

Celebrating the Neuroscientific Body
 Sacramentally:
*Reading the Body as Sacrament –
 A Radical Incarnational Theo-logos*

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ABSTRACT

Philosophy of religion can embrace the discoveries of neuroscience and thereby endorse these scientific texts, whilst offering a prophetic discord with regards to the reading of these texts. Certain neuroscientific discoveries are arguing for a radical immanence or total material embodiment, as everything can be explained via the internal neurological functioning of the body/brain. However, if one understands the body as text, how does this radical embodiment differ from the radical immanence of Derrida's famous statement that there is nothing beyond the text? This would open the way to interpreting the radical embodiment or materialism of neuroscience as something inter- and intra-textual with no beyond the text. Yet Derrida's famous statement is part of his auto-deconstructive reading of texts within their contexts and thus there is a radical openness towards the other (alterity), because of *différance*. The task of philosophy of religion is to challenge the one-dimensional (closed/conclusive) reading of these texts (body as text), and rather argue for the radical openness of texts as something that is internal to the grammar of the text itself. In reading the body as a text, a neuroscientific text, such a reading remains fundamentally open to various readings thereby not denying the discoveries of science, but embracing these discoveries as texts in need of reading. It is in the reading of these texts that philosophy of religion can play an important role – not in the traditional sense of bringing to the reading al-

ternative normative texts, but exploring the structures of texts and in the structural make-up of these texts discovering the role of faith, trust and hope in both the construction and reading of texts. This exploration of the fundamental structures of texts will focus on Derrida's 'grammar of faith' and thus celebrate the neuroscientific texts whilst reading them sacramentally.

KEYWORDS

neuroscience, Derrida, Laruelle, faith, science, postfoundational epistemology, body, text

In this article I will suggest that Wentzel van Huyssteen's proposal of a postfoundationalist epistemological space can facilitate a respectful and meaningful conversation, or as he argues, a fruitful duet between science and religion.¹ In *Duet or duel?* he follows the developments in evolutionary epistemology² to argue for a postfoundationalist epistemological space where there is an acute awareness and appreciation that no single reasoning strategy can sufficiently house the complexity of human rationality.³

On the question of the development of the human mind/rationality (evolutionary epistemology) and the subsequent arguments for free will, consciousness and responsibility, there are two main streams of arguments that can be broadly identified. The first is that everything can be explained biologically⁴ which can be described as a naturalist argument or as radical bodily immanence. The second stream argues that human rationality is too complex a phenomenon, taking into account the diverse reasoning strategies that the human mind is capable of. The human mind that can develop reasoning strategies for diverse fields such as science, music and art cannot be ex-

¹ J.W. Van Huyssteen, *Duet or Duel? Theology and Science in the Postmodern World* (London: SCM Press, 1998).

² See Van Huyssteen, *Duet or Duel?*, 134.

³ See Van Huyssteen, *Duet or Duel?*, xiv.

⁴ See for example: M. Arbib, 'Towards a Neuroscience of the Person,' in: R.J. Russel et al. (eds.), *Neuroscience and the Person* (Berkeley, Calif.: Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, and the Vatican City State: Vatican Observatory Publications, 1999), 77–100; B. Libet, 'Do We Have Free Will?' , *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 6/8–9, 1999, pp. 47–57; D.F. Swaab, 2001, 'Hersenen, bewustzijn en geloof: neurobiologische aspecten [Brain, Consciousness, and Faith: Neurobiological Aspects],' in: P. Oomen et al. (eds.), *Hersenen – Bewustzijn – Zicht op onszelf* [Brain – Consciousness – Image of Ourselves], (Nijmegen: Valkhof Pers, 2001), 75–95.

plained in simple terms by taking evolutionary biology alone into account. To take this complexity into account other metaphors evolved to explain the development of human rationality such as emergence, complexity, creativity, etcetera which transcends purely biological evolution.⁵ It is clear and all agree that biology is the *necessary cause*,⁶ but where there is disagreement is as to whether biology is the *sufficient cause*.⁷ These two different readings can be compared to either a purely intra-textual reading (evolutionary biology) alone or an inter-textual reading where evolutionary biology is only one aspect, the necessary cause of human rationality, but certainly not the sufficient cause and thus conversation with other disciplines is necessary. To really understand the emergence of the complexity of the human mind various disciplines enter in an inter-disciplinary conversation or inter-textual reading of the text (body as text) and *context* or text (body) in *context* (environment).

Van Huyssteen argues that it is the quest for understanding the complexity of the human mind itself, evolutionary epistemology,⁸ which guides us towards this space where inter-disciplinary or cross-disciplinary conversations are necessary to understand the complexity of the human mind.⁹ In this space he proposes a postfoundational epistemology¹⁰ which allows for various reasoning strategies to interact with each other in conversation. He argues that evolutionary epistemology yields the kind of postfoundationalist, comprehensive epistemology that is necessary to respond to the challenges of postmodernity and help us rediscover the resources of human rationality that are shared deeply by both theology and science.¹¹ What Van Huyssteen discovers in evolutionary epistemology is a way to think and facilitate the challenge of a constructive form of postmodernism: 'the need for a more comprehensive and integrated approach to the problem of human knowledge.'¹²

⁵ See S. Conway Morris *The Crucible of Creation: The Burgess Shale and the Rise of Animals* (New York: OUP, 1998); S. Conway Morris, *Life's Solution: Inevitable Humans in a Lonely Universe* (New York: CUP, 2003); I. Steward, *Life's Other Secret: The New Mathematics of the Living World* (New York: John Wiley, 1998).

⁶ See Van Huyssteen, *Duet or Duel?*, xiv.

⁷ See P. Clayton, 'Emergence from physics to theology: toward a panoramic view,' *Zygon* 41/3 (September 2006), 680 & F.M. Wuketits, *Evolutionary Epistemology: Its Implications for Humankind* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990).

⁸ See Van Huyssteen, *Duet or Duel?*, 132.

⁹ See Van Huyssteen, *Duet or Duel?*, 24.

¹⁰ See Van Huyssteen, *Duet or Duel?*, 7-8.

¹¹ See Van Huyssteen, *Duet or Duel?*, 134.

¹² See Van Huyssteen, *Duet or Duel?*, 135.

It is in this postfoundational space that he argues theology can come to the conversation and enter into a fruitful and graceful duet with science. From science there are the metaphors of complexity theory, quantum physics, emergence, creativity and from theology there are the metaphors of Creator, intelligent design, etcetera. These metaphors are all acceptable and welcomed to the table because they are based on reasonable (sufficient) reasoning strategies that can be mutually respected and accepted by the various sciences towards a postfoundational conversation and these sufficient reasoning strategies¹³ allows the various disciplines with their diverse metaphors to sing in the cross-disciplinary choir.

To explain the complex connection between evolutionary biology and cultural evolution, science has offered various immanent metaphors, for example: complexity, emergence, quantum theory, etcetera. Some of these metaphors might currently be the best theories/metaphors, for example as Helrich¹⁴ argues that theoretical physics offers the best mathematical equations to understand the world and yet it needs to be kept in mind that science is not the final mathematical equation with which to understand and interpret the world as was believed in modernity and therefore the space is opened for postfoundational inter- and intra-textual reading of the world or humanity. Helrich argues that theoretical physics certainly seeks such a mathematical equation, but he adds that such an equation will never be written on a piece of paper and so the search to find the one 'correct' mathematical equation with which to comprehend the world and the self is impossible. Wigner argued that mathematics is the language for formulating the laws of physics with which humanity is able to understand the universe.¹⁵ In response to Wigner and Helrich, the question could be asked: is mathematics the language of the universe? The universe itself is beyond language and beyond mathematics, because all we have is the text/equation/symbol/sign/formula as there is no outside text.¹⁶ So even though, as Helrich argues, quantum theory certainly seems to be the best mathematical language with which

¹³ See Van Huyssteen, *Duet or Duel?*, 34, 129. See also J.W. van Huyssteen, *Essays in Postfoundationalist Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 150.

¹⁴ C.S. Helrich, 'On the limitations and promise of quantum theory for comprehension of human knowledge and consciousness,' *Zygon* 4/3 (2006), 545.

¹⁵ E. Wigner, 'The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Mathematics in the Natural Sciences,' *Communication in Pure and Applied Mathematics* 13/1 (1960), 14.

¹⁶ See J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, transl. G.C. Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1997), 158.

to understand the universe as it is the most effective tool to understand, it remains a metaphor and therefore the need for postfoundational conversation remains.

These different metaphors seek to understand the world and humanity. Some of these metaphors seek to do this without a return of supernatural arguments or arguments for metaphysical being and others are open to supernatural arguments thereby opening the space for theology to enter into the conversation. Theology can therefore bring to the table her metaphors of God, but to what purpose? Is this a form of apologetics using the gaps or uncertainties in science to justify faith in God? Is the language of theology, specifically the Scriptural based theological language, truly useful to help understand and interpret scientific challenges? What contribution does theology offer the scientific conversation? What does theology have to offer the scientific discussion on the evolution of humanity? Can the theological concept of the *Imago Dei* truly contribute to the scientific discourse or is the conversation a struggle on the side of theology to identify where exactly in the scientific discussion the image of God would be appropriate: a theology of the gaps? Or is it a unilateral conversation where science offers the paradigms and the language/metaphors in which to think about certain things, God, creation, miracles, soul, afterlife and the image of God, etcetera and then theology frantically tries to accommodate her metaphors to this scientific language? It can also be argued that this duet is an appeasing time-filler to keep the religions (a powerful force in contemporary culture) on board until science does find some answers that are maybe more useful than the current answers and then what happens to theology?

Yet, just because science (evolutionary epistemology) itself points towards a postfoundational inter-textual reading it does not automatically entail an element of the supra-natural text. It does not exclude it, but nor does it include it – certain things cannot *yet* be explained, but that does not translate into the existence of some supra-natural being or even a metaphysical Being or God. Evolutionary epistemology does not necessarily include supra-natural elements just because it cannot conclusively explain the complex connection between biological evolution and cultural evolution.

Therefore, although one recognises the role of experience, tradition and metaphor in all knowledge there is a bias towards science as offering the ultimate ‘rational language’ or the *most* sufficient reasoning strategies and therefore all other languages needs to be in response to this rational language that has proven itself through its utility and technological prowess. This bias

I can accept, but it only accentuates the question: what can theology offer in the postfoundationalist conversation? I will argue that theology does not have much to offer science, because it is not a scientific discourse and thus the concepts such as image of God, creation, God, etcetera are not scientific statements, but utterances of faith. Is Christian theology, as based in Scriptures, necessarily about a supernatural Being? Is Christian theology a 'science' about a metaphysical Being or is Christian theology, as founded in Scripture, a science of faith in response to revelation as Karl Barth¹⁷ argued. One could argue that Christian theology focusses on the revelation of the Word (Christ) in Scripture. Thus Scripture as the basis for theology does not offer anything concerning science (physics) or anything concerning metaphysics, because it was not written as a physical (scientific) or metaphysical treatise, but it is about the Word of God (Christ) as witnessed to in scripture. In other words, it is about God's revelation of God-self in the immanence of Christ in the history of the world.

I would rather propose that Theology (with its focus on the Word made flesh) can embrace the radical immanence of natural science and therefore endorse the scientific text full heartedly and enter into the intra- and interdisciplinary postfoundational conversation without any attempt to read the Other, as super-natural or metaphysical Being. All we have is the text,¹⁸ hereby not denying the existence of an Other or other as every other is wholly other,¹⁹ but denying that one can make any conclusive statements concerning the other who is also wholly Other. If the insights of linguistic theory are taken into account then both naturalism and supernaturalism are texts seeking to understand the Other who is every other.²⁰ Thus, there is no dualism and there is no duel, but if anything there is One (various texts) and a unilateral duality as both naturalism and supernaturalism unilaterally, in Laruelle's sense, confront – not the Other (because the Other always comes to mind as text), but the future.²¹ Or as Žižek argues, that things do not merely appear; they appear to appear, thereby 'concealing the fact that they

¹⁷ K. Barth, *God in Action*, transl. E. G. Homrighausen & K.J. Ernst (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1937) 3ff.

¹⁸ J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 158.

¹⁹ J. Derrida, 'Sauf le nom,' in: J. Derrida & T. Dutoit (ed.), *On the Name*, transl. D. Wood, (Stanford: University Press, 1995), 76.

²⁰ Derrida, 'Sauf le nom,' 76.

²¹ F. Laruelle, 'What can non-philosophy do?', transl. R Brassier, *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 8/2 (2003), 181.

are what they appear.²² This double framing conceals the fact that things *are* what they appear.

Therefore the immanent reading of science remains inconclusive concerning the other (reality) and it is necessarily grammatically so because of *différance*. Every other is wholly other, Derrida argues, and therefore science cannot provide conclusive answers just as there cannot be conclusive answers to the question of theism or for that matter on the question of atheism. So at best one is perhaps left with speculative realism as Quentin Meillassoux²³ argues. In his speculative realism he has created the space for the possibility of a future God.²⁴ My question is: does theology want to engage in this speculative realism or with the possibility of speculative super-realism somewhere in the future? My answer is, no, and I believe that there is a strong theological tradition that would support such an emphatic *No!* A tradition that would argue that the focus of theology is not on that which cannot be known, God, but rather on that which is revealed (Christ) thus embracing the immanent text/s and contexts whilst offering prophetic discord, as these texts are never final but awaiting final judgement in the time that remains. The Christ event (alone) should be embraced in faith and grace alone. This revelation of the incarnated (immanent), crucified and resurrected Christ provides the hermeneutical key not only to Scripture, as Luther argues,²⁵ but I would argue to the postfoundationalist reading of texts and contexts as such. My vision of theology is to disengage from the speculative enterprise of either speculative realism or speculative super-realism and rather offer the world a hermeneutical key to read the grammar of texts of the world, and thereby offer an ethos of reading based on, as Laruelle argues, a science of Christ,²⁶ not in an attempt to answer questions concerning God, but with regards to the questions of the world in the hope of the kingdom that is still to come. The Christ event (narrative) as for example captured in the Carmen Christi (Philippians 2), read together with Derrida's understanding of language, could serve as such a

²² S. Žižek, 'A Plea for a Return of *Différance* (with a minor *pro domo sua*),' *Critical Inquiry* 32 (Winter 2006), 235–236.

²³ Q. Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on Radical Contingency*, transl. R. Brassier (New York: Continuum, 2008).

²⁴ Q. Meillassoux, 'Spectral Dilemma,' *Collapse IV*, ed. R. Mackay, Urbanomic, Falmouth, 2008, 261–276.

²⁵ See P. Althaus, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers*, (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 6. Auflage 1983), 73.

²⁶ F. Laruelle, 'A Science of Christ,' paper presented at the Grandeur of Reason: Religion, tradition and universalism conference in Rome, 1–4 September 2008.

science of reading the texts of the One, as that is all there is, because any thinking of the Other is still in language, the language of the same/One. This is the contribution that theology can offer the science-religion conversation, and the Scriptures as texts of faith, hope and love can hermeneutically guide and offer an ethos for inter-disciplinary reading of texts and contexts. Stuart Kauffman, in an interview with Steve Paulson,²⁷ argues for the need for a sacred science. I would argue for the need for a Christ-science, for the reading of texts and contexts at the table of the kingdom to come.

One can read the Christ event as the *Ereignis* of language and as such it is the *Ereignis* of difference.²⁸ John Schad²⁹ argues that each discourse can be read as an allegory or a re-writing of the other and it is possible because they are intertexts and one cannot read the one without the other. It is as Derrida argues,³⁰ when one no longer knows what is an example of what then literature has begun as literature has always already begun. The Christ narrative will be read together with Derrida's understanding of *différance*, and the two will interpret each other. What makes such mutual interpretation both possible and impossible is that the grammar of *différance* and the trace is best described in the grammar of faith, promise, hope and thus prayer, and these Biblical texts have as their content narratives concerning faith, promise, hope and prayer and therefore they can function as exemplary texts of *différance*. These texts' (Jewish-Christian Scriptures) 'truth' is not their metaphysical or onto-theological reference, but the 'truth' of language just as the poetic speaking of language was for Heidegger the purest (truest) form of language.³¹ For Derrida, it is prayer³² that is the speaking of language.³³ Thus one

²⁷ S. Paulson, 'God enough,' Salon.com, Wednesday, Nov 19, 2008 11:40 Am UTC, viewed from [HTTP://WWW>SALON>COM/2008/11/19/STUART_KAUFFMAN/](http://www.salon.com/2008/11/19/stuart_kauffman/) on 05.08.2012.

²⁸ John Schad, "'Hostage of the Word": Poststructuralism's Gospel intertext,' *Religion & Literatures* 25/3, 1993, 1, argues that God and speech (one could say God and writing, taking Derrida's arguments into consideration) share the same impossible beginning and therefore are always already identical, or coextensive. He argues that this becomes apparent in the Johannine Prologue, which he refers to as the Johannine heresy: that God who is Word becomes flesh (text or context). Michael Edwards reminds one that in Greek the same word is used to describe speech and Christ (M. Edwards, *Of Making Many Books* (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 179). Robert Scharleman (R.P. Scharleman, 'The Being of God when God is not being God,' in: T.J.J. Altizer et al. (eds.), *Deconstruction and Theology* (New York: Crossroads 1982), 102) argues that 'God is what language means and language is what God means.'

²⁹ Schad, 'Hostage of the Word,' 2.

³⁰ J. Derrida, 'Passions: 'An oblique offering,'" In: T. Dutoit (ed.), *On the Name*, transl. D. Wood, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 142–143 n.14.

³¹ M. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, transl. A. Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

can say that prayer, faith, promise and hope are the speaking of language. The 'truth' of these Scriptural texts therefore is not in their reference, but because they are narratives concerning faith, promise, hope and prayer they are exemplary of the grammar of writing and therefore they become exemplary texts of language and exemplary texts of texts and of contexts. As exemplary texts they are necessary for the understanding and interpreting and opening of contexts – the 'reality' of the world.

The Christ narrative can be used as an exemplary narrative, not to prove the truth of a historical Jesus, but to understand and interpret, deconstruct the texts of the world (*context*), by using the Christ narrative to read and re-read the texts of all that is and in that sense discover the 'truth' of these narratives, irrespective of their reference to which no one has conclusive access, but 'truthful' in the sense of useful interpretation (deconstruction) of reality (*context*) because of their grammar of faith, prayer, promise and messiah to come. In that sense the Christ narrative is perhaps exemplary of the story of language and as story of language it is exemplary of the story of the world (history of the world).³⁴

It begins with the incarnation of the God, the Logos, who becomes flesh – in other words, God pitches God's tent in human history. God the transcendent becomes immanent in the *context* of human history. The Word (transcendental signified) becomes words, texts, writing, *différance* as it enters human history and thus it becomes vulnerable.³⁵ The Word becomes flesh so there is no outside text anymore, only a trace of the Other (Father), of an immemorial past never present and a future always still to come.³⁶

³² Derrida argues that the God of negative theology is worth saving and secondly the prayer of negative theology needs to be translated for everyone (see Derrida, *Sauf le nom*, 46–48).

³³ See J. Derrida, 'How to avoid speaking: Denials,' P. Kamuf & E. Rottenberg (eds.), *Psyche: Inventions of the Other* Vol II, transl. K. Frieden & E. Rottenberg, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 143–195.

³⁴ John Schad, as already discussed above, interprets the Johannine Prologue in this light. Charles Winquist argues something similar when he says that 'The death of God.... is the birth of the Word' (Schad, *Hostage of the Word*, 2). Schad continues and argues that the Johannine incarnation and the postmodern or poststructuralist situation might be described, it seems, in one and the same way (Schad, *Hostage of the Word*, 2).

³⁵ '...that Christ, as the Word, does not so much put himself beyond language but rather that he endures all its frailties. Indeed, this very life and ministry – characterized as they are by discontinuities, displacements, and misinterpretations – parallels closely the fate, or itinerary, of the Derridean sign' (Schad, *Hostage of the Word*, 4).

³⁶ See Derrida's discussion on the trace in J. Derrida, *Margins of philosophy*, transl. A. Bass, (Brighton: Harvester, 1982), 12, 21.

This incarnate Word (this inscription of writing) becomes vulnerable like a baby in a crib. It becomes vulnerable to the wounding of *différance*, the wounding of the other. The incarnate word is opened (wounded, vulnerable) to the *tout autre*, which is every other.³⁷

Yet it is particularly vulnerable to the big other (the powers that be), the imperial forces that seek to be or represent the Transcendent as *the* transcendental signified. However, the big other is conscious of the fact that it does not have perfect access to the transcendent and that it is not the ultimate presentation or representation of the transcendent and therefore knows that its power is only as temporary as the myth survives.³⁸

These forces of the various big others hear of the Word made flesh and they are threatened in a dual sense. Firstly they are threatened by the idea of a possible other's attempt at being *the* transcendental signified (big other) that might be more powerful than they and therefore they need to destroy this potential before it rises to power, or secondly they are threatened by the possibility that if it truly is the transcendental signified (the Word) that has become flesh, become *context* and text as is inscribed, that would mean that all power will be threatened as all power rests on a foundational myth that has forgotten that it is a myth and that there is no 'true' legitimization of power on the basis of a transcendental signifier (truth), as there is no transcendental signifier but only a quasi-transcendental that deconstructs.³⁹

How right these imperial forces were with regards to this incarnate word that had entered their *context* (history) and thus had fatally wounded their power and authority. This inscription (archi-inscription – incarnation of the Word) had fatally wounded any claims to power based on metaphysics: a single cause our ground. The incarnate Word began his ministry in the context of Palestine, the context of imperial forces (Roman universal imperialism and Pharisaic particular imperialism). His ministry (activity) challenged and deconstructed these systems of power and control and thus the animosity grew between the powers that be and Jesus (the incarnate Word – the inscribed

³⁷ Derrida, *Sauf le nom*, 76.

³⁸ See Derrida's discussion on Walter Benjamin's *Critique of Violence* in: J. Derrida, 'Force of law: The "mystical foundation of authority,"' in: G. Anidjar (ed.), *Acts of Religion* transl. M. Quaintance (London: Routledge, 2002), 228–298.

³⁹ Theodore W. Jennings, Jr. follows a similar path in his book *Reading Derrida/Thinking Paul*, where he argues that what was exposed was the 'unfounded foundation of the law and thus renders it deconstructable' (see T.W. Jennings, *Reading Derrida/Thinking Paul* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 61).

text)⁴⁰. The only solution for these powers that be was to destroy this inscription that challenged or deconstructed their power. Jesus (the inscribed/incarnated Word – archi-writing) fundamentally questioned their power as he reinscribed the myths of their power. He fundamentally challenged the metaphysics of their thinking and their system and therefore he was crucified as the greatest criminal⁴¹ by the imperial forces of that time.⁴²

What makes this possible – this semi-translation of the story of Christ into the story of *différance*⁴³? It is because *différance*, and more specifically deconstruction as an effect of *différance*, is impassioned by the messianic (the other still to come) and thus the messianic story fits, the difference being that the Christian believes that the messiah did come and *différance* holds onto the fact that the messiah is always still to come.

The crucifixion: It is not the sign (the incarnate Word) that is crucified, but the messiah⁴⁴. Christ is not crucified because of being the incarnate word (writing/*différance*), but he is crucified because of the disruption and deconstruction this writing causes in the text or *context* and thereby challenges the powers that be. The Word incarnate, as argued above, translates into speech, signs, the inscription, archi-writing (flesh) and consequently the undecidability of the play of *différance*. This play of *différance* deconstructed the powers that be and it was because of this ultimate criminality (deconstruction) that Jesus was crucified as he challenged the metaphysical foundations of the authority of the powers that be by revealing them to be powerless inscriptions and thus re-inscribing them into the play of undecidability.

⁴⁰ See John Caputo's book, *What Would Jesus Deconstruct?*, where he brings the ideas of deconstruction and *différance* into dialogue with the ministry of Jesus and per implication the ministry of the church. J.D. Caputo, *What Would Jesus Deconstruct? The Good News of Postmodernism for the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007).

⁴¹ See Derrida's discussion on Walter Benjamin's discussion on the ultimate criminal, in Derrida, *Critique of Violence*.

⁴² See 1 Corinthians 2:8, where Paul makes it clear that the agents of the crucifixion were the rulers of this age.

⁴³ As Eric Ives argues, deconstruction is not a bad master, but a necessary servant for Christianity (E. Ives, 'Modern historical scholarship and the Christian Gospel,' *The Glass* 6 (1972), 65), or as Schad argues, deconstruction is the fate of Christianity (Schad, *Hostage of the Word*, 7).

⁴⁴ Jennings also argues that the cross is a verdict against the messiah and that the execution of the messiah is exemplary (Jennings, *Reading Derrida/Thinking Paul*, 65). He argues this in the context of the law-gospel debate in Paul and that the law has to be deconstructed for justice to be possible. 'That the wedge driven between justice and the law is precisely the execution of the messiah is, of course explicitly affirmed in Galatians (2: 21)' (Jennings, *Reading Derrida/Thinking Paul*, 64).

The powers that be responded to this deconstruction, seeking to arrest this undecidability, trying to arrest the certainty of uncertainty that questioned their certainties. It is this grammar that they sought to arrest and destroy so that they could return to their certainties. It is the *way, the truth and the life*⁴⁵, which is the grammar of all that is with nothing beyond (text and context), that they hoped to destroy by crucifying Christ.

The Messiah (messianic way) was crucified, this *way, life and truth* was crucified, crossed out, erased. Within the story of the text or in the context, the messiah was crucified by the two powers according to the legal functioning of the Roman and Jewish law, but theologically it is also argued that God (*tout autre*) crucified him and yet it was God who was crucified⁴⁶. Therefore it was the Other (God) who crucified the messiah so as to save the Other (God) and the same. One could argue that the cross is the death of the death of God, which does not translate into the life of God, but maybe the life of God as understood as the endless desertification of language⁴⁷.

Différance, like God, needs saving from becoming the final Word: the certainty of certainty which would indeed be death namely the end of play as Schad⁴⁸ argues. If the transcendent (the Word) is incarnate (there is no outside text) and if the Messiah (death of God) rises to power (if différance does indeed become *the* Messiah, a new transcendental signified) then it would be the end of history, namely death: the certainty of certainty and the absolute reduction of the other to the same, of Différance with a capital D. The world would collapse, as the world that is created (*poiesis*) in and of difference⁴⁹ would be without difference. Thus the death on the cross of God is not the death of the transcendental signifier as that death already occurred in the incarnation. It is the death of a capitalised Writing or Différance, the death of the Messiah who came: the death of the death of God. The death on the cross is not the certainty of certainty (death) as Schad argues, but the return of play, and therefore the certainty of uncertainty, the re-inscription of Différance into différance so that this play never rises to power. The cross ensures that différance is only ever a weak force⁵⁰ (weak messiah) who has no

⁴⁵ In reference to John 14:6

⁴⁶ J. Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 200–274.

⁴⁷ See Derrida, *Sauf le nom*, 56.

⁴⁸ See Schad, *Hostage and Word*, 10ff.

⁴⁹ See Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 200.

⁵⁰ See J.D. Caputo, *The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006).

power and yet all power comes from him⁵¹: a quasi-transcendental and never *the* Transcendental.

In a sense one can say the Messiah came and did not come, and Christians still await him/her (the second coming) – an important aspect in the story of Christ and *différance* so that *différance* does not become a capitalised transcendental signifier, but remains, if anything, a quasi-transcendental. Christ, a quasi-Messiah, who came and is still to come and thus opens the space of history in the time that remains.

Différance crucifies (deconstructs) any attempt to be the final judgment (transcendental signified) and opens the space for the messiah still to come (second coming). The trace of the other who has not been heard, who has no place⁵², and thus any theology based on the Christ event, that uses the name of God, is haunted by a democracy still to come (hearing the other who has not been heard), by justice still to come (offering the other a place who has no place) and offers hospitality to the unheard, place-less other. In such a context of offering hospitality to the other, of praying for justice and democracy still to come, it is impossible to rise to an imperial power.

This is exactly where Theology, and specifically the Word of God (Christ), can help and offer an important contribution to the conversation. Theology thus does not provide us with interesting ideas (metaphors) about the Other that can engage in a fruitful duet with science, because such ideas, as Luther says, can only lead to the devil⁵³, but theology rather provides a hermeneutical key (Christ event) to read the grammar of the texts rather than speculate about that which is beyond.

Theology thus does not sing the duet with science about the Other, but offers the sciences the hermeneutics (science of reading) and ethos for a cross-disciplinary postfoundational conversation.

In this article I have sought to propose the postmetaphysical turn towards language in the thoughts of Derrida as a more useful space and maybe theologically ‘more suitable space’ for theology to engage in the postfoundational conversation with the other sciences rather than to seek to sing a duet with science on metaphysical or super-natural questions, where the possibility always remains that the duet turns into a duel. Furthermore to rather facilitate the space where this postfoundational conversation as unilateral dual-

⁵¹ In reference to Jesus’ response to Pilate see John 19:11.

⁵² Matthew 25:45.

⁵³ See Althaus, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers*, 33.

ity, turns not towards speculation concerning the Other of metaphysics, but towards the future that can only be faced in faith, hope and love – the three gifts of the Spirit⁵⁴. It is the Christ event that offers and guides such a reading (faith, hope and love) of the texts and contexts of the world towards a more just interpretation (justice understood as offering hospitality towards those who have no voice or place).

The task of theology is not to seek to argue for the truth of metaphysical arguments over against the arguments of science, but rather that theology redefines her ancient role as queen of the sciences who in the past invited the various disciplines to her royal court. Today a more suitable biblical image might be the inclusive kingdom table of the feast or celebration of communion where ever more are invited to share the body of texts. At this inclusive table to offer a hermeneutical key (a science of Christ) to read and deconstruct (crucify) the body of texts in the postfoundational epistemological space for the multi- or *Cross*-disciplinary conversation and to drink of the wine of the new covenant of hope, faith and love. Theology is not the Queen of the sciences playing an imperial role as an absolute monarch with regards to the content of the arguments and thereby having the right to determine what is right or wrong, but rather liturgically facilitating the space by providing the hermeneutical key to unpack the grammar for the conversation and playing, if anything, the role of the court jester or holy fool⁵⁵ and thereby deconstructing or crucifying the absolute laws that seek to hold all that is captive to a single theory or metaphor.

This Christ science guided by the metaphor of the sacrament of the table can perhaps provide an ethos for interdisciplinary conversation where every knee will bow at the name of the crucified Christ in humility and acknowledgement of the vulnerability of all our knowledge constructions, but in the spirit of hope, faith and love and an openness to the future of the kingdom always still to come.

⁵⁴ See 1 Corinthians 13.13.

⁵⁵ See J-A. Meylahn, *The Limits and Possibilities of Postmetaphysical God-talk: A Conversation between Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida* (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 321ff.