**Conversations in Social Justice:**



**The Role and Responsibilities of Universities**

**In Transforming Society**

**Podcast transcript**

Series 1. Episode 3.

*Professor of Counselling Psychology at York St John University, Divine Charura, talks to Dr Jonathan Chaplin, a political theologian and a member of the divinity faculty at Cambridge University. Their discussion explores a range of matters including the role university has in activism and social justice, the qualities of a University of Sanctuary, and why it's important to engage in research and curriculum that identifies, exposes, and addresses systemic and interpersonal inequalities, injustices, and power relationships across society.*

**Divine Charura**

Everyone who is listening to these podcasts, which is a series of podcasts through the Institute for Social Justice at York St John University, my name is Professor Divine Charura, and I'm a professor of Counselling Psychology at York St John University. I'm very pleased to be joined by Dr. Chaplin, who is a political theologian and a member of the Divinity faculty at Cambridge University and is also a research associate for the think tank Theos. Just to give a backdrop, the Institute for Social Justice at York St John University was launched in July 2020 and Professor Matthew Reason is the director for the Institute for Social Justice. Many colleagues who are engaging and bringing their passion for social justice and research expertise within York St John University are members and join in to share their research, share ideas, share podcasts about social justice matters.

The centre itself draws on our history at York St John University of the work and the research that identifies and that exposes and that addresses systemic and interpersonal inequalities, injustices and power relationships across society. And I hope that through the podcast today, we'll make clear a part of our ambition to enhance this work and its impact in the future, to help to tackle some of the most significant challenges that are facing society today. And I think given that we're recording in the year 2020, there's been a lot of challenges this year that relates to social justice on so many levels relating to the COVID situation, we've been facing racial injustice, many, many inequalities. So today will speak to some of the issues, particularly around social justice and the place for university and what we can do as universities and communities.

At its core, the institute really seeks to work with people, with partners, with communities, with participants in a manner that sees action, implementation and change as really vital parts for our mission. So, Dr. Chaplin, welcome to this podcast. And I wonder if you could say something by way of introducing yourself.

**Jonathan Chaplin**

Well, thank you very much. I'm delighted to be partnering in this podcast series. I think it's a very exciting series, very pleased to see the creation of the Institute for Social Justice. I think our universities need more such entities located right within the heart of the university, so congratulations, and I wish the institute well.

So, I'm a specialist in political theology. My initial training was in political theory - mainstream political theory - I have interest in liberalism and democracy, injustice in religious and cultural pluralism, multiculturalism, and a range of other related questions. Many of which I focus on the question of what is the state, what is the political order and what its central tasks are, in relation to other entities in society, such as the university. So, this is the area that I've worked in towards over a number of years, published a number of books in and I'm still working on now.

**Divine Charura**

Well, I've read some of your work and it's very impressive, and I hope today the listeners can get a glimpse and in fact, I think they'll be in for a treat for some of the ideas that we're going to discuss today. And myself and you we've spoken about, we've had conversations that are intended to animate discussion, both within York St John University but more widely about the role of higher education in social justice, and equally the role of social justice within higher education. And by way of our dialogue today, a question that I would like to ask you is what you feel the role of activism and social justice is for the university?

**Jonathan Chaplin**

Well, that's a huge question. We can scratch the surface in these few minutes but let's do our best. So, I think I would make a basic distinction here between what you might call inward facing activities or the outward facing public activities of the university. It's not a bright line, but it's a helpful distinction. So inward facing would be the contents of research and teaching and so forth, and the inner life of the university. Outward facing anything that impacts on what is outside the university. So, let me address your question through the outward facing role. It seems to me that we have to see institutions as institutions fully embedded in society, one among many, social institution that is locked into all kinds of relationships with other social actors, other institutions, bound up with all the dynamics, the pathologies, the oppressions, abilities of society as a whole.

For too long, there's been an assumption in certain sectors of the university sector that it is sort of autonomous with respect to society, that it almost it's a self-sufficient island doing its own task of pursuing pure research and pure knowledge. That's breaking down, rightly so. Hence, universities now routinely talk about public impact. That's inherently a good development. Impact can take many different forms. In some cases, it seems far removed from issues of social justice, but nonetheless, any activity that as it were, contributes to a better understanding of challenges of social justice in society, are part of that outward facing task. So, universities have both expectations from society, they get financial support, and they get all kinds of other support. But equally, society has expectations of universities, universities are for many people, though, it's a tough environment at the moment, in many ways, that very special and a privileged place to work. With that privilege comes the responsibility to the rest of society to contribute to the larger project of transforming society, transforming social structures, transforming the patterns and the endemic systems and patterns – behavioral, institutional, global - that frustrate humanity, that frustrate justice, that obstruct it. Anything that the university can do to contribute to that larger goal is a very good thing. And universities are doing that already, even if even if they're not conscious of doing so. If some of them might actually deny that they're doing it, they are doing it, so far better to be explicit about that, to be self-conscious about it and to be conservative about. That’s the beginning of the answer.

**Divine Charura**

It's a wonderful answer and as you're speaking, I'm smiling, because I really love what you're saying to further the stimulus of our thinking about the nature of responsibility that we have in transforming society. And these things that frustrate society, the inequalities, power dynamics, in some ways, the discrimination that happens, the power of relationships across society, and some of the interpersonal and systemic inequalities that we work with. And I think as a way of having this podcast that begins to open up doors for dialogue for my colleagues across York St John University and beyond.

And in relation to this idea of responsibility, I think around the world today, more people than ever in history are being forced to flee conflict and persecution and to find safety and sanctuary elsewhere. And I think it's interesting what you said about higher education in the UK because I'm aware some higher educations have a proud and a radical tradition for providing sanctuary for academics and young people that may have faced political and social challenges in their lives. And over the years at York St John, there's been a move, along with other universities, to partner with the City of Sanctuary. Now the City of Sanctuary, as you will know, is an organisation which supports people who are seeking sanctuary and for York St John, having been recognised as a University of Sanctuary, the purpose is to create a culture that is of welcome and hospitality at a local level. And through promoting understanding and recognition of us celebrating the ways in which people seek sanctuary that actually is, we come together as a diverse society, we reach society, but also to provide opportunities for building closer relationships between local communities and those who are arriving in the communities. And so I am leading up to a question by saying this, Jonathan, that I wanted to ask if you could share some thoughts that you have as a scholar yourself around a University of Sanctuary and what some of the inclusivity work within the university could look like. Myself and colleagues, as you will know, I engaged in research, for example to do with refugees and asylum seekers, I think our most recently published work was on loss, grief and traumatic growth, and we experience of refugees and asylum seekers. And we just about to start a couple of research projects, again, with refugees and asylum seekers in the North of England in Yorkshire and Humber, and I wondered if you could say something around University of Sanctuary and inclusivity, and what might be good practice or any thoughts that you have?

**Jonathan Chaplin**

It's a marvelous idea. And I, you know, I commend York St John for being committed to it. And I hope this movement grows, you know, just to step back a second, in a sense, that distinction I made earlier between inward facing and outward facing, that's one that applies to every social institution or economic institution, even if it's not recognised. So, for example, do we not want to see businesses or trade unions, businesses and trade unions of sanctuary in their own way, contributing to this larger goal? You know, one could go on cultural associations, art associations, theatre groups, and so forth. In a sense, every institution has the possibility to exercise that kind of hospitality and generosity to those who are fleeing for their lives or in any other way, in danger and oppressed.

Universities, it seems to me are ideally placed to play that sort of a role. They are already very international institutions, certainly in the UK international. Just in terms of the university's own self- interest, that's a very good thing, knowledge growth thrives on that kind of diversity. That's the self- interested reason. Justice reason, of course, is that universities have these resources, have these spaces, have these opportunities to welcome people in those kinds of situations. And there's no reason at all, why they shouldn't do so very deliberately and very intentionally and every reason why they should do so, intentionally and proudly, and the more universities, individual universities, take up this challenge, the ripple effect will spread, and others will seek to emulate that.

So, it's an excellent goal. It's something that every kind of university could do, any university can take such a role on, and more should do it intentionally. It's not a deviation from the university’s core task. Historically, you can see that universities and colleges have been places of sanctuary down the centuries, people fleeing persecution, religious persecution in the Middle Ages, in the early modern period, one of the places that provided that sort of hospitality were universities centuries ago, so this is a long-standing tradition. I think it's a very exciting project.

**Divine Charura**

You were speaking, I was thinking about the commitment from different schools, so I’m in the School of Education, Language and Psychology, and how as colleagues who are developmental psychologists or neuro psychologists, counselling psychologists or colleagues from other schools, you know, are coming together to this commitment of not only sanctuary, but social justice in relation to some of the work we are doing in partnership with the hospitals, for example, we in partnership with the TEWV Trust, and providing scholarships for research around dementia, for example, linking with other NHS Trusts, and doing research and teaching about military veterans and trauma, and so on. And I think what you said about really being open as a university and as academics and students and as communities. And I really love what you said about businesses, everyone in community joining together to look at these challenges that we face as a society and as communities in relation to social justice.

So, I think has a lot to do, again, for us to enter the stimulus of our thinking and to take forward.

**Jonathan Chaplin**

Yeah, one of the thoughts. So, one of the key terms of art in the modern University is access, you know, widening access, it's a hugely important goal. It's a very welcome development. The word access, I would describe as kind of a morally thin word. It just seems to suggest a worldview in which individuals are seen as somewhat self-sufficient, there are certain barriers to entry which need to be removed so it's a rather morally thin notion, much better is the notion of hospitality. Which is what you use. Now you know, that's probably not going to make its way very high on to, you know, the mission statements of most universities, because there'll be a certain unease about that kind of language. But why? Why would there be? It's a rich language. It's an invitational language, as I say, it's in line with the university's historic tradition, hospitable to many, many different members of a community who arrived there for all kinds of reasons. And with all kinds of struggles and challenges.

You mentioned, people confronting mental illnesses, there are people confronting physical disabilities or other social disadvantages that have impaired their route towards higher education. And because in many cases blocking is entirely anything that university can do to, you know, blow open those doors and make access much easier, must be a good thing. And I think that has to trump nervous concerns of some who still see the university sector as a kind of an elite formation, where you have to have a tradeoff between hospitality and academic quality. I mean, that simply is just false. You know, so those sorts of binary divides between the purity of the research university and these wider social functions, we must overcome that.

**Divine Charura**

And I think that just your passion for that comes across in the matches what I deeply feel about what we must do and how we must engage with these matters. That affects all of us. And, as you will know, I'm very interested in what we do within the university itself. If we are offering this hospitality, we do get undergraduates and postgraduates and colleagues who are academics from all walks of life, they come in then the next question is what we do inwardly… I'm leading up here to thinking about why it is important to engage in research and a curriculum that identifies, and in many ways also exposes and addresses, systemic and interpersonal inequalities in the justices and power relationships across society because that's so important. And I, I wonder whether you could say something about that?

**Jonathan Chaplin**

Yes. I mean, that very idea has become particularly controversial in the last year. You know, one of the spin offs of Black Lives Matter has been the campaign over statues and other symbols, the visible decolonising of the university, so to speak. And then as well, of course, the so-called decolonising of the curriculum, and that's evoked huge passions on both sides. There's a lot of resistance to the idea, of course, as well. And it's not a straightforward question how to do that, what it actually means, you know, those questions should not be taken simply at face value, deconstruct the questions and find out what actually is really at stake.

But let me try and put that in a somewhat larger perspective, where the language of say decolonising the curriculum is, I think, best seen as part of a larger vision of what curriculum and research itself is the teaching function of the university is supposed to flow from his research. This is what makes a university different from other forms of education, which is that teaching flows directly out of research. The two are seen as bound together, that the quality of teaching depends upon faculty engaging in original research. And equally that research is, as it were, first tested and piloted in the classroom. You know, students are part of the process, actually, of research even passively in some respects, sometimes actively. Question then is, what is this research about? What kind of knowledge is it that we are looking for in the University. So, knowledge is a comprehensive human endeavour. Everybody in every sphere of life needs knowledge, is acquiring knowledge, there's all sorts of forms of knowledge, the university does have a unique role in dedicating itself to original knowledge, to systematic knowledge, to rational knowledge. I mean, this is what is essential about the university. Not to eliminate other forms of knowledge. But that's its distinguishing characteristic that needs to and usually does permeate its research activity and its function then flows out into teaching.

But what is the point of that research? You could say? What is the point of that kind of knowledge? Well, there you get all kinds of different answers. Let me just throw out mine, which sounds very similar to the one you were hinting at then. The phrase I would use here, is that all research in one way or the other, directly or indirectly, it'd be directed to exposing whatever is dehumanising in the world.

Now, that's the morally loaded concept, and I make no apology for that whatsoever. There is no morally neutral pursuit of knowledge, even in the hardest of sciences. So, you know what, let's put that myth behind us finally. The question is, what goals, what moral goals, what anthropological, what philosophical, what theological goals is knowledge actually pursuing, irrespective actually, of whether the, the researcher is fully aware of that goal? It's going to be morally loaded one way or the other. So far better to stand back and address that question explicitly, bring those questions to the fore. In what way is my work, my research work, whether it's in astrophysics, or you know, sociology, or literature, whatever it might be, in what way is it in some indirect way exposing factors, prejudices, pressures, dynamics, systems that obstruct human flourishing, or that fail to allow human flourishing to develop to its full or it's deliberately restricted those which are sort of overtly dehumanising.

That's broadly speaking, what I think, you know, university knowledge is, is about. And to me, that's a very elevating idea. That a lot of research, you know, as we all know, is actually quite mundane, you know, it's not heroic, it's counting things, it’s seeing connections, it's doing laborious reading of obscure texts, it's engaging in painstaking line by line exegesis of difficult work. It's not glamorous most of the time, but I think if we keep in mind that larger horizon, that all of these tasks, however mundane, are in some way to be directed towards that goal, and usually are, unbeknownst to the researcher and therefore, you know, research in that sense is a deeply human and humanising task because it is the unique gift of the university to society. It's a source of that kind of rigorous, systematic, rational knowledge directed towards the humanising of the world.

Note I say the world there because we're not just talking about human beings. We're not just talking about society, talking about the environment, nobody needs reminding of how important that dimension of research is. That's broadly how I would construe that topic. Now then, because that then has to feed through into teaching and curriculum. On the one hand, a course curriculum, whether it's undergraduates, especially at undergraduate level, you could say, needs to introduce the student to the field. Well, what is the field? Who decides what the field is that itself is a controversial question. And it needs to be done more self-consciously.

And this, I think, is where the concept of decolonising the curriculum comes in. It's the question of who determines the curriculum? Well, historically, in most western universities, it's been powerful, more or less wealthy, white people, they're the ones who've had the power, historically, and have shaped the curriculum accordingly, over generations. That's the challenge on those who are calling for the decolonising of the curriculum, and it's a powerful challenge it needs to be attended to. It’s not necessarily an ideological prejudice, it's calling attention to that question, who defines the field? Well, of course, then the field is complex, and the field is plural. So, the multiplicity of voices have to be put on the table for the student in that sense. You know, the classroom is not simply the platform for the propagation of one faculty member’s political, ideological or intellectual view. You have to inculcate a spirit of critical dialogue in every setting, that's entirely compatible with that larger goal.

Because actually, the question of what is dehumanising, therefore what is human, is right at the heart of all these debates, and that's a deeply conflictual, and deeply conflictual issue on which there are a multiplicity of perspectives. A university, while pursuing that goal, has to host a dialogue about what that goal means. You know, there has to be a capacious space for deep disagreement, that is how knowledge will advance. Within certain limits, obviously, you know, you can't cover everything in a course, no faculty member has complete expertise to cover everything. But that larger goal of hosting that variety of voices to debate what human flourishing actually is, in some sense, I think, is an elevating goal.

**Divine Charura**

As you were speaking, I was thinking about what that looks like in practice for me and colleagues, and I'm passionate about our teaching and learning and championing ideas for diversity. And an example, Jonathan, that I often do with counselling or psychotherapy or psychology trainees is to just at the end of our first semester to say to them - can you tell me, the top theorists that we've taught you about? And very quickly, the trainees all shout out, Sigmund Freud, John Bowlby, Sándor Ferenczi. You know, John Bowlby, the attachment signal for psychoanalysis. Karl Jung, psychoanalytic, depth psychology, and so on and so forth. And at about 15 bits that they shouted out, I stopped having marked, you know, written on the board, and very quickly, we see we probably have about 10 or 12 men, they might shout, Melanie Klein, you know, with her work and object relations, but very quickly, I then say to them, and I'm linking into what you were saying about diversity abstracting the human flourishing, I then say you are mental health professionals that are going to be working in a multicultural, multi diverse worlds. You know, across the domains of different ages, different ethnicities, different heritages, different sexualities, different, that's the reality. So, I think what you've said about the curriculum is really a dialogue that most universities are on both sides grappling with. But I really love how you framed that to be about the question what may be dehumanising? What is it that is obstructing human flourishing?

I wanted to ask my next question, how can we make clear our ambition to enhance this work - social justice - and its impact in our future, so that we are able to tackle some of the most significant challenges that face our universities, our local communities and our society today?

**Jonathan Chaplin**

Again, a massive question. So, let's just explore a few aspects, those that come to my mind. So, let me start by saying this, why do people go to university? What is it that they're looking for? What kind of a dialogue do we need about that question? So yes, we want as broad access as possible, we want barriers to come down so that all kinds of people can attend university.

It seems clear to me that in the last generation or so there's been a significant shift here, in the direction away from what you might call the classical pursuit of knowledge, towards career advancement. And therefore university's foreground, one of the key selling points, employment rates of graduates in different sectors, you know, in some cases, even sort of average salaries and so on. Nothing wrong with that. Obviously, a university experience for most people is part of the pathway towards some sort of career, some kind of employment, whatever that might be. And that's always been the case and still should be the case. But you know, do we not need to shift the balance here somewhat.

So, let me just quote a line, which came from Rowan Williams, which I liked very much, he just said this, he said “the most important bit of impact any university course can have, is to help people become intelligent citizens.”

Now, as with any quote from Rowan Williams, you've got to unpack each word there, or the point is intelligent citizens, not prosperous consumers, or high-ranking professionals, whatever it might be. By citizenship there, by being an intelligent citizen, he means somebody who is fully engaged in society as an act of solidarity with fellow members of society, striving towards common goals. So implicit in it is a notion of society having some kind of common good, which will include a commitment to social justice to equity to, you know, overcoming oppression and exclusion and so forth.

One could spell that out in richer terms, as we've already begun to do. So, if a university asked the question, what do we need to be, need to do? If we are to produce intelligence citizens? Might that lead to a different set of priorities than the ones that currently drive university right now, because universities are under huge pressures, pressures from government to deliver measurable targets. This is the whole reason for the whole research assessment process and the teaching assessment exercises and so forth, and impact assessments. This to me has become a far too burdensome and bureaucratic and confining process. It's the heavy hand of government working towards its own objectives, which are often the government's objectives, not those of universities and society. So, I think there's a significant imbalance there. But that whole government assessment mentality needs to be remodelled and reconfigured in a way to allow universities more freedom, more professional freedom, vocational freedom to set their own priorities in their own ways.

So that you know, the benchmark for a successful career in the university sector is now a very narrow benchmark. We all know what it is - it's a certain set of publications in a certain set of recognised outputs, a certain quantity of publications, quantity prioritised, sometimes over quality. But there's an absolute exponential explosion of publication, which none of us can keep up with, to be honest, I mean, we have to focus on very narrow areas in order to be so called up to date. That's one symptom of this skewing, I think, of the central function of the university. Not to downgrade at all, I see the university in a career trajectory and that's obviously great.

One can ask questions about whether the current set of offerings of our universities is actually producing very good careers for a lot of people. I mean, we all know the joke now about a graduate of a university who's competing for a job as a barista on some high street, because the jobs aren't there for the number of graduates. So, the questions like that needs to be addressed. But you know, I think the bigger question is, what is it that we want the university experience to do, passing through it as students, as researchers and so forth? That's where we need to ask the question of purpose. Universities can pursue multiple purposes. But that central one, I think, is, as I've suggested, you know, that it's the production and transmission of a certain kind of knowledge that contributes to human flourishing, that opposes dehumanising and builds solidarity, builds communities of cohesion, and justice and people who are willing to break the mould and to be countercultural who are willing to be transformative, rather than simply pursuing their own individual self-interests, worthy though they may well be.

**Divine Charura**

It really provokes thoughts and for a long time, I have thought about what is the function of our work as academics, and an example is I'm passionate about trauma informed teaching, in which we really help you know, I'm working with counselling psychotherapists, practitioners, psychologists, who will be at the forefront of the mental health workforce and in trauma informed teaching will have this idea around when we do notice those things that may be dehumanising others or particular presentations of psychological distress. Rather than asking what is wrong with you, we ask what happened to you and that brings back that interconnectedness of the person and the system that they are living in so, I think that's really wonderful to think about kind of areas of practice and trauma informed teaching.

But the other bit that I really love about what you're saying about the kind of citizen that comes out of a university education, who has the awareness of what they need to do, a responsibility, and an appreciation of the diversity of others within the community. So, there's a lot there. And I think, for colleagues who are listening from all over the world, in relation to social justice, we really are starting to scratch the surface of these ideas. Not to embarrass you here, Jonathan, but I know when I hear you've just submitted a manuscript for a wonderful book and I just wondered whether, by way of ending you could tie into what you feel we could learn in relation to social justice from the ideas that you've been recently working on and, and writing on, on the place have faith in democracy and diversity as it were.

**Jonathan Chaplin**

Sure, every author is always happy to talk about their own book. So, thanks for the question. Yeah, so the book is called *Faith in Democracy* and the subtitle is framing a politics of deep diversity. That phrase deep diversity is a phrase from Charles Taylor, who's a philosopher from whom I've learned a great deal. Deep diversity, meaning that you know, the diversity the plurality that we see in society now is it's not just a surface plurality, it reflects deep divergences of fundamental worldview, fundamental conviction, fundamental conceptions of reality, displayed in the different religious traditions, but also different moral and philosophical conceptions and of course, born along by very diverse cultures. So deep diversity is a characteristic of many Western societies. Some are more diverse in that sense than others, but we all have to confront it, we are all confronting it. And you know, different nations are responding in profoundly different ways, some more satisfactory than others, obviously.

My book is having to do with a focus on the UK is the place of faith, faith construed broadly, not just a religion, but you know, other large visions of society. I include under the term faith, large moral visions, what is their place in a liberal democracy, like the UK, and so I pick up on all sorts of contested questions that have hit the headlines in recent years. Archbishop Rowan Williams, famous or infamous lecture on the place of Sharia law in the UK, and so forth, and more broadly, the place of Islam, the contested politics of Islam in British politics, the place of the Church of England, of course, as the established church, and many other related questions. And really what I tried to do in that book is to say that if we understand democracy in a certain way, as a radically inclusive participatory forum, for the common pursuit of social justice, I use a term similar to that, that has certain implications, and one of those implications that we have to respect and recognise and respond to the people as they are, and not as we would prefer them to be. And increasingly, a number of citizens seek to foreground their faith-based identities for whatever reason, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, secularist, feminist, radical ecology and so forth.

This seems to me, in principle, a fascinating development. It's a very challenging development for a democracy that has tended to think of itself, at least among its elites, as essentially secular, in which religion and matters of faith are questions of private life and private concern, that paradigm is now under huge pressure. Indeed, you could almost say that it's kind of shattered because of the groundswell of these plural voices of faith that are challenging secular monism say, so what do we do with that? And that's really what the book tries to deal with.

And to me, this is also a matter of justice. It's a matter of social justice. You know, we tend sometimes think of social justice as dealing only with economic questions, questions of equal opportunity. But it's also a question of how we do justice, or morality of faith in our society. And in some ways, we do that reasonably well, in some settings, in the UK. We're not an aggressively monistic secular state. We have a state that funds faith schools, that welcomes faith contributions in many different areas of civil society. So, we're not an aggressively secular state in that regard but I think we could do much better than we do at present, particularly attending to those voices who tend not to hit the headlines, not to gain prominence for all sorts of reasons because they're smaller number, they lack the capacity, the historical capacity to put forward their voices in public setting in a powerful and compelling way.

You know, recent immigrants, particularly from different cultures, who may be educationally or in other ways disadvantaged for all sorts of reasons. And then, you know, the eccentric minorities that we tend to either ignore or belittle, but who may have surprising things to say, if only you would listen, that's the goal of the book to ask the question, what would British democracy look like, if it was much more affirming of that diversity of faiths? And what principles of justice do we need to bring to bear to frame politics of diversity, so by framing a policy of diversity, I don't simply mean managing it, you know, I hate that word. Managing diversity is the language of the powerful. It's the language of the establishment country, what we need to do is to discern, respect, facilitate diversity. And then, of course, place limits on it, where it places serious challenges to the integrity of democracy. This is not a complete free for all, where anything goes, but a much more affirming approach to the articulation of faith, a diversity of faith perspectives in society.

I write this book out of my own perspective, which is Christian political theology. So, I actually call my model, paradoxically, Christian Democratic pluralism, but I use that language simply to say, this is my one voice thrown into the conversation that must be multi faith, multicultural, and open to all, all comers. That's the flavor of, of what I've been working on anyway.

**Divine Charura**

Thank you very much, Jonathan, for that. And as we end, I really value the conversation and the dialogue that we have had and the things you've had to say in relation to us really being challenged to think about social justice in the terms of those things that fraught human flourishing and our commitment to it. I really love your approach to encouraging us to think about discerning and respecting all our diversities, but the link you make to democracy, and all sorts of thinking about the common pursuit for social justice thing that's really come across, and certainly for colleagues in universities like myself, and York St University, really being interested in what we do within the curriculum, within our research to hold this in mind. And I frame these things myself and thinking about our love and compassion for fellow citizens, if anything, the COVID 19, social restriction guidelines have shown us that and also how you've linked in, in the diversity, is examples of the link to our ecology, our environment, feminism, different faiths, religion, secularism, that there is a place for all and we can all meet at the point of the common pursuit for social justice.

**Jonathan Chaplin**

But just to say that, in that respect, you know, the university does have a unique position within society. So, within a democracy, in the sense that it can host the kind of intelligent, respectful, informed, patient, civil conversations that society currently is finding so incredibly difficult to do. When I was doing that over Brexit, because Brexit was debated in university settings, you know, I participated in some of those. And of course, in university settings, it's all very restrained, for the most part, it's civil, it's informed. Out in the larger society, we comprehensively fail to have that kind of debate. Now, was there a way, would there be a way for the university to make its resources available to wider society, better democracy, to elevate the level of debate? Now, that's not to say that parliament, and local councils have to sound like a university seminar. They'll never be that. But nonetheless, can the university somehow share its own internal experience of civility? That would be a very, very special gift. If the university could do that to a democracy, which now is driven by tribalism, by division, by an atmosphere of toxic mutual self-rejection and exclusion. That will be a very exciting challenge if a university could consciously take time and that's how can we contribute to as it were the healing, I would use that word, you know, then the healing of our democratic discourse, which is suffering from a great sickness at the moment.

**Divine Charura**

And what a wonderful place to end, thinking about social justice and healing. So, I would like to say a very big thank you to Dr. Jonathan Chaplin for your wonderful contribution, which no doubt has furthered the stimulus of my thinking and really given me more passion to be engaged so radically with these ideas and I'm sure that it'll be the same for my colleagues. And so, I just like to say thank you to our listeners, thank you for listening to this conversation and dialogue. My name is Professor Divine Charura and I'm a professor of Counselling Psychology at York St John University, and our guest today, Dr. Jonathan Chaplin, who's a political theologian, and a member of the Divinity faculty at Cambridge University, and also a research associate of the think tank Theos. Thank you very much for listening.

**Jonathan Chaplin**

Thank you very much.