# Key Theory and Philosophy of Mind

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*This article initially reflects on the beginnings of the close association between the author and Danie Strauss, whose work is the theme of this festschrift. The impact of the mentioned association, together with later philosophical influences, contributed to the author's work on "discourse archaeology". The article then takes up a particular tool of this archaeology, key theory, and explains its relevance for philosophy of mind.*

## 1.    Introductory remarks:  reflections on teachers and travels

### 1.1  Starting out:  youthful ambitions

On this special occasion, I would like to say something about a topic in which Danie Strauss has always expressed a keen interest. It is a project of mine that he has supported and encouraged over many years. What I am referring to, is the development of (what I call) an Archaeological Discourse Theory or just Discourse Archaeology (henceforth DA). Since I worked on my doctoral dissertation (*Wet en Interpretasie*,1983, supervised by Danie Strauss) I have been interested in the diverse origins (hence "archaeology") of what we think and say. In my dissertation I had already mapped the outlines of a model for a "grammar" of philosophical discourse on the origins, goals, foundations, unities, totalities, centers, etc. of reality. Thus the above terms "origins" and "archaeology" must be understood in this wider context, of which the precise concept of "origin" itself is only a metonymic example.

At that time I began to realize that the focus of Herman Dooyeweerd – a philosopher to whom I owe much, and on whose works Strauss has always been an authority – on the concepts of origin and of totality/unity (in his analysis of philosophical "ground-ideas") was too limited. I was also inspired to some extent by the "linguistic turn" of philosophy in the latter half of the 20th century, and by Chomsky's ideal of grammar as a highly explicit ("generative") analysis of syntactic structures. Thus I was looking for a way to analyse, in formal symbols, the kind of language/discourse (rather than "ideas" as such) which speaks of ultimate origins in the widest

possible sense. Also, contra Dooyeweerd, I was not so much interested in analyzing the structure of ground-ideas from the point of view of defending a certain (Christian reformational) worldview. I felt the need to communicate beyond such boundaries – just as I wanted to be able to freely borrow from "humanistic" sources (like Chomsky or Habermas, for instance) if they could be of use to the research I had in mind.

As for Danie Strauss – he had his own ambitions, and a primary one became clear at the time he wrote his master's thesis. In this impressive work (*Wysbegeerte en Vakwetenskap*, 1969) one can discern an ideal which was also present in Dooyeweerd: to explore the impact of one's philosophical perspectives across a wide range of disciplinary discourses, and then demonstrate the strength of these insights in a series of apparently victorious confrontations with experts feeling themselves secure within their highly specialized knowledge systems. No doubt influenced by these achievements, the path I took also led me to explorations in different fields of knowledge, although my path had by then begun to turn away from the precise direction taken by my teachers. But traveling some way along their paths was a wonderful experience – "quite a ride" as the saying goes. Even today, I find often find myself "checking" a given DA analysis, to see if it would stand up to the stringent criteria and possible objections of Dooyeweerd and Strauss.

## 1.2 The basic archaeological question: where to dig?

Let me just briefly sketch how the DA project has unfolded over many years. At the time of my dissertation, I had begun to realize that a discourse archaeology needed to contain more than a "grammar" of "origins"; so I had to turn to things like semiotic theory (images and metaphors *of origins* and image/metaphor *as origin* – the latter exemplified in the work of George Lakoff for example) and ideology theory (the paradigms within which "origin-al" discourse is conceptualized). In terms of the original macro discourses of whole cultures, I had to distinguish between beliefs in nature, knowledge, power, personhood, and other themes of similar import. (Here my findings converged partially with the different main themes that Foucault analyzed in the course of his investigations.)

The theory of communication also had to be attended to, as a determining context (itself a kind of origin) in which beliefs about origins are formulated and changed or modified. Of course, one also had to look at the field of ethics and beliefs. Here I found it necessary to distinguish several "postures" of human behavior as a kind of unity or totality called forth by

the primordial (explicit or implicit) question: what am I to do? It seemed that one had to reckon here with contextual postures like doing work or just contemplating life, and, on a different level, with "value" postures like hope, joy, peace, care (for people and things), humility, and so on. There is also a "dark side" to these postures: the universal human experience of meaninglessness, suffering and guilt. The interrelations between these postures; the privileging of some at the expense of others; their realization in concrete lifeplans and lifestyles and in the histories of communities; the relation between the "dark" and the "light" sides of the postural spectrum – these are some of the matters that this kind of ethics would address. (Here philosophies like for example existentialism and Buddhism, or a theology such as that of A.A. van Ruler for example, yield some valuable truth-moments – which, however, call for some serious re-interpretation.)

## 1.3  Returning to one's origins

The above mentioned fields of investigation and some of the people who work in them thus became important resources in trying to get the DA project off the ground. (There are also some other resources, but I will leave them aside in the present context.) In fact, I had to view an eventual DA theory as being comprised of a number of subtheories focusing on these and a few other areas. But as the project progressed, I found that (for me) some elements of Dooyeweerdian doctrine had become problematic. In developing these criticisms, I could again find a traveling companion in Danie Strauss, who had begun to voice his own criticisms while writing his doctoral dissertation (*Begrip en Idee*, 1973). Some of his misgivings and modifications came to form part of my own "check list" for the elaboration of DA theory. However, in our re-assessment of Dooyeweerd's philosophy, Strauss' interests did not really converge on my own. In a sense we pursued parallel paths: he was more focused on the "ontological" part of Dooyeweerd's analyses, while I had to measure DA theory mostly against the "subjective-apriori" part, that is, the notions of "ground-motive" and "ground-idea".

Let me very briefly give an outline of some of the problems I encountered, with reference to the above sketch of possible DA subtheories. (Aside from the reservations about Dooyeweerd's fixation on the concept of origin, mentioned in 1.1 above). A growing awareness of *a set of root metaphors* that seem to be universally implemented when ultimate beliefs about life (and its goals and origins) are formed, made me realize that Dooyeweerdian discourse is quite selective in this area. It favors images (well-entrenched in the Calvinist tradition) of "man" as a *servant* of, and

a *fighter* for, God – who Himself is pre-eminently a *Sovereign*: a *Ruler* and a *King*. I leave it up to the reader to think of other images on both levels, which should ideally complement the ones noted here. These are really crucial issues, also in terms of how a philosophy is communicated, for they ultimately structure or color the whole tone of a discourse. But there are also substantive conceptual implications. For example, if the idea of "the law" is linked one-sidedly to *juridical metaphors*, these will sustain the idea of the law as a (at most benevolently stipulated) *boundary*, but they will not be able to cope adequately with an understanding of the law as, say, a loving (in the intimate sense of marriage and family) *support* for creation. (Thus the image of a Father, ceaselessly caring and carrying…) The metaphors of sovereignty also caused Dooyeweerd to accept a traditional scholastic understanding of God, which was really inspired by Greek metaphysics (!), according to which God as He is "in Himself" is absolutely unknown to us. Only when he freely decides "to be" in a mode that is there "for us", can he be known in revelation. But notice that this interpretation tends to grant certain attributes of God (such as Fatherly care) a "secondary" status, while it also relativises the whole idea of "revelation" as such.

In terms of *ideology theory*, it became apparent that Dooyeweerd's notion of a "humanistic" ground-motive ("nature and freedom") did in fact target two "absolutised" cultural ideals. But in Dooyeweerd these ideals are not only located in a "spiritual" sphere *separated* from the material socio-cultural world; they are also *isolated* from a whole *network of ideologies* with which they interact (technocracy, politicism, selfism, mediatisation, "pastoral power", etc.) to form a comprehensive (what I call) ideological topography of modernity. Furthermore, the Dooyweerdian concept of what I would call *discursive domination* (where certain aspects of the world are absolutised and come to dominate others in "ground-motive" discourses which also come to dominate whole societies and cultures) does not link up to the complementary concept of *social* (group) *domination*. But in reality these two worlds of domination are interconnected in many instances. For example a certain classical understanding of science (e.g. in Francis Bacon) was intimately linked to patriarchal metaphors – a link which exists to this day. And the ideology of freedom often realizes itself in various forms of corresponding social domination. Think only of the history of (various forms of) liberalism. It is true that, in general, ideology theorists tend to be selective, working either with discursive domination (like Dooyeweerd or, to some extent, the neo-marxists) or social domination (like Marx or currently John B. Thompson for example). Before leaving this topic, I should point out that

some of Dooyeweerd's followers did succeed in extending his "minimalistic" theory of (humanistic) ideology. Van Riessen and Schuurman, for example, contributed to filling in some discursive "slots" in the "top layer" of "steering powers" (my terminology) located on the ideological topography of modernity. Thus they saw that the power of science in our socio-cultural lifeworld had to be flanked by other forms of power: technological, economic, and administrative-organizational. To this "upper" level of ideological power, one can also link, "lower down", a cluster of more or less political ideologies that Bob Goudzwaard studied, those centered on the hypernormative (my term) goals of ethno-nationalism, prosperity, security and revolution.

Turning now very briefly to what I would call a *theory of "macro discourses"* (cf. the above remark on Foucault ), this theory indicated that the idolization of nature and personhood (as Dooyeweerd understood it) was indeed located at the ultimate "deep structure" of the ideological topography of modernity – but that these two "motives" belong with some others (e.g. power, knowledge, society) to a rather exclusive club of "macro-ideologies" that seem to form a cross-cultural constant. But this macro-motivational deep structure is only realized in the context of culture-specific ideological landscapes. His emphasis on the cultural separation of ground-motives prevents Dooyeweerd from recognizing that one and the same motive (e.g. power) can be variously expressed in Greek, medieval, and "humanistic" ideology. (Although his own formulation of the Greek and humanistic motives does in fact point to the presence of the power-theme in both.) In other words, it seems as if Dooyeweerd did not (could not) contemplate the possibility of *conceptual generalizations* across the different ground-motives (he did concede that elements of the Greek motive could be taken up in, and then transformed by, the humanistic motive). Nonetheless, what does in fact seem possible here, is the construction of a kind of "universal grammar" underlying Dooyeweerd's ground-motive "languages".

In terms of *communication theory* and its models of types of communication, it became apparent that out of several possible modes of communication, Dooyeweerd was totally at home in the one of *combat*. (Other possibilities are for example *consensus*, *compromise* and *co-optation*.) This model is obviously not the best in terms of communicative *openness* – something that needs to function even at the level of differing religious discourses, and even more so at the level of religion versus politics. How can one be triumphal and authoritarian about one's own truth, yet approve of the other's ability to be convinced by, and converted

to, this truth? In this communicative asymmetry there seems to be something unethical. In any case, the simple act of *addressing someone* appears to presuppose a certain openness to possible agreement. Here the very structure of language and of speech acts seem in some way to anticipate the norm of communicative openness. All of this, however, should not tempt us to a kind of communicative idealism – for there is also the reality of ideological commitment.

Finally, in terms of "*postural theory*", it is probably Dooyeweerd's weakness for forms of rationalism (something that Danie Strauss has also pointed out) that in fact virtually excludes any form of "existential" (I am not referring to *existentialist ideology*) philosophizing in Dooyeweerd's works. Possibly he thought that these topics belonged to a more Biblical-spiritual discourse, or to a Christian ethics. On the other hand, he seemed to hold (implicitly – and correctly I would think) that *anything* can be analysed from the philosophical point of view. The fact is that existentialist philosophy or Buddhist philosophy, for example, with their privileging of some postures over others (Buddhism's "life is suffering" and its corresponding contemplativism, for example), as well as other philosophies which have explicit views in this area, can only be fruitfully engaged, not from a transcendent-religious standpoint, but from a "structural" model like the one I am envisaging here. This was the view of Dooyeweerd himself with regard to philosophical critique in general. But, if one does venture into such a "structural" treatment of what appears to be a central ethical dimension of human existence (a dimension that Dooyweerd does in fact recognize, but which he wants to be a metaphysical "unity", removed from all temporal multiplicity (!) and dedicated to "love"), such analysis should not lapse into an alienated, rationalistic kind of structuralism. To put it in a nutshell: I suppose what I always missed in Dooyeweerd was a *communicative acknowledgment of the "dark side" of human existence* if not a full philosophical treatment of the latter.

What one does find in Dooyeweerd is a recognition of the *posture of guilt*, which then figures formally in the "pure Biblical ground-motive", under the label of "sin". The neighbouring *posture of suffering* is not thematically present in Dooyeweerdian discourse. By way of contrast, it is magnificently present in the philosophy of Adorno for example, but here, unfortunately, it is treated in the context of radically irrationalistic "original" discourse. Incidentally: this particular posture was also present in the thought of my other philosophy teacher, Prof. P. de B. Kock , but was limited to the sermons of his earlier career in the church, and to occasional

devotional writings. (The same posture was also pervasive in the deeply existential sermons of Kock's brother, my pastor at that time, the reverend Frans Kock.) I suspect that Dooyeweerd would also have had a hard time acknowledging the other dark posture: the typically human experience – perhaps sporadic but always devastating – of *meaninglessness*. (This posture is even – and rather radically – exemplified in the Bible, most "philosophically" in the book Ecclesiastes. (Remarkably, the above mentioned Frans Kock also gave discursive expression to this posture, but not in his sermons as much as in the occasional poems that he wrote.) I think Dooyeweerd would have had even more difficulty in granting that there is in some sense a "normative" side to this posture:  allowing a certain dimension of an "ethics of authenticity" (Charles Taylor) to be experienced and acknowledged as such. Dooyeweerd's own philosophy emphasizes *meaning* as the exclusive mode of *being as such*. Ironically, this emphasis has been shown by Danie Strauss, in a different context, to be itself highly selective – even from a Christian point of view. "Meaning" is only one way in which to view the world.

## 2.   Philosophy and the key to reality

### 2.1  The basic structure of a conceptual key

After having sketched the way in which the DA project began to take shape, I will now and for the remainder of this article, focus on one of the subtheories, the one I referred to above as a "grammar" of "origin-al" discourse. (It is in this specific subtheory that Danie Strauss always seemed to express the most interest. Perhaps because it seemed to link up with the foundational modalities in Dooyeweerd's theory of modal aspects. Sometimes, however, I got the impression that he tended more or less to identify the DA project with this subtheory, possibly because it was the most developed one at the time when he was supervising my dissertation.) Henceforth I will refer to this subtheory by its informal name, "key theory" – the symbolism of which will soon become clear.  (In more formal analyses, I sometimes use the term "logosemantics" – but the reason for this is of no interest in the present context.)

A set of kernel concepts that form part of key theory has already been introduced above: namely discursive conceptualizations of the supposed origin, goal, foundation, center, etc. of reality or large chunks of reality. In philosophical discourse, it seems, there is always, somewhere, sometimes very explicit, sometimes more implicit, this claim about some kind of X that is featured as the origin, etc. of reality or some impressively large part of it (like society or culture, for example). Let us call the *subject* that is at

stake in such formulations "X", and the *operation* that it performs on reality (causing it, grounding it, ruling it, etc.) "Y", with the *object* or *domain* on which the operation is performed (reality or parts of it) then being "Z". It will immediately be seen that this arch-philosophical type of formulation resembles the structure of a very simple sentence, with its familiar noun-verb-noun structure. In fact XYZ conceptualizations are sometimes found in philosophical discourses, expressed linguistically in just such syntactic structures. But mostly, the DA analyst has to *deduce* the relevant XYZ structure – sometimes painstakingly – from the contents of a discourse or many discourses.

Philosophers, or theorists from other fields who think philosophically, tend to be excited by their initial discovery of XYZ structures – whether they themselves think them up, or whether they get to know them from the work of other thinkers. The reason for this is that such structures seem to present a kind of key to a deep understanding of reality: it seems to tell you what is *really* going on. For example, a specific XYZ key may state that it is really psycho-biological drives that lead to what we know as culture; another key may state that everything we know and experience is ultimately enveloped in language; while yet another key holds that the norms of law and morality only mirror the accidents of history; with an opposing key rejecting this, claiming that law and morality and also art are mere surface epiphenomena, hiding what is the underlying dynamic: a class struggle going on in society. Notice that the metaphor of a key is appropriate here also in the sense of these XYZ structures in fact having the tripartite structure of a real key – with its head (X), tail (Z), and the elongated piece joining the two (Y).

If we analyze the above key-expressions, we arrive at roughly the following structures (in sequence):

**(1)** [S psycho-biogical (drives)] [O cause] [D culture]

**(2)** [S language] [O enclose] [D knowledge, experience]

**(3)** [S (contingent) history] [O come to expression in] [D law, morality]

**(4)** [P [S social (power)] [O ground] [D law, morality, art]]

A few remarks on the way (1) – (4) have been represented here: it will be seen that the above structures contain some formalizations. For example, the categories of subject, operator and domain are indicated in each instance. Another kind of formalization concerns the maximal kind of generalization that we want such structures to express – this is an inherent

attribute of all theory-construction (and is also typical of philosophical thought). That is why "drives" in (1) is subordinate to the "real" or ultimate X at issue here: psycho-biological phenomena as a category. The same reasoning holds in structures (3) and (4). (And if parts of the above structures look familiar in terms of Dooyeweerd's modalities, it is because the latter do in fact constitute extreme ontological generalizations.) Another formalization is that in XYZ "grammar" we do not need to honor ordinary syntactic rules (such as the correct form of the verb, or the use of connectives like "and"); here we do better to use the kind of notation one sometimes finds in formal semantics or logics. For example, in systematic formal notation, the XYZ elements would be analyzed in the format of predicate logic Y (X, Z) – this would fit in with for example Jackendoff's treatment of conceptual semantics. Finally, notice that (4) above features additional outer brackets, which I have omitted in the other three examples. This is to indicate the overarching category of what we may call the key *proposition*, in which the other categories are then embedded – much like the category of "sentence" in syntactic theory is constituted by the different parts ("phrases") subdividing this unit of analysis.

## 2.2 Some complications

Of course, in reality key theory has to be much more complex than what the above illustration can indicate. This is a reasonable assumption to make, because, as cognitive scientists have shown, the conceptualization processes of the mind are extremely complex to analyze and understand. And probably the best way to gain an understanding of these processes is through an understanding of language (an approach that is in some sense echoed in the project of a *discursive*-archaeological key theory). For the purpose of this article it is not necessary to delve deeply into the rest of the conceptual machinery that appears to surround the simple kernel-structures shown above. But let me just give a very brief indication of some issues that key theory needs to address. (Henceforth I will not employ all the notational devices introduced above; rather I will keep the representations of structures as simple as possible.)

Firstly, in actual origin-al discourses there may be more than one key formula (if I may join the latter metaphor to that of the key which unlocks) at issue. In Dooyeweerd's writings for example we find: an initial formula which says **(5) [God/ transcendent personhood] [cause] [law]**; which is accompanied by a formula stating **(6) [love] [unify/center] [law]**; followed by another formula positing **(7) [law] [order] [reality]**, and yet another one indicating: **(8) [[Christ/transcendent-immanent personhood enclose humanity]]**

**[root] [reality]**. (There are still other formulas relating to the role of Scripture and the "heart", but I leave that aside in the present context.)

Note that in (8), the Y-term "enclose" is used in the sense of Z *participating* in X. In formal representations, this kind of information will be indicated by a suitable subscript to the Y-term. Note also, and this is more important, that in (8) we have an example of something occurring frequently in key formulas: one formula being encapsulated in another. In other words, in the X-factor itself there is a subordinate XYZ-formula present. This is something we will again encounter further on.

A second complication that has to be mentioned here, is that kernel formulas are usually accompanied by a specific package of classic *attributes,* or rather, a discourse selects attributes from this package of binary possibilities to illuminate the specific nature of especially the X-factor. We have an example in (3) above, where [contingent] should really be removed from the X-slot and housed in separate square brackets labeled "attribute". In this instance, we have history being qualified as *contingent* as opposed to *necessary.* By way of contrast, we can have an X-factor "God" which in scholastic theology sometimes attracted the attribute "necessary" in an effort to honor a Being who had to be sharply opposed to all that is other than, and dependent on, Him (and on the non-necessary dictates of divine will). We can also have an X-factor like "biological laws" which could have as attributes *both* necessity (genetics for example) and contingency (the way in which life first originated, for example). (Something approaching this key formula is found in the discourse of Jacques Monod, one of the founding fathers of molecular biology.) An interesting property of attributes is that they can move around in the conceptual space of a key formula, for example moving in to the X-slot itself. In terms of our present example, contingency can then be conceptualized as directly governing some or other Z-domain. (This is a kind of conceptualiszation that can in fact be found in the writings of the neo-pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty.) Before leaving this topic, let me acknowledge a debt here to Danie Strauss, who pointed out to me, some years ago, that an attribute pair which I had initially labeled "changeless-changeful", in reality involves the (modal) meaning of "constant" versus "dynamic".

A third complication is the way in which attributes are always *schematized* – for example a discourse selecting as attributes both "knowable" and "unknowable" can feature a "theo-ontological" schematization, whereby the latter attribute functions to qualify the X-factor as it is "in itself", and the former attribute then qualifies this factor as it appears "to us". (With reference to what was said above in 1.3, in terms of the Dooyeweerdian (metaphorical) image of God, it will be clear that this particular image is

informed by exactly this type of theo-ontological schematization.) A fourth and final complication (in the present context) is the way in which key formulas also generate *types of philosophical thinking*. For example, a selection of certain Y-terms and certain attributes may show (borrowing terminology from Vollenhoven/ Seerveld) a "*structuralistic*" type of thinking (emphasizing structure); a selection of their opposites usually evidences a "*geneticistic*" type of thinking (emphasizing process). Monism and dualism, on the other hand, seem to be descriptions of particular schematizations.

### 2.3 The critical edge of key theory

It is important to note that key theory is not only a "generative" type descriptive device. It also packs a critical punch. The essence of this is the fact that, overwhelmingly, the key formulas of philosophical discourses tend to be strongly reductionist in some or other way. To put it informally by way of an image: the extraordinary, sometimes enormous, weight that such formulas usually have in the content of their Z-structure, has to rest on the quite narrow foundation (the latter term I employ here to stand metonymically for the operational component of the formula) normally provided by the content of the X-structure. The existence of the formula is itself an indication of the fact that there is this discursive *belief* that the foundation will be able to carry the weight, and is in fact exactly suited to this purpose. However, in the critical communication among opposing philosophical discourses, we see this claim being contested all the time. And often this takes the form of arguments attempting to show (without any explicit key analysis) that a given X-factor is very selective, unduly privileged, and in reality unable to provide what is expected of it in terms of explaining why things are the way they are (in Z). Key theory plays along in this game, although it attempts to bring something extra to the field: a systematic-theoretical focus on the precise conceptualization of "key discoveries", so as to make explicit, in detail, what kind of logic is at work in the justification of such claims. Moreover, this is a focus that will usually be able to find elements of the same logic at work, not only in the *targeted discourse* but also in the *targeting discourses*. Ultimately, the critical stance of key theory resides in the assumption of a maximal ontological pluralism: the optimal X-value. For reasons of maximal internal theoretical consistency, this pluralism should as far as possible be related to the neighboring subtheories of key theory. Because these latter issues are of no direct relevance to what follows, I will not pursue them further in the present context.

It is the special merit of Jacques Derrida's famous "deconstruction" of discourses, that he shows an unparalleled awareness of the presence and function of (what I call) key formulas in the history of Western thought. The only other modern philosophers that I am aware of who show such awareness are Heidegger and Dooyeweerd. But not only does Derrida demonstrate this sensitivity, he can also, in a masterful way, tease out the *inner tensions* that arise in key structures when their foundations are stressed beyond limits. This is exactly where the "anti-foundationalism" of postmodernism comes in, and where deconstruction unleashes its immanent criticism against ambitious but fatally flawed key-constructions. As for Dooyeweerd, his third key formula, featured as (7) above, at first glance seems to avoid the kind of obvious partiality we find in (1) – (4), because his X-factor (a cosmic order) can seemingly enclose the X-factors listed in these latter examples, as well as others along the same lines. But the price to pay for such an expansive X-factor is, in this case, a metaphysical weight that attaches itself to the key formula (the order in question originating outside of structured reality, in a "divine plan").

Regarding the critical power of deconstruction, there is a twist to the tale. The weakness of deconstruction itself is revealed in its claim to move away, not only from indefensible *uses* of key logic, but also from the very *structure* of key logic as such. But in the face of such claims the key-analyst can play deconstruction's game against itself. Careful analysis shows that Derrida cannot but have recourse to his own key discoveries, and that these of necessity have to possess a key status in his thinking. For if a philosopher was not in the legitimate business of explaining his key discoveries, he would scarcely have anything to say. Indeed one of Derrida's formulas (famously) ascribes X-power to the "differences" that help to constitute our concepts of things (*that* which they are *not*). This partial aspect of conceptualization is then granted X-status and transformed into a non-structural structure (!) of continuous absence that precedes and pervades language and texts, and everything the latter enclose. The presence of key logic in this whole construction is palpable ("precede" is in fact one of Derrida's favorite Y-terms).

## 3.    Conceptual keys: *in* the mind, and *to* the mind

### 3.1  Faculties of mind, levels and hierarchies

Against the direction that the above analysis has taken, it may still be asked whether key structures, if there is such a thing, are not merely one way in which (some of) the philosophical minds of a certain era – or at most individual thinkers across the history of philosophy – have chosen,

contingently, to respond to a certain kind of intellectual challenge? In this case, it could be argued, such philosophers could either have independently created this type of thinking, or have picked it up from predecessors or peers. The trouble with this response, though it will probably express a majority view, is that it cannot really account for the internal *complexities* of key grammar (which obviously are not taught to anyone), or for the apparent *universality* (diachronic and synchronic) of these structures in philosophical discourse. As noted above, even the most skillful, conscious efforts to *avoid* key formulations, while creating a kind of philosophical discourse situated at the very borders of this discipline (Derrida), have not been successful.

This leaves us with the possibility that what we have here is a certain kind of (uniquely human) conceptualization that the mind itself provides for: an innate capacity to conceptualize abstract ontological wholes and parts of extreme generality, in relation to other wholes and parts of the same kind, with a very specific type of abstract relation holding between these two domains, one which humans experience as being explanatory in some way.

All of this might form part of (or be related to in some way to) what Chomsky has speculated might be a specialized faculty of the human mind: the "science-forming faculty". This is the remarkable competence of humans to create, in confrontation with "data", highly abstract pictures of what is really going on in some aspect of reality, pictures that in no way "flow" *from* the data, but are rather imaginative constructs that are brought *to* the data and may link up to the latter in a way that we experience as "explanatory" (a notion which we experience as operating within severely restricted conceptual limits). Perhaps key structures operate at a certain level of such a faculty. Perhaps they are even basically related to the "ordinary" conceptual hierarchies that we find postulated in all sciences, for example in linguistics something like **(9) [syntax encloses semantics]**, or in nuclear physics something like **(10) ["vibrating" strings constitute point particles]**. Perhaps, when such hierarchies are cognitively projected to a certain level of generalization, we end up with what we know as (the beginning or end) of philosophical conceptualization. (Dooyeweerd's model of a "ground-idea", interestingly, seems to be totally separated from such conceptual interconnections.) Perhaps we might one day see some research within the cognitive sciences on the nature and function of key structures; perhaps "attributive movement" (referred to above) might even come to attract a fraction of the attention that the phenomenon of syntactic movement (the movement of syntactic particles in the mental derivation of

sentences) has enjoyed over many years. But for now, all of this is mere wishful thinking.

### 3.2   Some key formulas in contemporary philosophy of mind

Turning now, finally, to the search for the "key" to the understanding of mind, I will very briefly review a sample of some of the standpoints that one finds in the literature. (This sample is by no means indicative of the *range* of perspectives that are being debated.) For this purpose, I will freely refer to a recent study by Pieter Repko (*Discursive Deep Structure and Philosophy of Mind: A Critique of the Neurophilosophy of Patricia Churchland*) of the most basic conceptual frameworks within which such viewpoints are formulated. The function of key formulas is one of these frames that he investigated (the other two are metaphorical frames and ideological frames).

A leading proponent of what is called "neurophilosophy", is Patricia Churchland. Like many others, she wants to bring science, especially the science of the brain, to philosophy. Reviewing the history of philosophical discourse about the mind, she feels that it is time to debunk the whole concept of "mind". What we need to come to grips with is the *brain* – specifically the *neurological science* of the brain. As often happens when philosophers feel they have an exciting contribution to make, the X-factor on which this contribution centers is related to our concept of the self. In a sense this is part and parcel of key rhetoric: showing how the X in question informs our very concept of who we are (we find this also in Dooyeweerd's key discourse for example, in his relating self-knowledge to the knowledge of God). Churchland's hopes for great advances in our understanding of the self, projects the following key to her discourse:

**(11) [neuroscience constitute self-knowledge]** This key is actually dependent on a more primary one: **(12) [neural activity constitute mental],** with the Z-factor of the latter formula unfolding further as something like **(13) [mental enclose self]**. It is the latter two formulas that provide the basis for the first one. Notice that (12) and (13) really combine to form one key, with the structure of a formula-within-a-formula as discussed earlier. Notice also that a "transformation" of (12) would simply be **(14) [brain constitute mind]**.

Considering the "discovery" conveyed in these formulas, one sees again the typical reductionist logic. Our communication with our self and with the selves of others is expected to eventually dissolve into the abstract and specialized discourse of biological science, with all first and second

person (in the grammatical sense) experiences becoming "truthfully known" only in objectifying, third person descriptions of material processes. But how the language of morality or art or even science itself can be translated into the bio-technical language of cells, membranes, neuronal networks, chemical transmitters, etc. remains completely unexplained by Churchland. Nevertheless, her "eliminative materialism" is so radical that she rejects formula **(15) [(talk of) neuronal states constitute (talk of) mental states]**, in favour of **(16) [(talk of) neuronal states end (talk of) mental states]**. (Note how this model of the radicalist interpretation hinges on the choice of the Y-term.)

Against this kind of materialism, it seems more sensible to take (with other scientists and philosophers) as our point of departure, formula **(17) [(biological) brain ground/generate mind]** and the implied **(18) [mind transcend (biological) brain]**. However, even in terms of the "grounding" featured in (17), it seems quite possible that we will perhaps never know precisely how and where neuronal activity actually begins to "anticipate" functions like thought, language, etc. It is important to understand that the correct interpretation of (17) and (18) does not imply subscribing to a mind/body dualism. For the mind does not transcend an *adequately expanded concept of body*, a concept that should, in its broadest meaning, be the focus of philosophical anthropology. Compare in this regard formula **(19)** (with recursive embedding in the Z-element in simplified notation): **[[human body] enclose [organs (brain generate mind enclose language, belief, morality...)…]]**. In terms of non-reductionist interpretations, there are some stimulating perspectives to be found in the work of the well-known philosopher of mind, Jerry Fodor. I will only list one formula here that seems present in some of his arguments. It might seem very mundane and even look like mere common sense, but in the contemporary debate **(20) [psychology transcend biology]** is very much disputed.

There is also the caution and humility which philosophers like Chomsky and Colin McGinn bring to the study of mind and its mysteries. They point to the fact that there is no compelling reason to believe that, with our brain designed the way it is (just as a rat's brain is designed the way it is, with very definite limitations), we must and will be able to solve all the problems that confront us when we study the mind/brain in relation to concepts like the self, creativity, free will, etc. They subscribe to a formula that we may render as follows: **(21) [unknowable (aspects of) nature transcend science]**. By the way: Dooyeweerd would probably not have been able to accept this formula, because his philosophy regards itself as

based on a biblical standpoint, one that is thought to teach (among other things): **(22) [humanity root creation]** (cf. (8) above). From the Dooyeweerdian perspective, this key would seem to imply that God would not, therefore, from the very beginning have "cut off" areas of reality from eventual "disclosure" by humanity (rooted in Christ). This was the kind of standpoint that he also would have used against the Kantian doctrine of the "thing in itself", the latter concept a consequence of the famous Kantian key **(23) [mind form world]**. (Note the link between the mentioned doctrine and the theo-ontological schematization described in section 2.2 above.)

## 4. Conclusion: unification and anthropology, ideology and spirituality

We should be careful not to maintain that a unification of for example biological science and linguistics as in **(24) [science unify [biology, linguistics]]** cannot take place, in principle. For we know that this did indeed happen in the case of for example physics and chemistry. (That is why Dooyeweerd also unifies them in one and the same "modal aspect".) But it should be noted that in such cases, we are talking about *unification*, not total *reduction*, as in **(25) [biology (must, will) constitute linguistics].** But unifications, not to speak of reductions, are very rare in science (a fact also emphasized by Chomsky). At the present time there is no conceivable way in which (24) can be realized – and this may remain so even into the far distant future.

Let me begin to conclude with two general observations. Firstly, the whole enterprise of "philosophy of mind", as it is currently practiced, seems to be something of an artificial abstraction, in the sense that it is an enterprise that is not meaningfully integrated into its natural intellectual environment, namely *anthropological theory* (cf. (19) above). The latter theory would in the end have to integrate "philosophy of mind" with themes such as desire, pain, mental imagery, the will to meaning, the nature of action, etc. Perhaps this lack of an integrated approach is still a consequence of the old mind/body dualism. On the other hand, it is true that sometimes idealized abstractions are necessary to study something scientifically, and this may (currently) be necessary for a *cognitivce science* of mind. But in the case of *philosophy* of mind, it is precisely the wider context that should be kept in the picture. In any case, some version of anthropological theory will also have to take its place among the assembly of DA tools.

Secondly, to end with one of the other tools that I discussed in the introductory section, it appears from the perspective of DA theory that key

formulas always function in a specific *ideological frame* – or even create such a frame. Recall the example of Churchland's key formulas and the frame of eliminative materialism. In this way key formulas and ideological frames help to theoretically define each other. It can happen that the same formula receives different interpretations in different frames, or that the same frame may contain different formulas (as we saw above in the case of different interpretations of materialism). Thus these two DA subtheories bring together two different worlds: that of the bio-mental (keys), and that of the socio-cultural (frames).

Some final remarks- again on a more personal note, linking up to what was said at the beginning. In revisiting my philosophical origins (cf. 1.3 above), I also had to re-interpret, for myself, Dooyeweerdian beliefs in a supra-temporal ghost world. I think that a human capacity for spirituality is a postural and even an anthropological datum. Theoretical knowledge *itself* has such a spiritual aspect (tended or neglected). That means, in this case, that the symbol of the key can in fact assume a *spiritual significance* preceding and transcending the *theoretical complexities* of XYZ formulas. The contemplative (postural) realization that there is an ultimate key that *locks mostly everything in your life into a certain confined space* – thereby reducing things to "Z-proportions" and essentially relativizing them – can lead to a kind of spiritual liberation and a need to periodically reflect (meditate) on this freedom. This kind of spiritual disclosure need not be limited to the specific tool of key theory. That an *array* of such instruments, or the phenomena to which they relate, constitutes a ground-structure of reality *and* discloses itself as a medium of spiritual enlightenment, has been understood throughout history, in very diverse contexts. An example of one such context is Jewish (Kabbalah) mysticism. In terms of their system of ten "aspects" of reality, or *sefirot*, the spiritual input of key theory is somewhat comparable to the *sefirah* of *Binah*, "Understanding". Another context can be found in *Abidharma* or *Madhyamika* Buddhism, with their own models of the "elements of reality": the former school looking at the way that experience can be traced to a multiplicity of elements (*dharmas*) and their interactions; the latter school looking, centrally and unifyingly (note the key terms), at the elements in terms of their radical coherence, which implies their "emptiness" (*sunyata*) of all absolutizations. Even Dooyeweerd's own model of spirituality can also be approached in the same way: all that can be spiritually experienced, is related to a spectrum of elements (with a central element) that also forms the blueprint of reality itself (and again there is much emphasis on the intrinsic coherence of the elements, and on unifying and centralizing perspectives that also transcend structures of individuality).

The ideal though, to which we should aspire, is the growing spiritual disclosure of a scientifically respectable model of elements (or an array of tools). Such a developed model would not only share something with the above mentioned philosophies of spirituality, but would also represent a "new critique" of them and of other spiritual discourses. I think that such a critique would contain, among other things, some "key" criticisms.

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