

3. Theology and Economics in Conversation

Abstract

This chapter aims to develop a methodology that allows an interaction between theology and economics. A short review shows that there has hardly been any equal conversation between theology and economics in recent times. Therefore the chapter explores van Huyssteen's postfoundational approach as a methodology for enabling a conversation between theology and economics. The key to a postfoundational interdisciplinary interaction is expressed in the notion of transversal reasoning (TR). TR has facilitated a conversation between theology and science, especially theology and natural sciences. Nevertheless, the point made here is that this approach is appropriate for any interdisciplinary conversation as long as the three guidelines for TR are mutually honoured. Radical uncertainty in climate change is then defined in depth, using work of Hannah Arendt. Drawing on insights obtained from the work of Jonathan Sacks, the author proposes that interaction with economics can lead to a fruitful interpretation of radical uncertainty. The chapter ends by arguing for TR between Jonathan Sacks and the economists Bart Nooteboom, Samuel Bowles, Dan Ariely and John Kay & Mervyn King.

Keywords: Wentzel van Huyssteen, postfoundational approach, transversal reasoning, Hannah Arendt, Jonathan Sacks

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explore an interaction between theology and economics when it comes to climate change. I proceed in five steps. First, I introduce interactions between theology and economics by providing a short review. This review will show that there has been hardly any interaction between theology and economics in contemporary times, either in general

terms or specifically on climate change. Then I discuss Van Huyssteen's postfoundational approach, based on the science and religion debate, to explore whether, how and in what sense it is possible to construct a conversation between theology and economics. Thereafter, third, I define radical uncertainty in climate change as a shared problem in theology and economics. The fourth step provides a reflection on how some theologians have started to work with the notion of hope and its relation to climate change. Fifth, I offer my contribution to bridging the gap between contemplative and action-oriented approaches to climate change by focusing this study on the understanding of hope in the work of the British intellectual Jonathan Sacks. His work will be used to study an interpretation of radical uncertainty in the context of climate change in interaction with economics. These five steps allow me to formulate the research question and sub-questions. A final summary concludes this chapter.

3.2 Theology and economics

Climate change is a public issue studied by theology as well economics. Nevertheless, there has been hardly any interaction between theology and economics on this issue. Within the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) "the significance of economics in tackling climate change is widely recognized" (IPCC, 2014, p. 213). However, a contribution from theology is nowhere to be found in this document. Nor does theology participate in the Integrated Assessment Model. This model, using input from several academic disciplines, seeks to link, within a single and consistent framework, the main components of society and economy with the biosphere and the atmosphere (section 2.4). Within theology, a special 2010 issue of the *International Journal of Public Theology* was devoted to climate change and the common good. The contributions came from different theological and ecclesial traditions and address several levels of climate change. However, the contributions hardly interacted with a broader audience. (Pearson, 2010, p. 270)

What is more, generally speaking, there has been almost no interaction between theology and economics.¹ In the view of Kim, "[although] theology

¹ It is worthwhile to mention here a new and promising development in the interaction between economics and theology, namely the recently founded Erasmus Economics and Theology Institute (2019) at the Erasmus University Rotterdam (The Netherlands). What is more, in 2020 the institute launched 'The Journal of Economics, Theology and Religion'. For more information see: <https://www.eur.nl/en/eeti/>

is prepared to [be] (or already has been) engaged with politics, economics, sociology and other subjects, the interest tends to be one-way" (Kim, 2011, p. 231). One can illustrate this with Tanner's *Economy of Grace* (2005). Tanner uses a method of comparative economy to develop a conversation between theology and economics. In short, a method of comparative economy means that the relation between theology and economics is based on the discourse on economy, e.g. principles for the production and circulation of goods. She defines theology and economics normatively. Tanner's method of comparative economy allows her to create "... the maximum possible contrast between the economic principles the world follows and those involved in the Christian story of creation, fall, and redemption" (Tanner, 2005, p. xi). She states "[w]ouldn't it indeed be wonderful if Christianity had its own vision of economic life, one opposed to the inhumanities of the present system and offering direction in trying times, a practical path to a better world?" (Tanner, 2005, p. x). Tanner provides a Christian vision of economic life, expressed in a theological economy based on principles of unconditional giving and noncompetition. I appreciate Tanner's point of departure, namely human experience, exemplified by workers in Singapore, in the context of global capitalism and the economic system in the United States. But her method of comparative economy creates a straw-man argument in the understanding of economics and, I would also argue, theology. As a consequence, her method doesn't allow for a learning exchange and a real conversation between the two disciplines, although her stated aim is to encourage such interaction.

This contribution of Tanner might be described as one of the theological contributions to economics, that "... may have provided valuable insights for fellow theologians, yet they have not always been well received by economists" (Wijngaards, 2012, p. 31). On a more profound level, Brennan and Waterman argue that theologians and economists often talk past one another, partly because their attitudes towards epistemic and methodological issues are so different (2008, p. 89).

The insight that there has been hardly any interaction between theology and economics in recent times raises the question whether it is possible to develop a framework that allows equal interaction.²

2 Of course, in the compendium of the social doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, for example, there is a whole chapter on economic life (Chapter 7): http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html However, in this study the focus is not on an interaction between church doctrine and economic life, but on (developing) a conversation between the academic disciplines of theology and economics. See section 1.4 and 2.7.

3.3 Van Huyssteen's postfoundational approach

This section discusses van Huyssteen's postfoundational approach in order to explore whether, how and in what sense it is possible to construct a conversation between theology and economics. This interest will shape my reading of van Huyssteen. As a consequence, I will not focus e.g. on the evolutionary origins of van Huyssteen's approach.³ As argued above, there has been virtually no interaction between theology and economics in recent times. However, since the nineteenth century, there has been a long debate on the relation between theology and natural sciences, often described as the religion and science debate. Core issues associated with this debate go back much further. Scholars have claimed that the second part of the twentieth century saw the emergence of a new interdisciplinary field of science and religion. (Reeves, 2019, p. 8) One of the leading scholars in this field is J. Wentzel Van Huyssteen. (Reeves, 2019, p. 22; Lovin & Mauldin, 2017, p. xiv) Van Huyssteen has extensively published on this relation between religion and science. He became the first James I. McCord Professor of Theology and Science at Princeton Theological Seminary (1992-2014).

For van Huyssteen, a widely accepted inheritance of modernity is that science is often considered a superior kind of knowledge. Religion then is seen as a privatized form of subjective, if not irrational experience. Van Huyssteen argues that the idea that science and religion have always been in conflict is increasingly seen as an invention of the late nineteenth century. (van Huyssteen, 1999, p. 17-18) He states that the question of how theology and science relate to each other is neither a theological nor a natural scientific question. It is rather an epistemological question, a question about how two different claims of knowledge are related. Over the years, Van Huyssteen has developed what he calls a postfoundational approach, one that views theology and science as different but equal faces of human rationality. In the following I give an overview of his line of thought. While this approach was already present in his inaugural lecture at the Princeton Theological Seminary, *Theology and Science: The Quest for a New Apologetics* (1993), his definitive work on this topic is *The Shaping of Rationality: Toward Interdisciplinarity in Theology and Science* (1999). Van Huyssteen presents his postfoundational approach as a middle path between what he calls (1) a foundational and (2) a nonfoundational form of rationality.

3 For detailed secondary literature on van Huyssteen's postfoundational approach see Reeves (2019).

(1) A foundational approach to rationality states that there is only one universal form of knowledge, i.e. objective knowledge. This view of rationality can be found both in theology and in science. It holds that in the process of justifying knowledge there is a claim resting on a foundation that is beyond doubt, self-evident and incorrigible. Foundational approaches are associated with notions of positivism, objectivism, true scientific knowledge, universal rationality and absolute principles. (van Huyssteen, 1993, p. 434) In natural sciences, a foundational approach gave rise to the thesis that knowledge rests on objective chains of justification. A foundational approach in theology is related to notions like divine revelation and biblical literalism. A foundational approach makes an interdisciplinary interaction between theology and science impossible, because its justification allows for no communication with other disciplines. The mistake of foundational approaches is, for van Huyssteen, that they neglect that "... all our inquiry and reflection, whether scientific or theological, is indeed highly contextual and already presupposes a particular theoretical, doctrinal, or personal stance and commitment" (van Huyssteen, 2014, p. 210). Van Huyssteen argues that "... indubitable beliefs that can justify all other knowledge claims do not exist" (Reeves, 2019, p. 79). Van Huyssteen associates a foundational approach closely with modernism.

(2) For van Huyssteen, a foundational approach to rationality is often rejected in favour of a nonfoundational approach, which deconstructs the claim of an objective rationality. Such an approach takes seriously the contextuality of rationality. It argues that "... every historical context, and every cultural or social group, has its own distinct rationality" (van Huyssteen, 1999, p. 63). This nonfoundational approach seems to avoid the dangers of foundational approaches. However, van Huyssteen argues that a view of many rationalities often leads to an extreme relativism of rationality. The contextualism of rationality offers a picture of human knowledge in which there is no authority in reason, as if science is just another opinion. This makes it virtually impossible to speak with authority about theology and science, and therefore does not allow interdisciplinary interaction. Van Huyssteen closely associates a nonfoundational approach with postmodernity.

Over against the objectivism of foundationalism and the extreme relativism of some nonfoundational approaches, van Huyssteen has developed an epistemological middle path. He calls this middle path a postfoundational approach to rationality. Van Huyssteen has developed four key characteristics of this approach (van Huyssteen, 1999, p. 8; 2006, p. 18):

- (1) *Embeddedness of rationality.* A postfoundational approach to rationality recognizes the contextuality and the embeddedness of all human

reflection in human culture, and therefore in specific scientific and confessional traditions.

- (2) *Interpreting reality by all forms of inquiry.* A postfoundational approach points to the interpretation of one shared reality as common ground of rationality in theology and science. All theology and science is an interpretation of reality. Above we have seen that in Van Huyssteen's view an inheritance of modernity is that science is often viewed as rational and religion as subjective, if not irrational. However, in a postfoundational approach the difference is based on the epistemological focus and the experiential scope that inform the reflection (van Huyssteen, 1999, p. 13). As a consequence, the postfoundational notion of rationality considers human rationality to be multidimensional.
- (3) *Critical reflection.* As a theologian or scientist, one comes to interdisciplinary interactions with questions, assumptions and arguments shaped by a certain research tradition or a confessional tradition. Therefore, one can pose different questions, perceive various facts differently, and favour different explanations. For van Huyssteen, a critical reflection on one's own embeddedness is a *precondition* for going beyond one's own borders and the borders of one's epistemic community and participating in interdisciplinary interaction.
- (4) *Problem-solving.* Van Huyssteen defines problem-solving as "... the most central and defining activity of all research traditions" (van Huyssteen, 2014, p. 221). Different research traditions working together on a shared problem might provide a fuller understanding of the problem and a better practical response.

With regard to these characteristics, at least one criticism can be made. For van Huyssteen, a critical reflection on one's own embeddedness, the third characteristic above, is a precondition for participating in interdisciplinary interaction. In my view, for theologians and scientists to engage in TR, having postfoundational characteristics is not a precondition per se. Developing postfoundational characteristics can also flow from participating in transversal reasoning. The reason for this is that collaborative praxis can result in greater awareness of the assumptions one lives by. In other words, postfoundational characteristics need not be a precondition, but can also be developed in practicing transversal reasoning.

To sum up, a postfoundational approach to rationality views rationality not as beyond doubt, but as embedded and self-critical, in dialogue seeking pragmatic and defensible solutions in and for the benefit of a common reality.

3.4 Transversal reasoning

The key to postfoundational interdisciplinary interaction is expressed in the notion of transversal reasoning (van Huyssteen, 2006, p. 19; 2014, p. 214). This notion is derived from the philosopher Calvin Schrag. Transversal reasoning facilitates a performative, dynamic and multi-levelled interaction between theology and science. In transversal reasoning, different disciplines "... can learn from one another and actually benefit by taking over insights presented in interdisciplinary dialogue" (van Huyssteen, 2006, p. 20). At the same time, in transversal reasoning there is not a fusion of different reasoning strategies, but a conversation between them. It is a conversation of approaches in order to solve a shared problem. In this conversation, the integrity of each of the different reasoning strategies is respected by the participants (van Huyssteen, 2014, p. 218). One can wonder how this respect for integrity relates to solving a shared problem. In my view, it is not always easy for different reasoning strategies to understand one another. It may take time to become aware of one's own assumptions and to understand the reasoning strategy of the other. Only respect for the integrity of each reasoning strategy allows participants to open up to one another and to develop a fuller understanding of the shared problem. This fits with the insight of van Huyssteen that transversal reasoning is a skill that has to be learned. At the same time, the interaction with other reasoning strategies might create the opportunity to enrich one's own discipline. Lovin and Mauldin argue that van Huyssteen's approach takes the usual interdisciplinary dialogue a step further. The reason for this is that "[a]s researchers assimilate the results of other methods of inquiry, revise their own methods and formulate new questions in the light of what they have learned, the lines drawn when disciplines set their own boundaries begin to blur" (Lovin & Mauldin, 2017, p. xxiii).

Van Huyssteen's postfoundational approach is one of the leading approaches relating theology and (natural) science. The question has to be answered whether this approach can also be used to develop a conversation between theology and economics. According to van Huyssteen, a postfoundational notion of rationality is not limited to the debate of science and religion. The reason for this is that van Huyssteen's approach is not just a description of the knowledge in science and religion, but a description of human rationality, understood as being constantly under construction in its engagement with reality. Van Huyssteen's approach aims to promote cross-disciplinary conversation (Reeves, 2019, p. 84). Van Huyssteen considers his postfoundational

approach appropriate for any interdisciplinary interaction as long as the guidelines for a postfoundational approach are mutually honoured (van Huyssteen, 1993, p. 439; 2014, p. 2019). The question is then what are the guidelines that need to be honoured for possible successful transversal reasoning between theology and science, in this case between theology and economics? The guidelines can be traced in the following quotation:

... the rather a-contextual terms “theology and science” should be replaced by focussing our attention on specific theologians, engaging in specific kinds of theologies, who are attempting to enter the interdisciplinary dialogue with very specific scientists, working within specific sciences on clearly defined, shared problems. (van Huyssteen, 2014, p. 227)

Based on this quotation, I identify three guidelines for successfully employing transversal reasoning:

- (1) there is a focus on specific theologians and scientists instead of the rather a-contextual terms ‘theology and science’.
- (2) the work of these theologians and scientists should be able to be constructed in a postfoundational manner.
- (3) the interaction has to be on a clearly defined and shared problem.

These three guidelines need to be honoured to allow for a successful interdisciplinary interaction. Successful means here that the shared problem is more adequately addressed. After sharing the resources of interdisciplinarity, a postfoundational approach points back to the natural boundaries of one’s own discipline (van Huyssteen, 2014, p. 220). This creates the opportunity to impact one’s own discipline with the gained result of the interdisciplinary interaction.

In the sections above, I have discussed van Huyssteen’s postfoundational approach. Like Reeves, I consider Van Huyssteen’s description of human rationality to be generally convincing (2019, p. 88). Doubts can be raised as to whether van Huyssteen has decisively answered Enlightenment challenges to religious belief (Reeves, 2019, p. 88; Reeves, 2013, 150; Schoen, 2000, pp. 122/123). Dealing with these doubts is beyond the scope of this research. The reason for this is that van Huyssteen’s postfoundational approach fits for its part in this study, namely to serve as a framework that allows for exploring a conversation between theology and economics in order to solve shared problems.

The next step in this study is to honour the guidelines for a postfoundational approach. In the remainder of this chapter I start with the last

guideline, identifying a clearly defined and shared problem between theology and economics. Thereafter a start is made with discussing the other two guidelines, (1) a focus on specific theologians and economists, and (2) engaging in postfoundational approaches to theology and economics.

3.5 A shared problem: radical uncertainty in the context of climate change

A postfoundational interaction requires a clearly defined and shared problem between specific theologians and economists. In chapter 2 we have seen that the conventional assumptions underlying the economic model of social cost-benefit analysis (SCBA) run into serious limitations when it comes to uncertainty in the context of climate change. However, uncertainty is still too broad to function as a shared problem. In section 2.6 a distinction was made between two main sources of uncertainty, namely (1) scientific uncertainty, an incomplete understanding of the climate system and related parameters, and (2) socio-economic uncertainty, an incomplete understanding of the impacts of climate change on people and societies and related parameters. It is possible to reduce uncertainty. However, in chapter 2 I have argued that there will always remain a residual of uncertainty due to the human condition. I have called this residual of uncertainty ‘radical uncertainty’. ‘Radical’ is derived from ‘radix’, which is a Latin word for ‘root’. I define radical uncertainty as rooted or inherent in what Hannah Arendt has called ‘the basic human condition of existence’. In contrast to Heidegger’s elevation of mortality as the defining characteristic of human existence, Arendt accentuates natality. For Arendt, we are not solely human because of physical birth and mortality. People become fully human on the basis of the natality of their second, ‘political’ birth. In the view of Arendt, natality is based on the human capacity for speech and freedom of action (Hayden, 2014, p. 14). Taking seriously the basic human condition as described by Arendt means that human knowledge is limited and that humans have the freedom for speech and action, so that there is always the possibility that people say and do new, unexpected and unprecedented things. As a consequence, the future cannot be predicted in advance. Radical uncertainty permeates the two other sources of uncertainty: scientific uncertainty and socio-economic uncertainty. In this study I consider radical uncertainty in climate change a shared problem as required by van Huyssteen’s transversal reasoning.

3.6 Hope in climate change

Radical uncertainty in the context of climate change can easily be associated with tragedy. The French philosopher Pascal Bruckner argues that fear and a sense of apocalypse are widespread with regard to environmental issues, including climate change (Bruckner 2013, p. 2). Clive Hamilton, an Australian public intellectual, has even written a Requiem for a Species—that species being humankind. It is as if hope has been abandoned. For Hamilton “despair is a natural human response to the new reality we face and to resist it is to deny the truth” (Hamilton, 2015, p. 226). But he further argues that it is unhealthy and unhelpful to stop here. “Emerging from despair means accepting the situation and resuming our equanimity; but if we go no further we risk becoming mired in passivity and fatalism” (Hamilton, 2015, p. 226). Hamilton takes advice from Pablo Casals: “The situation is hopeless; we must now take the next step” (Hamilton, 2015, p. 222). He is willing to concede that “finding meaning in adverse circumstances is one of the most remarkable human qualities” (Hamilton, 2015, p. 222). Hamilton acknowledges the role of religion and wonders whether abandoning the lesser gods like money, growth and optimism will lead people to turn to the sacred for protection (Hamilton, 2015, p. 221). Let’s turn to religion and from there to theology.

In the view of Jonathan Sacks there are at least two possibilities for interpreting this type of uncertainty, namely tragedy and hope. Sacks was a leading British public intellectual and Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth (1991-2013). According to Sacks, ancient Greece offered the West the concept of tragedy. Tragedy is a view of the future in which fate controls human beings. As indicated above, it is not difficult to see how this tragic sense of fate can readily flow from the kind of radical uncertainty that climate change projects. Sacks makes the case for a more hopeful interpretation of radical uncertainty. It is one which stands in a long tradition that goes back to the Hebrew Bible and gave Western civilization, via Christianity, a concept of hope in which the state of the world is not inevitable (Sacks, 2009b, p. 249).

In section 1.1 we have already seen that Eagleton considers hope as a curiously neglected notion in an age which confronts us with the felt loss of a future. Jürgen Moltmann has long argued that hope is a neglected aspect within theology too, in the sense that there are theological traditions on love and faith, but there is no tradition ‘... shot through by hope’ (Moltmann, 2015, p. 177). Nevertheless, it is true that in recent years some theologians

have started to reflect on hope and its relation to climate change. Albert Nolan, South African Dominican priest and well known for his work against the apartheid system, argues for developing a perspective of hope in this context that is not based on signs, but on trust in God (2010, p. 5). Borgman has developed a Catholic perspective through his interaction with the papal encyclical *Laudato Si'*. He argues for a politics of contemplation in order to find hope where only hopelessness seems to remain (Borgman, 2017, p. 102). Borgman states that looking with eyes of love, the world becomes visible as the place of promise that it essentially is (2017, p. 76). The essence of this perspective is to see where the light of love presents itself, to let it in, and to put oneself in the service of this light (Borgman, 2017, p. 35). With his politics of contemplation, Borgman argues against an overly activist approach in Dutch policies. In the wake of the Fifth Assessment Report of the IPCC, suggesting that exceeding the critical threshold of two degrees Celsius before the end of the century may be unavoidable, Stefan Skrimshire emphasizes that an attitude of hope “that denies despair in the face of such epic failures, and encourages action in the face of the death that such failures will bring, may be an extremely welcome one in the light of such a report” (Skrimshire, 2014, p. 5).

This study aims to contribute to an understanding of hope that allows for a bridging of the gap between contemplative and action-oriented approaches. For this purpose I limit myself to Jonathan Sacks’ understanding of hope as a way to interpret radical uncertainty in the context of climate change. Sacks’ work is clearly embedded in Orthodox Judaism. One can argue that he did not actually work within the research tradition of theology because, generally speaking, Orthodox Judaism maintains that it doesn’t have a theology in the sense of a separate academic or intellectual discipline. The reason for this is that it considers theology as defining God in words. Orthodox Judaism regards God as essentially unknowable. In line with this, Sacks uses the term ‘philosophy of the human condition under the sovereignty of God’ instead of ‘theology’ to define his reasoning strategy, at least as related to the book of Genesis. Arguably this is also the case for Exodus, which plays a key role in the present study, because both books of the Torah, Genesis and Exodus, are part of the same literary unit. In this unit theology is almost always implicit rather than explicit. (Sacks, 2009a, p. 6) As a consequence, Sacks calls his own approach ‘public philosophy’ and not ‘theology’ (Tirosh-Samuelson & Hughes, 2013, p. 106). Nevertheless, most theologians are also aware that words will always fall short of describing God (Ten Kate & Poorthuis, 2017, p. 552). Therefore, I consider Sacks as a representative of the research tradition of theology.

It is not uncommon within theology to refer to Jewish public thinkers. In 2013 The International Journal of Public Theology devoted a special issue to Jewish Public Theology. This issue paid particular attention to Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, one of the leading Jewish thinkers of the twentieth century. What is more, Tomáš Halík, a leading Christian theologian and professor of sociology of Charles University (Prague), considers Sacks' understanding of hope very promising for the understanding of hope within Christian theology (Halík, 2019, p. 11). This is in line with the statement of the Dutch Roman Catholic bishops that an interaction on hope with Judaism can be fruitful for the church:

Catholics have come increasingly to realize that we share a common messianic mission to make the earth inhabitable.... Slavery and death [do not] have the last word but liberation and life in God's presence is our common conviction.... Jews and Christians live from one and the same hope. With this hope as a solid basis, modern man does not necessarily have to experience the future as an ominous void. (The Roman Catholic Bishops of the Netherlands, 1999)

In this study I develop an understanding of hope based on the work of Jonathan Sacks.⁴

Before we can situate Sacks' understanding of hope in the context of climate change, it needs extensive decoding. The reason for this is that hope is often used glibly in everyday language. Take for example the following remark: I hope that tomorrow the sun will shine. Sacks' understanding of hope is completely different. When Sacks uses the concept of hope, he is giving a commentary on the Torah, especially the Exodus, which in turn gives a commentary on present reality. In the Exodus, the concept of hope is not just an expectation, wish or emotion. Hope orientates us to the possibility

4 Although this research touches upon the relation between Judaism, in particular Jonathan Sacks, and Christianity, an explicit elaboration on this relation is beyond the scope of this research. Nevertheless, there are already some examples of an interaction between Jonathan Sacks and Christianity. In the Vatican, in 2014, Jonathan Sacks gave an address at the colloquium on the complementarity of man and woman. In 2008 Sacks spoke at the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Community. An example of a Christian theologian reflecting on some lines of thought of Sacks is Thabo Makgoba, Archbishop of Cape Town and Metropolitan of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, see Makgoba (2009). What is more, Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury and *primus inter pares* of the worldwide Anglican Communion, states that Sacks had a powerful influence on Anglican social thought over the last decades. (Sacks, 2021, p. vii)

of gradually starting something new and liberating in the midst of radical uncertainty. Sacks' reading of hope, derived as it is from the experience of the Exodus, offers several key ingredients to address radical uncertainty, namely *emunah* (a special kind of trust), *chessed* (a special kind of love) and a change of identity. The next chapter extensively develops an overview of Sacks' understanding of hope in relation to his general approach of *Torah vehokmah*, which means the relation between Torah and secular wisdom (including natural and social sciences).

In the pilot study of transversal reasoning comprising chapters 5 through 8, I will construct a conversation on radical uncertainty and hope between Sacks and five economists, namely Bart Nooteboom, Samuel Bowles, Dan Ariely, and John Kay & Mervin King, a kind of intellectual pop-up salon. The reason for choosing these economists is twofold. The first reason is that their scientific approach can be constructed as what I call a postfoundational approach to economics. The second reason is that concepts in their work seem good candidates for interacting with Sacks' understanding of hope in TR.

3.7 Central question and structure of the research

Now that the framework required for an interaction between theology and economics has been described, the central question for the interaction can be formulated:

What is the relevance of a conversation between the theologian Jonathan Sacks and the economists Bart Nooteboom, Samuel Bowles, Dan Ariely and John Kay & Mervin King for a social response to radical uncertainty in the context of climate change?

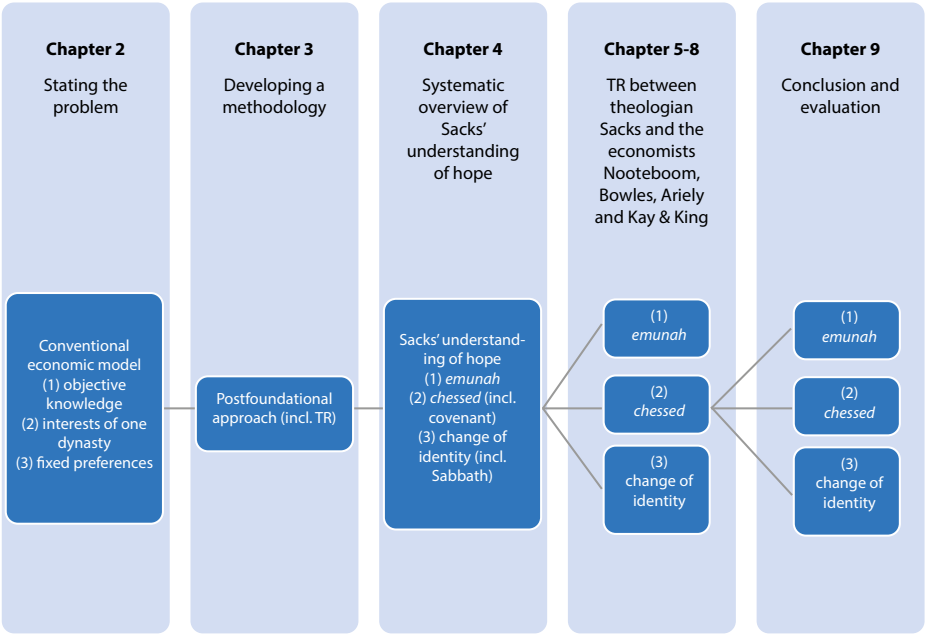
The term conversation is here defined as transversal reasoning (TR). A social response refers, in line with SCBA, to collective decision-making. A social response is distinguished from the private decision-making of consumers and producers. Radical uncertainty is defined as uncertainty inherent in the human condition. In the remainder of this study, the terms 'uncertainty' and 'response' are used as both abbreviations and synonyms for radical uncertainty and social response, respectively. To be able to answer the research question in chapter 9, I have broken it down into three sub-questions:

1. Whether, how and in what sense is it possible to construct a conversation between theology and economics?

- 2. What is the meaning of Jonathan Sacks’ understanding of hope?
- 3. How can a conversation between Jonathan Sacks and the economists Bart Nooteboom, Samuel Bowles, Dan Ariely and John Kay & Mervin King be constructed in such a way that it leads to the creation of a fuller understanding of a social response to radical uncertainty in the context of climate change?

The first sub-question is answered in this third chapter. The second one is answered in chapter 4 and the last one in chapters 5 through 8. The figure below gives a thematic overview of the structure of this study, beyond the introduction.

Figure 3.1 Overview of the thematic structure of the research



3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I have developed van Huyssteen’s postfoundational approach, originally created to facilitate the interaction between theology and natural sciences, into a methodology that could possibly provide a framework for a conversation between theology and economics—a conversation scarcely

attempted in recent times. According to van Huyssteen, a postfoundational approach is appropriate for any interdisciplinary interaction as long as it mutually honours the three guidelines of a postfoundational approach. These guidelines are: (1) a focus on specific theologians and scientists (instead of the rather a-contextual terms ‘theology and science’), (2) whose work can be constructed as specific kinds of theologies and sciences with postfoundational characteristics, and (3) who work together on a clearly defined and shared problem. In the chapter I argued that one can consider radical uncertainty, the uncertainty inherent in the human condition, in the context of climate change a clearly defined and shared problem (satisfying the third guideline of TR). In the chapter it is argued that radical uncertainty can easily call up a tragic sense of fate. However, climate change does not carry with it its own interpretation. In recent years, some theologians have started to work with the notion of hope and its relation to climate change. In the chapter Jonathan Sacks’ understanding of concept of hope is highlighted as a possibly promising theological contribution to this shared problem of radical uncertainty in climate change. By selecting Sacks and focusing on his understanding of hope, the chapter has also taken a first step in honouring the first and second guidelines of TR and pointed ahead to chapters 5 through 8, where five economists will interact with Sacks in TR. Subsequently, the central research question was formulated and divided into three sub-questions.

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