again (although the majority of them had had no or little sleep the previous night), chopping wood and slaughtering sheep to be cooked by the women for visitors and others who attended the mass funeral. After slaughtering, the youth (marshals) went home to wash and change into their uniforms: kakhi trousers

for males and black skirts for females, kakhi shirts, black shoes, black berets and a small piece of cloth with the ANC colours on the sleeve of the left shoulder.

Later during the morning the funeral service started at Mlungisi stadium, where people sang and listened to speeches again. Towards the afternoon the funeral procession left the stadium through a guard of honour, formed by the youth in kakhi and black uniforms right up to the cemetery. Others were pallbearers; a third group of youth in uniform carried banners from the stadium to the cemetery, one for every victim of the massacre. The crowd followed, also through the guard of honour. While the procession was still at the stadium, the police stood watching from afar. But when the cortege reached the cemetery at about 16:00, the police drew closer with two or three casspirs. This infuriated the youth who desperately wanted to revenge themselves on the police (after having had their anger fanned by many days of night vigils). But the older people who feared for more lives, calmed them down. The officiating priest intervened and asked the police to withdraw themselves for some distance, which they did. After the corpses were buried, people toy-toyed for a while, and then dispersed.

The next morning, Sunday the 8th of December, five young men (five of the six who were the accused in the eventual trial) gathered as usual on Sundays, in a shack in Newtown. One of them, Mzwandile Gqeba told the others that he was informed by one Martin Melini that he had seen a hippo visiting at the home of a girl named Balise Zamela a few times and that he suspected Balise was having affairs with the Inkatha police. At about 12:00 Mzwandile and Thozamile Bacela (another one of the five) went to look for Balise and her friends, Tshoki Hloyi, Nana and Pixie Nojegwa (two sisters), as they were previously instructed by the area committee to be on the lookout for girls who were having affairs with the Inkatha police. These girls were from the same

area as the five young men - Balise and her sister Nosipho were neighbours of one of them, and lived on the same street as Mzwandile Gqeba. When they found the girls, they took them to the shack where they were questioned by the young men. When, after a rather lengthy interrogation, Tshoki told them that Nosipho was seen getting onto a hippo when coming from a night vigil for Nkhululi Songelwa (their late friend who died during the massacre), the young men became very angry since they had buried their close friend only the previous day - Nosipho had slept with the men who had killed her and their brothers. Mzwandile and Thozamile then went off to look for Nosipho and Pemezi, and, after they had found the girls, took them to the shack where the other girls were still waiting. When Nosipho and Pemezi were subsequently questioned by the men, Pemezi confirmed that she had seen Nosipho getting onto a hippo with the assistance of policemen. But Nosipho denied everything. The fact that she bluntly denied everything, and did not try to explain at least how it happened that she was seen getting onto a hippo, angered the men and convinced them that she was lying. So they decided to take her out for public punishment. The other girls remained in the shack.

They took Nosipho out to the open area at a public toilet for the people to witness that she was being punished for what she had done. They took turns in beating her with a sjambok. Men, women and children started gathering when they heard about the sjambokking. They were about seventy in number at that stage. The rest of the crowd also became extremely angry and excited when they learned about Nosipho's "betrayal", and encouraged the men to teach Nosipho a lesson. After some time she cried and asked why she was the only one to be punished though there were other girls who had also slept with the Inkatha police at the show grounds. When they asked her about the others, Nosipho said it was a girl called Pumla and another one, the

name of whom she couldn't remember, who stayed at Masipala (the municipal section of Mlungisi, also called White City). When Nosipho was instructed to take them to the other two girls at Masipala, she said she only knew where Pumla lived.

The crowd then moved from Newtown to Masipala. As the crowd moved along, it grew bigger and bigger to about 100 people as adults and children were attracted from the streets or from their homes by the excitement, and in turn added to the excitement. Before it reached Masipala the crowd started toyi-toying and sang "freedom songs". (It was generally stated by members of the township that they had to toyi-toyi to remove their fear and anxiety - frightened young boys, they said, act similarly when they are about to go to the circumcision lodge. Toyi-toying and chanting actually increased during periods of unrest in the township, when the residents feared attacks by the riot police.)

When the crowd arrived at the street in Masipala where Nosipho said Pumla lived, people were already highly excited and toyi-toying in anticipation of the girl they were about to punish. The inmates of the house pointed out by Nosipho were in front of their house, but told the men no such person lived there. Then Nosipho said maybe she was confusing the streets, maybe Pumla stays in the house in the same position in the next street.

The crowd still grew while it moved to the house in the next street. Some persons from the crowd started shouting that Nosipho was only fooling them. The crowd arrived still toyi-toying at the house in the second street, only to be informed once more by a man in front of the house that no person by the name of Pumla lived there. This angered the crowd even more and various people shouted louder and louder that Nosipho was lying. Then Nosipho suggested that Pumla also frequented Newtown and that perhaps they would find her there. At this stage the five

men became separated from Nosipho and never came near her again. People now suddenly started shouting that Nosipho is an "impimpi" (traitor) and must be burnt.

A very excited crowd of about 200 toyi-toying people now moved down to Newtown. On their way to Newtown members of the crowd shouted: "This girl is fooling us. Yesterday we buried our comrades who were killed by the people with whom she slept. We are going to make an example of her — we are going to burn her! We shall burn her at The Golden!" (an open space at a public toilet where the only street light of the township was). The crowd was now wild with excitement, leaping high and briskly while chanting loudly. Apparently few members of the crowd were at this stage interested in Nosipho or her reactions, or at any other stage since they had left Masipala. They did not bother to watch. They were extremely excited and toyi-toying wildly. Their minds were fixed on toyi-toying and singing with the crowd: their most pressing need was to toyi-toyi. At the Golden a tyre was put over Nosipho's head, petrol poured over her, and she was set alight amidst raging toyi-toying.

When I entered Mlungisi township in 1989 for fieldwork (after having been called to give evidence as "expert witness" in the trial), I felt at home. But my feeling at home was not the result of being familiar with conditions of poverty through fieldwork in other places in South Africa. Some years ago I would have felt out of place in Mlungisi despite being familiar with conditions of exploitation and poverty. I felt at home in Mlungisi because I consciously and subconsciously recognised the signs of a particular kind of consciousness which I have acquired to some extent by living in close association with the residents of a homeland settlement where I have been doing intensive fieldwork since 1985, and subsequently with the residents of other social contexts occupied exclusively by black persons. That is, I understood the situation from ex-

perience as a social human being, and not as a scientist with theoretical knowledge. Theory usually transforms the image I have of people beyond recognition; it precludes empathy because it does not allow one to see life through the eyes of the other. In explaining people and their actions to a judge, one has to make the former's experience come alive by placing the judge in their shoes, so to speak, and not by wrapping them in scientific theory - it is a simple fact of life that given his/her experience and the perception deriving from that experience, and sufficient pressure, any non-violent person can be brought to violence. Though subjective understanding through the clarification of connotative meaning cannot (and does not intend to) undo blameworthiness in the case of violence, it is the most compelling way in which to argue for extenuation, as I have learned from experience in several trials. Theory, on the other hand, is far too detached and devoid of human feelings, for all its objectivity and denotative qualities, to create empathy.

I shall now elaborate upon this connotative meaning, whilst also trying to avoid as much as possible the contradiction between personal and scientific authority, as the anthropologist Mary Louise Pratt has phrased it:

"I think it is fairly clear that personal narrative persists alongside objectifying description in ethnographic writing because it mediates a contradiction within the discipline between personal and scientific authority, a contradiction that has become especially acute since the advent of fieldwork as a methodological norm. James Clifford speaks of it as 'the discipline's impossible attempt to fuse objective and subjective practices' ... Fieldwork produces a kind of authority that is anchored to a large extent in subjective, sensuous experience. One experiences the indigenous environment and lifeways for oneself, sees with one's own eyes, even plays some roles, albeit contrived ones, in the daily life of the community. But the professional

text to result from such an encounter is supposed to conform to the norms of a scientific discourse whose authority resides in the absolute effacement of the speaking and experiencing subject" (Pratt, 1986:32).

Though social categories like "black", "white", "children", or "adults" are ideological categories in the first place, they eventually assume some kind of reality as distinct categories (or more appropriately, social contexts) since they are acted upon as if they are real. To be "black", or a "child", given their existence as social categories, make very real difference indeed to those labeled as such. The (eventual) reality of being "black" or a "child" (as opposed to "white" or "adult") in turn confirms the "reasons" for treating them as separate categories. Naturally it is important to understand such categories as ideological phenomena - as part of culture rather than nature - but also as phenomena which eventually become more than mere fictions of the mind, particularly for the incumbents of those categories. Not only do they spend much energy to combat the constraints inherent in their ascribed positions, they also develop distinct values and views about the uniqueness or distinctiveness of the respective categories in which they happen to find themselves. This is not to say that such categories form "cultural wholes" in any sense at all, or that each represents a common culture. They merely constitute contexts - externally specified and internally constructed. In other words, persons sharing similar experiences, develop similar strategies, mechanisms or perceptions for coping with those experiences.

Persons classified as "black" in South Africa (in opposition to those classified as "white") are not only residents of townships, squatter camps, farm compounds or homelands; they have also developed distinct life and perceptual styles as a result of this experience. It is said by many black persons that despite the knowledge of the experience of blacks as a poor and exploited people, white

countrymen still lack an intuitive understanding of blacks. That is, though men and women from "white society" study "black society", they still live in two separate worlds. And, more than merely experiencing (poverty and exploitation), blacks also deal with that experience socially and perceptually. As whites do not have this experience, or because they do not interact meaningfully with blacks in the social world of township, rural settlement, squatter camp, etc., they usually have very little intuitive understanding of the feelings, views or perceptions of black people.

The popular belief in the existence of ethnic and cultural differences amongst the black population of South Africa is belied by the most dominant experience shared by black South Africans, as black South Africans, in general. This common experience is reflected in the widespread similarities between widely differing social or geographic contexts. A remote rural village in a homeland, a neighbourhood in Soweto and a township in the Eastern Cape differ in many regards (as do members of the same family), but they also resemble one another in many respects: people socialising in streets or other public spaces rather than, or at least as much as, inside private homes; "children" (mostly unmarried, unemployed persons roughly between the ages of 5 and 18) forming and maintaining supportive structures independent of adults; children placed in the care of grandmothers; male dominance; virtually identical female strategies against male exploitation; black tea and dry bread for breakfast; a love for soccer amongst males; shebeens with universal characteristics and atmosphere; and many more.

The rest of the discussion in this article, apart from the last section, is largely a verbatim version of my evidence in court in which I tried to develop a generalised connotative meaning, particularly as it is expressed in perception.

At a very general level, therefore, black people in South Africa may be under-

stood fruitfully in terms of the most central and fundamental characteristic of the context of being "black". That is, whilst it is acknowledged that black people are not a monolithic body of human beings, there appears to be sufficient sense in translating a common dimension of perception overriding the differences in language, tradition, education, occupation and creed amongst black people. This perceptual characteristic, which derives from common experience, may be called (for want of a more appropriate term) "*collective consciousness*", in contrast to its opposite pole, "individualistic consciousness", generally operative in the context of being "white". Collective consciousness would appear to be incomprehensible if interpreted with the intellectual tools formed by individualistic consciousness, and vice versa, of course (cf. Rogers & Shoemaker (1971:145ff) on the question of socio-cultural compatibility). Overt as well as covert judgements of actions flowing from the perception of collective consciousness are commonly based on the perspectives of individualistic consciousness, and therefore an open or secret vexation to many. That is, the manifestations of collective consciousness are as widely misinterpreted as they are well-known. Racists openly and contently admit to this knowledge. Liberals and radicals treat it as improper knowledge - if ever they concede to this knowledge, it is done with great discretion. Naturally racists want to substantiate the grounds for racism, whilst non-racists are embarrassed by signs of differentiation (as if racism is totally ineffectual).

The pervasiveness of collective consciousness in the context of being "black", then, derives from common experience. Directly it is the result of general or total deprivation: low income, unemployment, lack of social stability (particularly within family life and in terms of marital instability), lack of residential stability (due to unstable family life as well as migrant labour

and employment instability), employment instability, malnutrition and poor health, lack of education and, generally therefore, lack of security. The deprivation is total in the sense that it encompasses all of material, social, physical and intellectual insecurity. Therefore, if I tend to fuse collective consciousness with a particular race category in this article, I have done so because of the close association between the context of being black and destitution in South Africa. Logically, however, the fit is between collective consciousness and poverty, and not between collective consciousness and race.

Indirectly collective consciousness is the result of growing up or living amongst those who are totally or partly deprived. Virtually all affluent black persons display collective consciousness to some degree, which they have acquired by living in close association with poor blacks (apart from those who originally grew up in destitution). It is also brought about by the social pressure exerted on the more affluent members of that society to share whatever they have at their disposal with the poor. The resultant collective consciousness, again, reinforces this need to share since one grows up with the experience of not having the moral right to dispose of private property at individualistic will. Collective (or whatever) consciousness therefore persists in a particular social context when the experience which gives rise to it, is the dominant experience in that context. The logical corollary of this, of course, is: if wide-spread poverty is replaced by wide-spread affluence, a different perceptual style will develop simply because collective consciousness was not designed for affluence.

Collective consciousness (people, actually) therefore has to be understood in terms of experience, for people think and behave the way they do largely as a result of their experience. In other words, persons who differ in experience will also differ in the ways they react to the same situation, because they interpret the

meaning of the situation differently. The interplay between experience and perception may be demonstrated schematically in the following way (Experience (E) + Situation (S) = Perception (P)) (cf. Forge, 1973:260):

$$\begin{array}{rcl} E1 & + & S & = & P1 \\ E2 & + & S & = & P2 \end{array}$$

Children in townships or rural areas generally grow up under circumstances of profound material deprivation and acute insecurity - either as children of an unmarried mother who is absent at work or as the children of a married father who is also absent at work. Because parents are unable to provide adequately for the needs of their children, the latter are forced to survive physically, emotionally and socially largely independent of their parents. To this end they learn to form strong social bonds through which they may find food, a place to sleep, and often clothes as well. They learn very early in life that no single individual is able to provide for one's needs; that survival as an individual, or even as a single nuclear family, is impossible; that a collection of individuals (called a "group" by all but anthropologists) has to be organised into enduring ties which collectively provide the best chances for survival; that in a world where material security is lacking, physical and emotional survival is to be found only in cooperative action. These children develop social maturity - an astute sense for social engineering - as early as 5 to 6 years of age. Black children of this age in fact often display social abilities equal, and in some cases superior, to that of white children in their final years in school (even though they lag far behind in conceptual abilities). Life is therefore essentially experienced and known as a member of a collection of persons, and all things familiar and unfamiliar are perceived and filtered through this perspective. Money, food, vehicles, houses, clothes, beds and even toothbrushes amongst children assume a very strong

social meaning. None of these assets are regarded as for exclusive, private use. Also, any asset has to be used to bind others to oneself. By sharing everything one has, with as many other people as possible, one deprives oneself over the short term but ensures survival over the long term, albeit precariously.

Social strategies in childhood breed concomitant social practices in adult life, and in this way childhood experiences eventually also contribute to childrearing practices which in turn anticipate and therefore reinforce the need for collective strategies. In affluent communities babies are socially separated and secluded to a very large extent. They do not sleep with their parents; at sleeping time, day or night, they are put to bed and the door closed on them - and everybody at home has to keep quiet during baby's sleeping time. Later when they start to grow up, and circumstances permit, children get their own private rooms. In the poorer part of society, on the other hand, babies are protected from isolation (privacy) and virtually in constant physical contact with their mothers, sisters, aunts, grandmothers, or other female persons who carry them on their backs. The belief that babies cannot sleep in noisy situations is proved to be a myth by the fact that black babies can sleep blissfully on a mother's back even while she dances violently with scores of other people to the rhythm of deafening music. The impression made by this experience of constant social and physical warmth on an infant's mind is truly profound.

Collective consciousness is therefore laid down at two totally different, but mutually reinforcing levels. Firstly, during infancy and the toddler stage when children are protected by, and very dependent on, adults. Secondly, from the end of the toddler stage onwards, children are forced into collective interdependence (which, paradoxically, requires of them to be independent). During the first, critical, phase of their lives, therefore, they are taught dependence on people. During the

second phase they are forced into dependence on others. People within whom collective consciousness is as powerfully created, as described here can suffer greatly in a societal system dominated by individualistic consciousness. When their worldview (as defined by collective consciousness) is consistently violated by the perceptual mechanisms of a societal system ruled by individualistic consciousness, collective consciousness tends to be reinforced for the sake of protection in antagonistic ways. This point will be taken up again at a later stage.

Before turning to the manifestations of collective consciousness, three final remarks should be made in order to put consciousness or perception, as such, in perspective.

- Collective consciousness is not a kind of knowledge people are aware of, or which they apply situationally at given moments or circumstances. Normally people are totally unaware of the perceptive style by which they operate mentally in the world of people and things. As such collective (like individualistic) consciousness is an all-inclusive, omnipresent, subconscious world view - the way people view the world, life, nature, people, themselves. It determines, for instance, how one defines human nature, masculinity or femininity, authority, love, justice and all other ingredients of life.
- Collective and individualistic consciousness are not two discrete perceptual types. They represent opposite poles of a continuum. Yet, though no person is totally without characteristics of either collective or individualistic consciousness - although no person is either totally socially minded or totally private - people tend to be either more collective or individualistic in their consciousness. However, the particular experience of the vast majority of black people makes for extreme forms of collective consciousness.
- Perception, and the values underlying

it, is not a matter of whim but a functional and effective way of coping with experience. It is rather common knowledge that individualism and the need for privacy (the need to escape from people) increases commensurate with increased affluence in society - as the need for assistance or aid by others diminishes, self-sufficiency and interindividual competition increase. In this sense individualistic consciousness is a pragmatic way of coping with conditions of affluence and a futuristic disposition. Likewise, collective consciousness is a functional adaptation to deprivation. Values associated with either collective or individualistic consciousness, also have functional necessity. Like perception, values cannot be changed fundamentally, independent of the conditions which cause them.

Collective consciousness indeed has been developed into a mechanism of extreme sophistication insofar as it takes care very effectively of demands which would normally be regarded as beyond human endurance: for communities with an average daily per capita income of as low as 60c — R6, survival is no common feat. Survival under these conditions demands constant vigilance at all levels of existence and is structurally intolerant of anything which only slightly jeopardizes peoples' ability and ways of coping with the everyday demands of living.

The most common manifestations of collective consciousness are widely known in South Africa, though not as manifestations of collective consciousness. They may perhaps be best illustrated by contrasting or comparing them with that of individualistic consciousness.

Persons with collective consciousness are socially open, whereas persons with individualistic consciousness are socially closed.

Middle or upper class citizens generally never conduct a private discussion in the presence of others. When they talk, they

use soft voices and confidential tones. When two or more of them enter a lift and find just one other person already in there, they tend to terminate whatever conversation they have immediately. They are very prone to confidentiality and seem psychologically unable to conduct a conversation in the presence of outsiders. Persons from the poorer part of society, on the other hand, are able to conduct a conversation with the greatest of ease even across the width of a busy street. What affluent citizens take for rowdiness, in fact is social openness within the context of collective consciousness.

Persons with collective consciousness are inter-individually (that is, in private situations) closed, whereas persons with individualistic consciousness are open in inter-individual, private situations.

Though affluent persons are unable to conduct conversations in public, they easily show emotion in public. They will kiss and embrace even after just one day of separation where anybody may see them. Persons with collective consciousness very rarely show inter-individual emotion (i.e., in a private situation, albeit in public). A man may return home after three to six months absence on migrant work without as much as touching his wife, which does not imply that he has less love for his wife than a man with individualistic consciousness has for his wife.

Persons, particularly males, with collective consciousness constantly seek physical contact in various unemotional ways with members of the same sex; males with individualistic consciousness shun it.

Males with collective consciousness frequently hold hands, sit close together and consistently make bodily contact with their arms, elbows and shoulders. They do so subconsciously, naturally and with complete spontaneity. They have of

course experienced physical contact since infancy when they were carried on the back of some woman where they learned to find constant comfort in the reassuring warmth of another human body. In contrast to the social meaning attached to physical contact and proximity from this perspective, most affluent/educated males are unable to make amicable, physical contact on a regular basis. When it does happen, abnormal sexuality is read into the situation with horror. Males from poverty-stricken communities are uninhibited in this respect because they perceive physical contact from the perspective of collective consciousness. One may easily share one's only bed with a visiting friend who wants to sleep over for the night, without the slightest unease. In fact, reading homosexual motives into the situation - and not sleeping on the same bed - would be regarded as very weird indeed. The generally greater freedom of black men over their white fellows in this regard probably derives from two sources. First, unlike the vast majority of white, affluent or educated men, poor or uneducated black men doubt their masculinity to a lesser degree because they are brought up in a society where male and female roles are not confused, where the sexual roles are rigidly separated and women terribly dominated in ways created by destitution. Secondly, because people with collective consciousness are far less aware of themselves as individuals, their personal selves (their ego's) are far less of an issue, so to speak. They are less aware of themselves because they are (relative to persons with individualistic consciousness) acutely aware of others. And because one is perceptually unaware of one's own person and body, the bodies of fellow beings are not a matter of embarrassment - other persons' bodies can only be an embarrassment when one is selfconscious about one's own

physical person. There is, in other words, a far greater perceptual fusion between one's own person and those of others. For this reason it is much easier to borrow someone else's clothes than it is amongst affluent people with individualistic consciousness.

By reason of the fusion between the self and others, persons with collective consciousness require far less physical space than persons with individualistic consciousness.

People with collective consciousness are able to fill the restricted space of a small room or vehicle to the brim with no sign of emotional unease. In fact, they are truly happy under crowded circumstances - which is not to say that there is no limit to their tolerance in this regard. On the other hand, lack of physical distance is unbearable to people with individualistic consciousness simply because their perception of the psycho-social boundary of the self (of ego) does not allow physical proximity. They are much more aware of themselves - their ego's are more extended and therefore require more space, as it were (a phenomenon which Hall (1964) has termed "proxemics"; see also Harrison, 1974:150-1). To people with individualistic consciousness, therefore, situations which give them the feeling of being socially drowned, cause intense emotional discomfort; they experience a lack of personal identity, a swallowing of the ego. In contrast, situations which require the expression of a unique personal identity, cause great discomfort to people with collective consciousness. To them (those with collective consciousness) the psycho-social boundary of ego and of others largely overlap. One's own psycho-social person extends into the ambit of the group, as the group penetrates one's own personal ambit. The perceptual knowledge of the boundary of

ego is extremely vague precisely because of the acute awareness of others.

Communities characterised by collective consciousness of necessity require collective democracy, i.e., consensus and consensual procedure. People with individualistic consciousness regularly demand their individual democratic rights.

In terms of collective democracy, decisions by the group (or the community) are the only, truly legitimate ones - no individual, no leader however big, may take decisions for the group on his/her own. Very few things cause so much bitterness and anger as decisions taken on behalf of the community, without the consensus of the community. As in more traditional times, no modern leader (be it a headman, chief, cabinet minister or any informal leader) enjoys popular legitimacy unless he seeks and follows the opinion of his followers. Ideally matters are discussed by at least the more senior members of the "constituency" (the representatives of the constituency) or by a meeting of adult men. To persons with collective consciousness the "group" is far greater than any individual member. Therefore, one or a few individuals cannot take decisions for the group as a whole.

In communities dominated by collective consciousness, adjudication is a matter of reconciliation. The legal process in societies dominated by individualistic consciousness is clinically geared to establish right or wrong, innocence or guilt.

Persons with collective consciousness do not singularly, or even primarily, pursue the notion of establishing who is right or wrong, guilty or innocent: it has to do with social vulnerability, as against individual vulnerability. The ultimate aim (in terms of collective consciousness) is to even-

tually reconcile the parties involved in a dispute. To this end matters seemingly not directly related to a case, agenda or discussion, and relationships of persons not directly involved in the case, are discussed at length in order to construct a picture of the wider social situation from which the dispute or matter arose. The ultimate aim is not to protect the rights of individuals, but to restore the solidarity of the group/ family/community which was disturbed by the dispute. The solidarity of the group is of paramount importance since the group is the only effective source of security and safeguard for survival to people who do not dispose of sufficient means to survive individually.

Persons with collective consciousness are forced to divide their loyalty between the group/community and the workplace. Persons with individualistic consciousness subordinate social loyalty to professional loyalty.

To individualists work has intrinsic value: individuals toil for the sake of their personal careers first and foremost, since a career is the primary vehicle by which social standing in society is enhanced. Ultimately the individual is judged, and immortalized, by her/his professional achievements. Naturally, therefore, the system of which individualistic consciousness and personal achievement are vital ingredients, will place a high premium on diligence and reliability in the workplace. Persons with collective consciousness who generally do not show equal enthusiasm for diligence and reliability understandably are a source of exasperation to their employers. They (the workers) generally have the reputation of being lazy, without initiative, unreliable, prone to absence from work - forever attending funerals or visiting ill relatives, or for whatever other "obscure" reasons. There are generally three reasons for workers' apparent lack of enthusiasm for

their jobs. Firstly, collective consciousness simply attaches too much value to social life for it to be subordinated to the demands of employment. Secondly and pragmatically, because workers (particularly unskilled and semi-skilled workers) are desperately dependent on a social group or network for reasons of poverty - because their jobs cannot provide in all their needs - they simply cannot afford to give their undivided loyalty to their jobs. In the case of affluent persons, their jobs have prior claim to their loyalty, and secondarily their families. Both work and the groups of which workers are members have at least equal claims to their loyalty. If the group needs one, one often has to obey the call. Naturally, and this is probably very seldom or never known by employers, workers often have to disobey the calls of their respective groups as well when they decide situationally to give precedence to their loyalty for their jobs. To say that unskilled workers have to divide their loyalty between job and group, is therefore not to say that their jobs are not regarded as of critical importance for survival. Thirdly, these workers often do not feel themselves part of the workplace, precisely because they are people to whom active, social belonging is a natural and vital part of living. They find it very difficult to be, like people with individualistic consciousness, largely professionally or mechanically involved in the organisation or company in which they are employed - they do not draw the same stark distinction between professional and social spheres. Employment or the workplace are essentially defined (perceived) as a social situations. Belonging or involvement, therefore, does not merely follow from completing ascribed tasks, and receiving a salary or a wage for it. It follows from being a socially acknowledged member of the organisation for which one works.

Collective consciousness creates an insatiable need for people and social

situations; individualistic consciousness creates an acute need to escape from people at times.

Individualistic consciousness produces intense interpersonal competition, which in turn heightens the strong sense of individualism which already exists. It tends to amplify (subconsciously of course) the aggression individuals have for one another under circumstances of fierce competition. In this way fellow beings come to be regarded subconsciously as adversaries. They become symbols of obstacles in the race to success in which there is very little mercy for opponents. Hence the need for the credo love thy fellow person; and hence the expression: "The more I see of men the more I love my dog" — an expression which would be regarded as something of an indecency amongst persons with collective consciousness. The need of people to flee from people manifests itself, amongst others, in the need to get back to nature - to be one with nature". In the Manyeleti Game Reserve in the Eastern Transvaal, patronized mainly by black tourists, visitors make use mainly of the facilities at the rest camp. Many do not go game-viewing; for those who do, going for drives in the reserve is an activity secondary to socialising in the rest camp. To people with collective consciousness animals and people cannot possibly be of equal interest.

Collective consciousness defines time socially and in terms of the immediate present; individualistic consciousness defines time in terms of economic surplus and the future.

Individualists are usually very punctual (at least in contrast to persons with collective consciousness), whilst collectivists regard punctuality as some kind of lunacy. For people with surplus material assets the present is part of history, life is projected into the future, and time is of

the utmost importance. To people who dispose of no or insignificant surplus material assets, survival is a serious matter of the here and now. To them life holds very little predictability. For them to concern themselves with the future in terms of material considerations, would therefore be neither sensible nor practical. Predictability is consequently sought in social relationships which are constantly maintained and reinforced for the sake of long-term security. Social relationships, though, demand a lot of time.

Differences in perception are also reflected in ways of greeting.

Competition in affluent society, and the comparative lack of it amongst people with collective consciousness, is also reflected in the way people shake hands. Affluent persons use a firm grip when they shake hands, while looking each other boldly in the eye. To them the limpy grip used by other persons, is perceived as a lack of drive or will to progress. In reality, the limpy grip is an expression of social amiability and the lack of fierce interindividual competition. The firm grips, on the other hand, are usually accepted with some embarrassment by persons with collective consciousness - they do not know what to do with it because handshakes are supposed to be friendly messages of goodwill and brotherhood and not aggressive, rude, challenges.

Collective consciousness, however, does not exclude the incidence of conflict. On the contrary, conflict is a regular feature of social situations ruled by collective consciousness. There are broadly speaking probably three reasons for this: Firstly at a technical level, persons with collective consciousness are closely and constantly involved with fellow-beings, whereby the opportunity for conflict is naturally enhanced. Secondly, material deprivation (from which collective consciousness develops) requires the

design of multiple and diverse economic strategies, including collective (social) cooperation, with a precarious balance between the various strategies. Any threat to this balance or mutual, collective support (such as unequal or privileged access to a resource(s)), produces anxiety. Thirdly, precisely because of social dependence and reliance, collective consciousness is highly intolerant of rejection. But by the same token, persons with collective consciousness have an enormous capacity for reconciliation and forgiveness, and a low capacity for vindictiveness: it would seem as if, from the perspective of collective consciousness, antagonism is directed (subconsciously) towards deeds or "wrongs", rather than towards the persons who are responsible for those "wrongs".

The intense dependence of persons with collective consciousness on a collectivity of fellows, makes them very vulnerable to anything which may happen to that community of persons of which they feel themselves a vital part. Of course, the community does not really exist as "something" which can act - only people exist with real or potential relationships between them. The collectivity of people is reified as a corporate body of people, as a unified "thing" stronger than individuals precisely because individuals are critically dependent on one another for their survival in the face of deprivation. So people need to experience the intact wholeness (solidarity) of the community, to feel the maximum strength of the community in its ability to protect its members. They need to feel themselves strengthened by one another against the overpowering constraints working against their survival.

Death as a result of attacks from outside, causes enormous anxiety in the community as it is experienced as a severe breach in the integrity, strength and ability of the community to protect its members. Funerals are therefore occa-

sions, first and foremost, for re-uniting as a community, for reassuring the paramount importance of solidarity, for pledging loyalty and cooperation in staving off onslaughts against the integrity of the group. The bottom line of the intense emotional state of crowds at burials (or at riots or demonstrations) is a profound sense of insecurity and unbearable anxiety over the community's ability to facilitate the survival of its members. Situations of this kind present itself as statements directed *externally to the outside world*, to enemies, precisely because of a desperate need to mask the internal vulnerability. Therefore, they essentially are powerful, mutual, collective statements directed *internally, to within the group*, by its members about their fears and anxieties, and about their firm resolve to stand by each other in a situation which is hopelessly too powerful to be overcome by persons individually.

The actual killing of Nosipho Zamela was an extremely dramatic, collective act. The incidents and processes which culminated in the death of the girl were equally dramatic. The killing of the girl, however, did not stand alone; it was an intricate and inseparable part of a series of events. As such these events did not provide a necessary condition for the burning of the girl, but they surely constituted a sufficient condition.

The consumer boycott of 1985 unquestionably followed out of widespread and profound deprivation, it required unwavering solidarity, and the high degree of collective consciousness which prevailed in the community provides this solidarity. The effectiveness of the solidarity (the boycott) in turn increased the solidarity. It bound the community of Mlungisi together to a degree which cannot be equaled easily. As such it provided the community with a sense of security, support, control over their destiny and self-respect which they had not

known could exist, and which they desperately needed. The community was to guard this newly found sense of own value and security jealously.

The boycott deeply shocked the community of Queenstown, to whom it naturally came as a very painful experience. It was said that it would take decades for the economy of Queenstown to revive to its former level. The police action which followed the boycott has to be understood at least partly, but crucially, in terms of this experience. Pamphlets were dropped from a helicopter (or light aircraft), encouraging the residents of Mlungisi to buy in Queenstown, and promising them protection if they did so; police in uniform and in civil clothes did the same; more than 400 members of the community, including its leaders, were arrested over two days in September 1985, and detained; constant police presence in the township, a house which burnt down as a result of teargas shot into it, a young man shot dead at night in a street of Mlungisi, various persons (including an old woman and a small boy of six years) wounded - all these injudicious incidents caused intense anxiety and insecurity amongst the members of the community who could not face the idea of returning to their previous state of helplessness and lack of self-respect.

With the residents at this time experiencing the feeling of living in a community under siege, with an impaired ability to protect its interests and members, the "massacre" took place. It was a truly horrifying experience to the members of community in two regards. Merely technically speaking, it caused total chaos, bewilderment and shock because people were virtually trapped inside a building while being shot at. Those who were outside tried frantically to get inside, and those inside fought their way over the shoulders of one another to get out of the building. Others were shot at (and two

killed) whilst defenseless, fleeing and without cover. It was a particularly bad experience because it came at a time when people who were trying to work out their own salvation were already staggering under external onslaughts. The "massacre" left them utterly embittered.

Then followed 19 days of intense mourning during successive night vigils at the home of every person who died in the "massacre", and a final mass vigil for all, plus constant clashes with the police. Naturally, the fears and anxiety of the residents of Mlungisi were deepened by the fact that they were powerless against the police. The process was irreversible in so far as the police had the community of Mlungisi by the throat militarily speaking, and Mlungisi had Queenstown by the throat economically speaking. The power of Mlungisi centred in passivity, but they were forced into activity, at which they were not good and could never hope to win. They knew this instinctively, and it caused them unspeakable anxiety.

The residents of the township continued uninterrupted from the final, all-night, mass vigil to the mass funeral the next day. The funeral, like the night vigils, was an occasion for reassurance in terms of solidarity and for repairing the "wholeness" of the community which was impaired by the deaths which had occurred. Because these occasions were occasions of make-belief more than anything else, they also increased the soreness and tension in people who experienced life from the perspective of collective consciousness.

The burning of Nosipho provided the opportunity to release the agitation and soreness in an extremely dramatic burst of emotion. The fact that the burning was an instrument rather than an end in itself, is not merely borne out by the whole nature of the incident and its antecedent circumstances. It is particularly borne out by the nature of the five young men's par-

ticipation in the whole drama, and their reaction after the drama.

The young men could clearly describe to me the reaction and the state of mind of Nosipho from the time she was sjambokked at the public toilet in Newtown, up to the point at the second house in White City where the crowd shouted that she is an "impimpi" and must be burnt. But, however much I pressed them for answers, they could not tell me what Nosipho's state of mind was from that point onwards. The point is, up to that point in White City, punishing Nosipho for her affairs with Inkatha policemen was an end in itself. Therefore, up to this point, the five men (at least) were primarily in interaction with Nosipho. From this point onwards, they (and most probably 95% + of the crowd) were in interaction with the crowd - with one another. Henceforth they were only interested in toying together with one another, and they ignored Nosipho. She then became an instrument; she provided the opportunity for a crowd of people in desperate need to rid themselves of their fears and anxieties, given their collective consciousness. The five men did not even bother to look at Nosipho while she was burning, very strange indeed if their main aim was to punish an "impimpi".

Immediately after the burning of the girl the young men experienced intense remorse at their share in the event. They felt empty and some of them told one another that Nosipho was not an "impimpi", that she was only a poor girl in need of money. They did not come to this insight because of some incident which took place after the burning and which could provide them with fresh information; neither did any person provide them with new information. Therefore, they must have had this knowledge before Nosipho was burnt. But they suppressed the knowledge — they had to suppress the knowledge because they subcon-

sciously needed a dramatic event. They did not hate Nosipho, therefore their attention was not directed at her from the point onwards where the crowd left White City. The knowledge of Nosipho not being an "impimpi" certainly operated when she was sjambokked (if not, it would have been decided there and then to burn her). This knowledge was gradually suppressed while the crowd was moving from the first to the second house in White City. At the second house the knowledge was suppressed in one moment by the act of calling Nosipho an "impimpi".

If it was the aim of the people to burn "impimpis" on the 8th of December, they could have waited until later that evening when they had the possible chance of getting hold of two more "impimpi's" (Nosipho had said the two other girls who had affairs with Inkatha police would come to fetch her at eight o' clock that evening). Why could people who are known for their patience, and to whom time is of little importance, not have waited that little longer? A few more hours would have delivered two more "impimpis" into their hands. At least some of them must have realised instinctively that burning Nosipho before they got hold of the other two "impimpis", would have caused the latter to flee to the end of the earth - that is, if they were out to find and destroy "impimpis".

The people involved in the burning of Nosipho Zamela, were people deeply troubled by anxieties which they experienced from the perceptual style of collective consciousness, and which had accumulated over an extended period of time. The involvement of the Accused has to be understood in terms of their experience as members of the community of Mlungisi, the perceptual style which flowed from this experience, and the role this perceptual style played in shaping subsequent experiences, wants and

needs. Given this intricate human reality, it would have required a miracle for members of the crowd to have withdrawn themselves from involvement with the actions of the crowd on the 8th of December, once they were part of that crowd. Persons with an advanced degree of individualistic consciousness most probably would have extricated themselves from such a situation at an early stage. But then, persons with individualistic consciousness would not have been in Mlungisi, would not have been poor, would not have been engaged in a consumer boycott, would not have been shot at, and would not have been in the crowd.

An objective, scientific explanation of Mlungisi in 1985 would have required a different approach, but an inappropriate one, I believe. When going to court as an "expert witness", or when communicating as scientist in other social situations, one needs to mediate differences in consciousness with one's own subjective experience and knowledge - one needs to (both for the sake of dialogue and shared meaning, and because it naturally is impossible to disregard one's experience) appear as a subjectively living human being, relying on personal authority. Objectivity, for being too unreal, impressive and erudite, alienates rather than evokes dialogue. It is unreal in the sense that human beings (including scientists) do not live objectively, and therefore cannot identify themselves meaningfully with an artificial state of being. Objective scientific discourse therefore tends not to communicate experience - it mostly communicates a self-contained logic, which is a mere technical attribute of reasoning.

The one-sided ideal of objectivity, also, contradicts personal involvement and the acquisition of experience and consciousness far too strongly. It forbids, or at least disavows, experience and perception. "In terms of its own metaphors, the scientific position of speech is that of an observer fixed on the edge of a space, looking in and/or down upon what is other. Subjective experience, on the other hand, is spoken from a moving position already

within or down in the middle of things, looking and being looked at, talking and being talked at. To convert fieldwork, via field notes, into formal ethnography requires a tremendously difficult shift from the latter discursive position (face to face with the other) to the former. Much must be left behind in the process". (Pratt, 1986:32-33) As science, in striving for objectivity, hovers above particular social situations, subjective experience per definition is immersed in real social situations. Being based on communicative and dialogical discourse, subjective experience is not part of, as Tyler (1986:131) says, a project whose aim is the creation of universal knowledge. Because objective science wants to say too much, it says too little - particularly in critical situations such as that of legal trials.

The perspective of individualistic consciousness inherent in objective science is not very helpful in trying to understand situations ruled by collective consciousness. It is not sufficiently subjective to the experience underlying collective consciousness, and therefore in this sense lacks objectivity. For this reason we cannot acquire intuitive understanding of matters like necklacings through objectivity, however much we may try.

The young men who were the accused in the case of the State vs. Gqeba & Others in 1989 were originally sentenced to death for their part in the incidents which lead to the killing of Nosipho Zamele, in an earlier trial. However, due to a technical error in court procedure, the sentence was set aside. In the second trial, in 1989, the men were sentenced to twenty months imprisonment, *inter alia*, I believe, because the Defence counsel insisted on shared meaning; because the judge was able to engage in perceptual dialogue with the subjective experience and consciousness of the Accused and other residents of Mlungisi township. To the Accused, both the knowledge and acknowledgement of their consciousness infused an unfamiliar and potentially hostile social situation with meaning and assurance.

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