

A different way of knowing – a desperate need of theology and preaching in an age of cognitive chaos

**A response to Tom Troeger's Basel lecture on November 26, 2014
by Jan Chr. Vaessen, Gasselte (Netherlands), Christmas 2014**

Tom Troeger addressed the famous Theological Faculty of the University of Basel, Switzerland (Karl Barth taught theology there) at the occasion of receiving an honorary doctorate for his endeavors in the fields of homiletics, liturgy, poetry and church music at Iliff School of Theology in Denver and Yale Divinity School in New Haven (USA). The title of his lecture was: 'A different way of knowing, the role of theology and preaching in an age of cognitive imperialism.' Here I would like to reflect on some key concepts of Tom's lecture to begin with the concept of 'cognitive imperialism'. Instead of denying this illness of western culture to be cured by a more holistic way of knowing (as happens for instance in phenomenological reductionism) I even want to go a step further and characterize our age as an age of cognitive chaos. And this chaos is the logical result of the whole development of western thinking from pre modern, modern and post modern forms of knowing and not necessarily negative. And so in our time many new paradigms are under construction and I want to look at two interesting European philosophers with very Dutch names (Sloterdijk and Cornelis) who inspire me to focus on heart connection as ground for a holistic way of knowing in theology and preaching. So the outline of this essay will be the following:

- Cognitive imperialism versus holistic thought
- Cognitive chaos and quantum physics
- Well being in the global village (Sloterdijk) and communicative self directing (Cornelis)
- Heart connection as ground for a holistic way of knowing in theology and preaching

Some ten years ago Tom invited me to teach a course on Biblical hermeneutics in the Doctor of Ministry Program at the Iliff School of Theology in Denver (CO). After the course my D. Min students gave me a beautiful card with all their names and the message: 'Joy is the clearest sign of the presence of God!' I am still so grateful for the time we spent together then and since then it has become crystal clear to me that joy must be the fertile ground of all knowledge, theology and preaching in order to be able to make a difference.

1) Cognitive imperialism versus holistic thought

Tom relates cognitive imperialism to reductionist thought, which of course is true when this kind of thought reduces all knowledge to a discipline's own methods and theories of truth finding, and ignores or even worse rejects in a narrow minded way all other efforts in that direction. However, reductionist thought has deep roots in western philosophy and we owe a lot to this kind of thought when it comes to knowledge – even holistic knowledge.

It already started with the ancient Greek reduction of knowledge to (in terms of Howard Gardner¹) two of all the intelligences fed by the human senses, i.e. the seeing of the eye expressed in concrete spatial insight and language and the more abstract, logical imagination of mathematics. By disqualifying the hearing of the ear, the smelling of the nose, the tasting of the tongue, the touching of the skin, the movement of the body, the intuitive interpersonal relationships to acquire *épistèmè* (sure, unchanging knowledge) you already perform some kind of violence towards these senses and their intelligences in favor of the spatial and mathematical intelligences that have remained to be predominant throughout western culture up till now. And - according to Gardner - the preference of one sense and its related intelligences is a cultural affair and therefore imposing this preference on other

¹ Howard Gardner, *Frames of mind, The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, New York, 1993 (second edition). Cf. Jan Chr. Vaessen, *A Quest for hope, Searching for ways out of postmodern nihilism into new reality*, Groningen 2009, p. 205-209

cultures with other preferences is a form of cognitive imperialism, reductionism in the negative sense. Too bad for music, perfume, food, dance, love and human relations more in general that have suffered all the way under this Greek way of cognitive imperialism, without vanishing completely. Apparently the human being as a whole is too strong to let it be deprived from its senses and related intelligences! So reductionist thought is quite ambiguous. Something is lost, although in the case of the ancient Greeks this happened in a totally unconscious way, like the Hebrews preferred the hearing of the ear and developed more linguistic and musical intelligences. But something is also gained: by means of the preferred intelligences human knowledge increased enormously, be it in restricted areas.

In modern times reductionist thinking really accelerated, because now we were confronted with a totally new universe where the sun was center instead of the earth. Ever since Descartes, Kant and Hegel 'knowing' became more and more lying under pressure. Descartes ended his doubts enticed by the new universe by founding all human existence in his own subjective thinking: '*cogito ergo sum* - I think therefor I am'. Kant tried to rescue objective universal knowledge and its unified logical system – the pre modern *logos* - by postulating a 'universal subject' for whom certain fundamentals were 'self evident'. He failed and had to recognize the limits of knowledge at the borders of the unknowable '*Ding an sich*'. So he reduced 'objective' knowledge to rather empty concepts in which logic (through transcendental deduction of the categories of the human mind) was related to the empirical reality of the senses. This remained a rather dualistic way of knowing and reasoning in dichotomies – avoiding the deeper layers of the symbol related to the '*Ding an sich*' – reductionist thinking that nevertheless sharpens the mind. Hegel tried to rescue the absolute knowledge by proposing an Absolute Spirit that was only home in itself by means of its absolute knowing. No exteriority whatsoever, Hegel's absolute knowledge remained a closed system in which the new universe was reduced to categories that the human mind could handle and that inspired the imperialist mind of (German) state politics in an exponential way. However he gave us the dialectics of thesis, antithesis, synthesis as a new way of questioning reality and intelligent growth of insight in reality as a whole. The result of all this is the development of many different logical systems to investigate many different realms of reality.

Now for Edmund Husserl – father of all phenomenology – experience, employing all the senses and not only seeing with the eye, was a legitimate source of truth. Furthermore he employed reductionism consciously and deliberately as a reliable method of reasoning and finding truth. In this way of gathering knowledge he distinguished two sorts of reductions: eidetic reduction and transcendental reduction. In eidetic reduction Husserl goes from, lest us say, divers empirical reality to the underlying logical, unifying coherence of reality. By means of imaginative variations in different states of a phenomenon he discovers ever deeper coherent layers in the phenomenon that logically assemble, connect and explain the diversity of what may appear at the surface. In transcendental reduction he goes even deeper than the logical layers of reality to end up in an abstract concept as '*Lebenswelt*' ('world of life'), some kind of spiritual reality in which the researcher is only responsible to himself. So phenomenological reasoning discovers many new areas and layers of reality but ends up in some kind of idealistic solipsism or maybe we could call this exploded cognitive imperialism. For Martin Heidegger this was the reason to invert Descartes' adagio '*cogito ergo sum*' in: '*sum ergo cogito*' (I am, therefor I – can - think) thus distinguishing in a very conscious way knowing from being, epistemology from ontology with priority of being over knowing. I think this is a very hopeful development in western thinking that again opens the mind for deep layers in empirical, logical even spiritual reality. It includes many different ways of knowing and thus prepares the way for more holistic approaches to reality as a whole. However, Heidegger goes the same reductionist way as his teacher Husserl had gone, from empirical through logical reality to '*Sein*' – 'Being' as abstract fundamental nearly spiritual concept. And both stayed there, they didn't make their way back to empirical reality and got stuck in some vague spiritual but idealized closed abstract system of knowing ('*Lebenswelt*', '*Sein*') – reductionism in the negative sense. However, by increasingly reducing 'knowing' and confining its discovering methods of gathering knowledge to ever more restricted and better defined areas the world to be known as a whole expanded – inward and outward - at a comparable rate. Cognition

began to mean something different than it ever had done before. It now becomes consciousness in which being and knowing are both important, connecting physics and technology with the humanities, linking eye and ear, math and music.²

I see this happen in the hermeneutic phenomenology of Paul Ricoeur³ and also in what I call the phenomenology of exteriority in the work of Emmanuel Lévinas⁴. The work of both philosophers would have been inconceivable without the preparation of their forbears. Kant helped Ricoeur to sharply distinguish between thesis and antithesis and Hegel helped to reach for new insight in a new synthesis which in turn became a new thesis to provoke a new antithesis and synthesis and so on. Husserl and Heidegger helped Ricoeur to search for deeper layers in his symbol and metaphor theories. But Ricoeur refused to get stuck in some idealized closed structure – be it ‘objective knowledge’, ‘absolute knowledge’, ‘*Lebenswelt*’ or ‘*Sein*’. So he made his way back to concrete reality thus starting a dialectic between (timeless) structure and (time related) event - knowledge and being - in language and in an ongoing logic of interpreting texts. What Ricoeur aims at in his hermeneutic phenomenology is to increase consciousness as joyful responsibility in open, caring and loving structures! For him the word God is more than a philosophical concept, more than the religious name of Being. In the word God two forces come together: the collection of meaning coming from the separate areas of (Biblical) discourse and the opening of an horizon that escapes the closure of discourse. Christ then is the symbol of self sacrificial love stronger than death. What develops here is a cognition that connects empirical, logical and spiritual reality, which is even more expanded by (Jewish) phenomenologist Lévinas from Vilnius, Lithuania. He is the one who declares western thought – even Heidegger’s ontology – as totalitarian thinking based on the desire for control of closed systems. The closed systems exist thanks to violence (i.e. the Third Reich of the Nazis) and it is the suffering o/Other who is the determining factor for my responsible choices, thus opening the closed suppressing systems for the mystery of cosmic universal energy and love coming from a realm that surpasses human control, knowing, being and even cognition in the sense of consciousness. In that way Lévinas opened our senses, mind, spirit and souls for that mysterious reality of mind blowing numbers of galaxies in the universe and the parallel sub atomic reality of electrons, positrons and photons circling with unimaginable speed around a nucleus in the basic building blocks of everything that is and lives.

So, reductionist thought and methods of research have brought us an enormous amount of new knowledge, technology, experience, ethics and even new ways of cognition. It can but does not necessarily lead to violent cognitive imperialism – this is an important ethical question. Reductionist thought will surely end up in violent imperialism if it ignores all other efforts in finding truth, substitutes its own ‘*Lebenswelt*’ for reality as a whole and takes over control in an idealistic and arrogant way. And that of course has been very often common praxis in western consciousness or should I say Greek frames of mind. Then again holistic, connective and healing ways of knowing have also developed in western thinking, in our days especially by means of reductionist methodologies and reasoning in phenomenology. And that I interpret with joy as a hopeful sign.

2) Cognitive chaos and quantum physics

A second concept in Tom’s lecture that I like to reflect on is the MRI technology coming out of nuclear and quantum physics. Not only do fMRI and other technologies like the Pet Scan, the CT Scan and the ECG coming from the same area in physics support more holistic ways of knowing they introduce a whole new sort of knowing e.g. not knowing - that is the mystery - as functional for human consciousness. This I think is the most exciting phase of human – and not only western - knowing in the whole history of mankind.

² Jan Chr. Vaessen, *A Quest for hope, Searching for ways out of postmodern nihilism into new reality*, Groningen 2009, p. 26-76

³ Paul Ricoeur, *Le conflit des interprétations*, Paris, 1969; *La métaphore vive*, Paris, 1975; *Interpretation Theory*, Fort Worth Texas, 1976; *Du texte à l’action*, Paris, 1986; *Soi-même comme un autre*, Paris, 1990

⁴ Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totalité et infini*, Paris, 1971; *Autrement qu’être ou au-delà de l’essence*, Paris, 1974

What I find remarkable is that each period in western i.e. Greek thinking - pre modern, modern and post modern – was anticipated by important developments in physics. For Socrates, Plato and Aristotle the work of the researchers who had questioned the Homeric mythical world view in order to see in a rational way what nature was really about had been very important. However according to Sloterdijk the Greeks were very afraid of change and so they searched for *epistèmè*, that is sure and unchanging knowledge, geocentric – pre modern - with the earth as center of the universe and mankind as its crown. This changed in modernity starting in the Renaissance with the development of lenses and telescopes in a dramatic way, so that Copernicus concluded that not the earth but the sun was the center of the universe. This heliocentric worldview changed our whole conception of everything that had been discovered before, so that Descartes started to doubt everything up to the point that he could not deny, i.e. the mere fact that he doubted: '*cogitio ergo sum*', grounding existence on his own personal subjective activity of thought. Modernist turn to the subject was a fact. Newtonian mechanics and the Galilean universal law of gravity explained many movements in the new universe, however we had not penetrated into the core of existence yet. Now in that core Newton's logic no longer applied, nor in the sub atomic reality nor in the astronomic reality. And the post modern mind followed what was discovered there. In the nuclear reality we discovered that particles could be waves, tiny little entities could expand vibrating over vast amounts of space. And in the astronomic reality we discovered that there was not just one galaxy with the sun as its center but numerous galaxies and thus numerous suns, none of which could claim the privilege of being center. Quantum physics discovered that the observer influenced the outcome of his observations and therefore Heisenberg formulated his uncertainty thesis. Hubble's telescope that saw further than our own galaxy questioned our heliocentric worldview. The universe and our perception of it had become non-centric. Some call this a fearful chaos because our mind is no longer in control - we can never know for sure!⁵ For others it is exciting news that opens our mind for a new experience of reality, even for a new spirituality and experience of religion. I personally belong to the last category⁶.

It is as if Kant's unknowable '*Ding an sich*' regains some rehabilitation in the post modern mind. But now this '*Ding an sich*' is put into a dialectical relation with acquired knowledge up till now surpassing by far Hegel's Absolute Spirit that is only at home in itself by means of 'absolute knowledge'. What will be the new synthesis then? I think some kind of Lévinas' phenomenology to be entered by Ricoeur's language as the narrow gate to an open infinite reality as a whole, which finally will be a surrendering kind of knowing with roots in the mysteries of being. What will be discovered next and why should we want to know? Will fear to lose control stop our will to know the unknowable or is there – somewhere - some kind of basic trust active as an inner drive to continue our adventurous search to connect *logos*, *pathos* and *ethos* to create a better world?

I have done some very premature, simple and naïve research in quantum physics⁷, not to become an expert in this field but because of the great impact of new developments in physics for philosophy, art, media, mass experience and finally also – more forced than willingly - theology. The most exciting discovery I made in these studies was the resonance that attracted atoms to each other and so doing create not only matter but also living organisms in ways that surpass our traditional ways of understanding. We did know something about electricity and magnetism and that dually counteractively loaded atoms (through + and -, or positron and electron particles) attract each other. In quantum physics more was discovered about the loading of atoms by means of unpredictable so called 'quantum leaps' that changed the charge of an atom and therefore performed another force of attraction on other atoms. Furthermore it was discovered that not only electro magnetic forces through plus and minus charge were responsible for mutual attraction of atoms to form molecules and cells,

⁵ Post modern philosophers like Derrida (no truth) and Lyotard (no moral) seem to go into this rather nihilistic direction. Cf Wouter Slob, *Dialogical Rhetoric, An essay on truth and normativity after postmodernism*, Dordrecht, Boston, London, 2002.

⁶ Jan Chr. Vaessen, *A Quest for hope, Searching for ways out of postmodern nihilism into new reality*, Groningen 2009, p. 195-229 ('Morality rather than truth as a basis for meaning')

⁷ H.A. Kramers en H. Holst, *De bouw der atomen en moleculen*, Amsterdam, 1949

but that there was also a phenomenon called *photon*, particles of light within the atoms, that played a role in mutual attraction. Since light – like sound – has a frequency, that is vibration, atoms search for other atoms with more or less the same frequency, so they also attract each other to form molecules and cells on the basis of harmony. And that means that at the basis of all there is – living organic as well as, as we say, ‘dead’ anorganic matter – there is light that stimulates some principle of harmony to activity. For me here lies the deepest ground for my basic trust in existence whatever may happen. There is light everywhere, even in the deepest darkness we can imagine. Rationally understandable or not, mysteriously comprehensible perhaps, it sounds as beautiful music in my ears, pure joy.

All this had a great impact on what we call the post modern mind. First of all this impact was dark and negative. Dutch theologian and philosopher Wouter Slob observed that the post modern mind collapsed under its own weight⁸. Structuralism exploded in Derrida’s deconstruction philosophy. Time and thus event had been excluded from structural knowing leaving the timeless system as the only and last basis for all knowledge, only to be deconstructed by Derrida. In fact as time, event, the ego cannot be erased from experience it gained an unprecedented hidden kind of total autonomy, ‘everything goes’ and each subject may design and own his or her own logical system of truth. However as the shared and common ground for any knowledge was completely lost, knowledge and science no longer possible, the autonomous individual was left behind in desperate confusion. Lyotard – reproaching Heidegger for his Nazi past in World War II - went as far as to declare the end of morality, interpreting moral as ‘a dark cloud of terror hiding in the limpid blue of language’. So what will remain as quality of life when truth finding and moral praxis are no longer possible? For me it is here where cognitive imperialism – reductionism in the negative sense - ends up and collapses under its own weight. And it is also a marking point beyond which interpreting time in a spatial way in concepts as pre modern, modern and post modern is surpassed and new cognition emerges.

A massive search for new ways of knowing, believing and doing set off with exciting results. Interpreting the concept of ‘chaos’ no longer in a negative way in terms of fear of loss of control of the mind, chaos now refers to more positive states of mind. Features as the acceptance of the ‘unknowable’ in knowing; the mystery of transcending narrow knowledge into new ‘super’-rational, more holistic ways of knowing; the basic trust of a communal supportive ground for each individual human being in the world - surpassing all individual traditions, religions and cultures; even a complete new spirituality, it is all gaining ground nowadays in the human mind and ways of knowing. Two contemporary European philosophers Peter Sloterdijk (conceptualizing the well being of humanity in the actual global village) and Arnold Cornelis (entering a new phase of cognition with his concept of communicative self directing) have inspired me intensely in this direction.

3) Well being in the global village and communicative self directing

Peter Sloterdijk asks in his book *Mediatijd, Technologie en wereldmanagement* (Media time, technology and world management)⁹ whether life of mankind in the age of globalization living in a global village will unfold under the sign of *euangelion* (good tidings) or *dysangelion* (evil and catastrophe). He considers five anthropological facts to be of crucial importance for the actual development of mankind and its way of knowing on a worldwide scale and then studies the role of mass media technology in this totally new phase in the history of mankind.

1) Man as the miracle of evolution is an audiovisual animal. While 99% of all the animals orient themselves by means of smell and interpret their own restricted environment in chemical ways, man (like whales and birds) has developed a relationship with the open, the unknown, the new. Because the eye and the ear are organs of distance the possessors of these risky organs are destined to become world creatures, conquerors of time, beings for who the actual place in Being is the ‘not yet’.

⁸ Wouter Slob, *Dialogical Rhetoric, An essay on truth and normativity after postmodernism*, Dordrecht, Boston, London, 2002

⁹ Peter Sloterdijk, *Medienzeit, Drei gegenwartsdiagnostische Versuche.*, Stuttgart 1993; here used in the Dutch translation by Hans Driessen, *Mediatijd, Technologie en wereldmanagement*, Amsterdam, 1999, p. 75-98

2) Man coming from the inside of the uterus is characterized by his reaching out and moving towards the outside world through a change of elements: from water to earth. After being born he preserves this inside world in his extra uterine existence: the group in which he is born and raised represents this inner world as a vital continuum that guarantees psychic and physical life. Threatened and vulnerable, *homo sapiens* stays connected to this inner social reality and is *a priori* inclined to open himself to the acoustic world of the group – the *sono* sphere of the community. Through fine tuning to this *sono* sphere the old society convinces her self of her own message: she will remain this society as long as she is able to tune in to herself.

3) Man is a telepathic animal. Sloterdijk explains: telepathy is the ability to be moved, stimulated into participation by means of something that is absent. This is not a paranormal phenomenon but the most fundamental characteristic of intelligence. Human intelligence can be reached from a distance, in time as past and tradition, in space with written texts that form the basis for imperialistic communication, ‘*tele politics*’ and enforce power from a distance. Writing becomes world language. Not only were inner voices from the past and tradition ‘heard’ - reminding *homo sapiens* of the original *sono* sphere – also the deep logical structure of the world in time and space was expressed in some kind of world text in which the integral truth of all that is was encoded. And this holds for political as well as religious texts, i.e. the *euangelion* of liberation from the *dysangelion* of suppressing power.

4) The fourth characteristic of man illustrates his inclination to receive the absent even more: his urge for migration, his inner drive to reach out and move from place to place, over small and long distances, and eventually from the land of the living to the other world beyond the borders of time that Plato called *metoikèsis*. Man comes and goes all the time showing not only physical mobility but also a psychological and spiritual mobility. The more complex and expanded a society becomes the more the difficulty of tuning in and contributing to the *sono* sphere increases. And yet whole populations need this *sono* sphere as an inner world, as an habitable world house. Therefore a special kind of mobility develops that goes much deeper: a creative state of being in and relating to the world. Creativity being the capacity of bringing along old images, sound, as ‘furniture’ in the migration from the small and well known to the expanded new and unknown reality. In our days this bigger reality has become the ‘world’ and received global connotation: responsible communication through the worldwide media has become vital.

5) Finally the fifth anthropological fact about man is that he is ‘auto hypnotic’, auto plastic, in the sense that he invents himself, individually but even more as nation, culture or imperial entities. What is needed most for a society to remain society is to create a consistent coherence in the *sono* sphere. This has political implications, for the right of self determination of societies and cultures collides immediately with the problem of multi interpretation. Musical concepts as political monophony and political polyphony become the new concepts of the political psycho-acoustics and theory of harmony. They are helpful in the question how to ‘compose’ a complex society with a consistently coherent *sono* sphere that feels as an habitable world house. These auto plastic processes are very powerful, as shows the global invasion of western culture, and can be implemented for good and for worse. With musical ways of knowing in politics also harmony enters the picture and there mass communication technology has a vital role to play. Internet connects everything to everything, everyone to everyone and news travels fast all over the world. The question is: will the news the media spread over the world be good news or predominantly bad as is the case in our days. A lot of meaning dissipates because there is no more trust in any unifying meaning behind the plurality of the global mind and the news about that plurality is ‘reduced’ to flat, understandable superficiality. However, the project of the modern world, the habitation of a coherent *sono* sphere as a real home in the global village can only be successful as long as the principle of sufficiently good news is working. There is our challenge of today: create new positive meaning and spread the news.

Arnold Cornelis then is really helpful in creating new positive meaning beyond post modern nihilism. In his book *De Logica van het gevoel* (The logic of feeling)¹⁰ he performs a thorough and beautiful philosophical investigation of the development of the human mind in the history of mankind. Cornelis states that on each level of consciousness the human mind is learning in two ways: constructive learning and catastrophic learning. Furthermore he distinguishes three main phases in the human history of learning and we are now entering the third phase which is a very positive and hopeful phase for mankind as a whole.

1) The first phase actually starts long ago when 'man' began using tools to achieve his goals. It really starts to flourish when man began to use the intelligence that was needed for this kind of activity to question the mythical reality in which he had lived for so long and investigate nature in a more rational way. Abandoning his nomadic way of life he now settled on a fixed piece of land and stayed there to enjoy the fruits of his own cultivation of the land. New agricultural techniques were invented and the crops increased in quantity and in quality. Especially in areas with big rivers inundating the neighboring lands on a regular basis – like Nile, Euphrate and Tigris – this turned into a lucrative business. Huge irrigating systems were built to hold the water and fertilize the ground throughout the year and not only at times when the river overflowed the land. This meant agricultural overproduction, that is a lot of food could be produced for people who did not work in agriculture: kings, palace servants, priests, soldiers, scientists, librarians, etc. Great civilizations could emerge out of this rational development of the human mind in practical matters. And they were defended and expanded by means of huge armies and violent warfare.

The constructive learning in this first phase of human intelligence is that a better understanding of nature may lead to better management of the land by means of better agricultural techniques so that many additional hungry mouths can be fed and civilization in all its aspects may flourish. This knowledge is gathered in a stable layer in human consciousness. It is there to stay there forever and will never disappear. The catastrophic learning is destruction in violent warfare and following suppression of many innocent masses by the conquerors, only to be conquered and annihilated themselves in the same ongoing process. New learning became necessary to secure the existence of human life in more solid social structures.

2) According to Robert Carneiro from the American Museum of Natural History in New York the total number of political entities – village communities, tribes, clans - on planet earth in the year 1000 BCE was approximately 500.000. In the year 500 CE this number had decreased to 250.000 and in our time there are 200 political formations that have survived the world historic rally and are represented in the General Assembly of the United Nations. What mankind learned in this process was to build ever bigger solid social structures with consistently coherent *sono* spheres, secure borders and more or less reliable distribution of power. And this happened in tribal and eventually in regional and national politics of the state but also in numerous institutions in all kinds of social realms on the basis of bilateral or mutual agreements that were written down in contracts and fixed in a vast amount of jurisprudence. This jurisprudence created closed systems of national and social security in which warfare and personal conflicts were avoided or at least handled with care. Only in utmost necessity it was decided to go to war, but because ever bigger political entities were involved the results were also increasingly devastating. Violence as guarantee of social and individual security does not lead to real freedom nor safety. Constitutional, penal and private law dictated how groups and individuals had to live within the closed systems that grew more and more rigid and self serving because of post modern doubt and nihilism. Especially as a result of the modern turn to the subject individuals felt increased pressure to make their life worthwhile all by themselves. In the end the self conscious individual felt lonely and worthless because the structures in which he had to live only served themselves and deprived him from his own personal dignity and value.

The constructive learning here is the building of solid social structures and related jurisprudence to to avoid war and conflict with varying results and guarantee social security as much as possible for

¹⁰ Arnold Cornelis, *De logica van het gevoel, Filosofie van de Stabiliteitslagen in de Cultuur als Nesteling der Emoties*, Amsterdam, 1997

self conscious individuals. Also this knowledge is added as a stable layer in human consciousness to the already existing knowledge of nature. The catastrophic learning of this phase refers to the arrogance of the self sufficient social structures and the ditto modern lonely individual losing more and more personal freedom, dignity and self value. And this catastrophe will be met in learning a new way of knowing in the next phase of human history that we are now entering.

3) The self conscious individual cannot and will not live in post modern nihilism – no truth, no moral and desperately fragmented solipsism – so he starts searching for new ground under his existence. And he finds it in more holistic ways of knowing and in a renewed feeling of belonging to and therefore active participation in the community. The self conscious individual acquires new dignity and self value by means of seeing himself as a whole living human being with many layers of consciousness, many senses and related intelligences capable of heart connections with other whole human beings. And so many new networks emerge in and through the social media where mutual aid and support are more important than power and money. And this means that communal life – digital as well as analogue - also receives new and more holistic meaning. Cornelis calls this new emerging worldwide consciousness ‘communicative self directing’. The individual is important and is able to make his or her own decisions, but he/she does so with dignity in connection with others by means of meaningful communication. Of course there is a lot of suspicion and even disbelief in the world towards this new consciousness and holistic ways of knowing. Many fall back on their ‘safe’ positions dictated by tradition, religion, state or culture, in short the social structures that guaranteed their safety. But now they have to defend them with armed forces and this causes the social structures to close in themselves. They try to make themselves independent and absolute which in turn makes them unsafe per definition, because in so doing animosity and hostility are invited and the consistently coherent *sono* sphere driven out.

So the constructive learning in this third phase of human history is related to the ‘redignification’ of the individual as a whole and thus valuable member of open and loving communities by means of sincere communication. Added to the other two stable layers of consciousness this ‘communicative self directing’ makes mankind ready to create a better world. Human consciousness as a whole - according to Cornelis – is now well equipped and strong enough to overcome the catastrophic learning of this phase i.e. arrogance, nihilism and warfare by artificially closed systems and pseudo safe social structures.

4) Heart connection as ground for a holistic way of knowing in theology and preaching

I would like to draw some conclusions from what preceded for a new way of knowing in theology and preaching. What seem to me to be the most important lesson coming from contemporary thought and consciousness is that it is time to re-evaluate, re-interpret the concept of ‘chaos’. In the nuclear and cosmic realities that are opening themselves nowadays to the human mind the traditional Newtonian and modern variants of this logic no longer apply. But that doesn’t mean total, destructive chaos. What seems to be chaos to the traditional human mind – that is uncontrollable rationally in traditional logical systems - appears to be a wonderful mysterious reality of unexpected connections based on vibrations of light and energy. A unique and trustworthy *sono* sphere that helps us feel at home in an infinite universe with unimaginable numbers of particles and galaxies. And relating this infinite universe to the God beyond gods (with Paul Tillich) helps us to experience basic trust theologically and speak a new spiritual language based on this holistic although always partial way of knowing. The interpretation of the concept ‘chaos’ as a function of traditional cognitive imperialism is negative and destructive, the interpretation of the same concept as a function of a new, more holistic way of knowing is expecting and hopeful. Like the Hebrew term *tohuwawohu* (wild and empty) at the beginning of the Genesis story of Creation it announces new reality.

Now in this new *sono* sphere things begin to change rapidly. The act of knowing no longer aims at exclusive and excluding knowledge but at inclusive connecting knowledge. Through phenomenological reduction ever deeper layers of reality and consciousness are discovered and experienced and what is more the energetic interrelationships between all these layers revived. Psychoanalysis connects the seven chakra’s – or levels of consciousness - as a whole structure of flowing energy through

each person from heaven to earth and back. Body and soul, matter and spirit are no longer separated but form a creative unity with the loving heart chakra as its center and authentic community with others as its playground. Vision, hearing and all the other senses with their related intelligences form together the basis of a new way of knowing. Arts (visual and musical) and sciences (physics and humanities) cooperate in exploring reality on a much larger scale than ever before. Religions no longer fight each other to secure their own rights in heaven, but enrich each other with their wisdom and cooperate to create a better world. Basic trust inspires every person to take his or her own rightful place in the universe in a responsible way and in doing so to create room for others. Truth is no longer something that can be owned by a limited number of smart people, but a huge realm that can never be completely grasped nor controlled by the human mind. And man is nevertheless invited to participate in the realm of truth, humbly and partially, serving the suffering other. For me all this comes quite near the Hebrew conception of knowing in the verb *jada*, cognition in which spiritual, rational, communal and sexual ways of knowing form a beautiful and joyful unity. New positive meaning is being created so spread the news.

When all this is manifested on a world wide scale – for Sloterdijk this a *conditio sine qua non* for mankind to survive, for Cornelis it is ‘just’ the next step in human history – this will also affect Christian faith deeply. The role and status of Jesus will change dramatically. He will remain Savior, but in a completely different reality, greater and more modest at the same time. Greater because in the new *sono* sphere of the galaxies / infinity his role as redeemer will encompass all galaxies and so his cosmic status will expand enormously, more than we ever realized before. And he will also become more modest because of his greatness.

In the worldwide human mind of today – beyond the traditional western ways of knowing – the pre modern satisfaction theology of St. Anselm of Canterbury no longer holds with the compelling force it once had¹¹. First of all Anselm ‘proved’ the existence of God by describing Him as ‘something greater than which nothing can be thought’. Anselm’s ontological ‘proof’ of the existence of God lost its compelling rational force in our days, because God is related - not to say - reduced to the human thinking of the pre modern period and that is also the frame of mind in which the satisfaction theology was conceived. God as perfect being was hurt by evil and guilt exercised by man and He could only be satisfied by the atonement operated by an equal perfect being as Himself. So he sent his son. And therefor Jesus as the Christ - without sin and evil – sacrificed himself on the cross and so doing paid for the human sin and evil. God Almighty satisfied and man could only be atoned, reconciled with Him by believing in Christ as the only way to salvation. Perfect balance in a closed system where everything or at least what is needed most can be followed, ‘known’ by the human mind. This is now experienced as the kind of reductionist, closing knowledge in the negative sense that no longer holds in the actual *sono* sphere of today’s multi universe, where the mysteries of the unknown also play a more important role than we ever realized. And that is why I think that Jesus as Savior can no longer be exclusively connected to human ways of knowing that has developed on planet earth and that he may have completely different roles and attributes elsewhere of which we humans are totally unaware. So in an expanded universe the role of Savior has expanded likewise. ‘Greater than anything that still can be thought’ would be my proposal.

However, something of Anselm’s faithful intellect has survived in our mind as some sort of first naivety. Only the analysis that followed has changed the status of intellectual proof dramatically and prepared us for – what Ricoeur calls - the second naivety. What seems to be the most basic reality in the atoms and the galaxies, that determines the new *sono* sphere we are beginning to become aware of now, hints at two colliding mysterious forces: decay and separation on the one hand and connection through harmonic vibrations on the other. Or in more anthropological terms: violent hate separation versus loving heart connection. Our hope lies in the heart connection to experience and build new reality. And therefor competition between the Saviors of the religions begins to become inconceivable. Instead of Jesus as the only Savior or Messiah I imagine him in a more modest way: cooper-

¹¹ St Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion*, here used in the translation by Dr. Carlos Steel, Bussum, 1981

ating, communicating with other Saviors for the human wellbeing in a new *sono* sphere - worldwide and connected to particles and infinity. I see him search with the Hindus for balance, with the Buddhists for decrease of desire and suffering and for an increase of compassion for the suffering other, with prophet Mohammed for peace between the rivaling desert tribes and finally longing with the Jews for the coming of the *Meshiach* who will bring the love of an ultimately undefined God to planet earth. In terms of cognitive imperialism this may make Jesus smaller and that may even look like blasphemy. But it is not: in terms of salvation it makes Jesus, our Christian Messiah and symbol of self sacrificial love stronger than death, a modest and loving connector of hearts only to feed the basic trust of Christian and other faiths to grow - in a new reality - towards Gods Kingdom of peace and righteousness. Mysteriously wonderful, salvation in infinite eternity, pure joy ...