

Uniqueness and Coherence: Epistemological and Ontological Considerations*

Prof. D.F.M. Strauss

Samevatting

In die lig van die verskeidenheid wederkerig-uitsluitende 'ismes' in die geskiedenis van die filosofie en van die vakwetenskappe moet uiteraard teruggepraeg word na dit wat deur hierdie 'ismes' raakgesien, maar skeefgetrek is. Die belangrikste bydrae van die reformatoriese wysbegeerte tot 'n beantwoording van hierdie vraag is te vind in die implikasieryke teorie van modale aspekte. Juis omdat die aspekte in 'n onlosmaaklike samehang gevoeg is kan denkers wat God nie as Skepper erken nie maklik versand in die vergoddeliking van een of ander aspek. In hierdie artikel word allereers aandag geskenk aan die vraag hoe 'n mens tot kennis van die aspekte van die werklikheid kan kom, met verwysing na probleme in Dooyeweerd se siening van hierdie saak. Daarna word onderskei tussen modale eienskappe en die algemene struktuur van die modale aspekte, en op die basis daarvan nader ingegaan op die vraag of modale aspekte van konkrete dinge geabstraheer word en of dit uitgelig word uit die tyd-samehang. In die laaste gedeelte word die kriteria vir die identifisering van aspekte aan die orde gestel en word na die sin van die estetiese aspek gekyk in die lig van die onderskeid tussen die ondefinieerbare sin-kern van 'n aspek en die wyse waarop die sin van so 'n aspek tot openbaring kom in die samehang daarvan met ander aspekte.

1. Historical background

The history of philosophy and the various academic disciplines are distinguished by the presence of multiple, oftentimes mutually exclusive,

* Intended to be published towards the end of 2008, the late publication of this article is done with an apology to the author.

theoretical stances, more often than not known to us as instances of some or other 'ismic' orientation. The Pythagoreans are best known for their conviction that *everything is number*. They were succeeded by the Eleatic school with their notion of *static being* – understood in pure spatial terms (static simultaneity – the paradoxes of Zeno). Early modern philosophy soon proceeded under the spell of a *mechanistic* orientation in which the universe is reduced to particles in motion, that lasted until the end of the 19th century when it had to make way for the acknowledgement of physical action. The *vitalistic* trends in biology (late 19th century and 20th century) currently revived in theories of “irreducibly complex systems” (Behe, 2003:39) and the idea of *intelligent design* (see Dekker *et al.*, 2005). These trends actually refer back to the organological mode of thought of Aristotle and the Romantic movement (late 18th and early 19th centuries). Psychologism dominated the scene for some time by the end of the 19th century (Brentano) and became known particularly through the rise of depth psychology (Freud, Adler, Jung). The problems within the foundations of mathematics gave rise to different schools of thought, in particular to the *logicism* of Russell and Gödel (next the axiomatic formalist and intuitionist schools of thought in mathematics and logic). During the mentioned Romantic era we also witness the rise of *historicism*. Designations like *symbolic* interactionism, sociological individualism and universalism (atomism and holism), *economism* (including the dialectical materialism of Marx), *aestheticism*, *legalism*, *moralism* and *pietism* are all making their contribution to a more complete picture of all the 'isms' we have in mind.

By and large these 'isms' are produced by *scholarly* thinking. This generates the question what is so peculiar about theoretical thinking that 'isms' such as these are constantly produced. The answer given by the tradition of reformational philosophy is that 'isms' such as these proceed from the reification of some or other aspect of created reality, at the cost of the others that are then reduced to mere sub-divisions of the absolutized aspect.

2. Epistemological considerations

According to Dooyeweerd theoretical thought is characterized by the *Gegenstand*-relation, i.e. by opposing the logical aspect of our concrete act of thinking to the non-logical aspects of experience. He developed his epistemological views in what is known as his *transcendental critique of theoretical thought*. The aim of this critique is to gain an insight into the transcendent and transcendental pre-requisites of theoretical thought – in other words, he aims at laying bare those universal conditions that make possible theoretical thought as such. For this purpose, he distinguishes be-

tween our non-theoretical experience of reality, embedded in and characterized by the subject-object relation, and the “theoretical attitude of thought” that is stamped by the mentioned *Gegenstand*-relation.

The transcendental critique of Dooyeweerd is meant to show a new direction, leaving the approach of the Enlightenment philosopher, Immanuel Kant, behind. In his epistemology Immanuel Kant proceeds from the *isolation* of sensibility (Kant, 1787:33) that is strictly *separated* from our pure understanding (Kant, 1787:89). He never succeeded to give a satisfactory account of its ‘synthesis’. Dooyeweerd thought that he could rectify Kant’s view by expanding the scope of the *Gegenstand* to all non-logical aspects of reality. Unfortunately he continued something essentially Kantian in his belief that theoretical knowledge originates in the theoretical *synthesis* between the logical aspect of our real act of thought and some or other non-logical aspect (cf. Dooyeweerd, 1997-I:39).

This idea lies at the basis of the first two problems formulated in his transcendental critique. The first concerns the question of what is *abstracted* (subtracted) in the antithetic attitude and “how is this *abstraction* (emphasis is the author’s – DFMS) possible?” (Dooyeweerd, 1997-I:41). The second question poses the problem: “From what standpoint can we reunite synthetically the logical and the non-logical aspects of experience which were set apart in opposition to each other in the theoretical antithesis?” (Dooyeweerd, 1997-I:45). Clearly, *abstraction* and *synthesis* are opposed to each other by Dooyeweerd. However, since abstraction rests on the two ‘legs’ of *lifting out* and *disregarding* it is actually synonymous to analysis, for the latter rests on the same two ‘legs’, namely identifying (= lifting out) and distinguishing (= disregarding). The implication is that whenever identification takes place the multiplicity of traits united in the concept obtained represents the element of *synthesizing*. Identification, i.e. synthesis, being just one leg of analysis, is therefore not *opposed* to analysis itself but to the other leg of analysis, namely *distinguishing*.

The implication is that *opposing* an aspect to the logical aspect, setting aspects apart in the “theoretical antithesis” or distinguishing between the logical aspect (of the real act of thought) and an “intentionally abstracted non-logical *Gegenstand*,” entails the *identification* of such an aspect. But identification is equivalent to the acquisition of a concept, of uniting or ‘synthesizing’ a multiplicity of universal features. Therefore setting aspects apart or opposing them, i.e. identifying and distinguishing them, is exactly what the acquisition of a concept (as part of analysis) is all about. Nonetheless, the formulation of the *Gegenstand*-relation is based upon the assumption that in spite of the fact that it has been ‘opposed’ to the non-

logical pole of this antithetic relation is not yet conceptualized, for Dooyeweerd explicitly states that we “must proceed from the logical antithesis to the theoretical synthesis between logical and non-logical aspects, if a logical concept of the non-logical ‘Gegenstand’ is to be possible” (Dooyeweerd, 1997-I:44). Since the author’s first reading of the transcendental critique, he was unable to understand how it is possible to think of (!) the opposition of a non-logical aspect to the logical aspect of our thought-act without (conceptually) *knowing* what is opposed to the logical aspect! Only after a more serious analysis of the meaning of analysis he eventually not only realized that identifying and distinguishing constitutes the meaning of analysis, but also that it is constitutive for the acquisition of concepts as such – i.e. for bringing together (synthesizing – through logical identification and distinguishing) various universal features of whatever is conceived. Moreover, in the first presentation of his transcendental critique (in 1941) Dooyeweerd actually proceeds in a way that comes very close to his own view of logical objectification. He writes:

In the theoretical, scientific attitude of thought, by contrast, logical analysis is directed first of all upon the modal aspects themselves, which are theoretically pried asunder into a theoretical discontinuity by means of this analysis and abstracted from their given, continuous, systatic coherence (Dooyeweerd, 1941:5).

In NC-I:39 it is said that “we oppose” the logical to the non-logical aspects, but initially (in 1941) it is “logical analysis” that is directed at the modal aspects “pried asunder” by “means of this analysis”. So here it is not the ‘we’ performing the distinction (analysis) between the logical and the non-logical aspects, i.e. that oppose them, but logical analysis itself.

Keep in mind that Dooyeweerd understands logical analysis merely in the sense of distinguishing (the traditional meaning of analyzing), and not yet in the sense of resting on the two ‘legs’ of identification and distinguishing – and for that reason he also did not acknowledge the fact that analysis (identification and distinguishing) is synonymous to abstraction (in the sense of lifting out and disregarding). However, he does add something to his view of “analytical distinction,” namely the remark: “distinction in the sense of setting apart what is given together” (see Dooyeweerd, 1997-I:39, note 2). Surely, identifying and distinguishing do not cancel the inter-modal coherence prevailing between the aspects that are identified and distinguished.

Compare in this regard his remark:

The ‘Gegenstand of understanding’ arises by means of a conscious setting apart of systatic reality, by performing an analytic epochè to the continuity of the cosmic order of time, by which the non-logical meaning-

structures are fixated in logical discontinuity. This deepening of systatic, naive thinking, along the road of “being placed in opposition,” can be explained from the analytic structure of the logical meaning-function itself. Only through logical discrimination can the analytic meaning-structure reveal its universality in its own sphere (Dooyeweerd, 1931:103).

What is obtainable “through logical discrimination” conforms to the meaning given to analysis in NC-I (page 39, note 2): “the aspect of analytical distinction; distinction in the sense of setting apart what is given together”. Distinctions are also drawn in naive experience – Dooyeweerd only believes that naive experience does not enter into the making of modal distinctions,¹ for the latter is reserved for the *Gegenstand*-relation. In other words, Dooyeweerd holds that the analytical function as such can perform the setting apart, but it cannot accomplish the re-uniting, the bringing together (the inter-modal synthesis), for then we suddenly require a supra-modal central point of reference (see Dooyeweerd, 1996:15).

Opposing modal aspects in the *Gegenstand*-relation is accomplished by our logical function in its analytic [for Dooyeweerd: distinguishing – DFMS] activity, without the need for a supra-modal focal point, whereas the theoretical inter-modal meaning-synthesis can only bring together what was analytically set apart in a more-than-analytical way, in a way transcending analysis!

At the same time this hidden circularity in Dooyeweerd’s argument, according to which something already conceptualized has not yet been conceptualized, explains why the entire account of the *Gegenstand*-relation is burdened by internal inconsistencies (see Strauss, 1973).

3. How does theoretical thought abstract modal aspects?

The modal aspects of reality, distorted by the known multiplicity of *ismic* orientations, display what is known as *modal universality*. This means that whatever there is in reality functions in all aspects without a distinction – either as subjects or as objects.

¹ At most Dooyeweerd would say that in naive experience we have “an implicit awareness of” the aspects but no explicit concept (Dooyeweerd, 1996:9). Keeping in mind that aspect and function are synonyms his explanation of naive experience as characterized by subject-object relations is inconsistent. He says: “Naive experience makes a distinction between subject-functions and object-functions” (Dooyeweerd, 1996:8)! If naive experience does not have a concept of functions (or aspects), how does it distinguish between subject and object functions!?! Dooyeweerd also says: “Furthermore, these subject-object relations are grasped, in naive experience, as structural relations within empirical reality itself” (Dooyeweerd, 1996:8). How it is possible to distinguish between subject functions and object functions in naive experience without being able to distinguish these functions as functions (aspects)?!

For the sake of the (untenable) *Gegenstand*-relation Dooyeweerd normally argues that these modal aspects are abstracted from the inter-modal coherence between the aspects – and since this coherence according to him is embedded in the inter-modal continuity of cosmic time he also says that this bond of time is abstracted. However, he sometimes provide examples of the many-sided nature of things or events and then he employs a mode of speech in which it is said that the modal aspects are abstracted from *concrete reality*, from *empirical reality*, i.e. from things and events.

This apparently creates a problem, because Dooyeweerd's general conception is that the modal aspects of reality are universal and therefore cannot merely be seen as *aspects of things*.

Dooyeweerd says that although naive experience “does not understand these aspects explicitly in a conceptual way, it does have an implicit awareness of them (‘impliciet weet van’)” (B1:10). On the previous page we read: “All these aspects are implicitly experienced in relation to things and events as integral entities, and not explicitly as they would be in consequence of distinguishing them theoretically. But how is this possible?” The answer given is: through the *subject-object relation*, which differs from the *Gegenstand*-relation.

We first consider the possibility of an *implicit knowledge* of aspects within naive experience. If we experience the aspects *implicitly*, i.e. in relation to things and events (as mentioned often also designated by Dooyeweerd as “concrete reality” or “empirical reality”), then what we implicitly *know* concerns the *modal properties* of those things and events (such as the *number* of beads on an abacus). That is to say that it is related to the functions of things within the (universal structure of) modal aspects.²

However, as soon as Dooyeweerd accounts for the role of the subject-object relation in naive experience the “implicit awareness of” becomes strikingly *explicit*. In connection with the explanation below it should be kept in mind that the *modal aspects* of reality are also designated by Dooyeweerd as *functions*.³

2 According to Dooyeweerd these functions are concrete individual functions. For Dooyeweerd the factual side of reality is strictly individual.

3 In a work from 1931 he even consistently employed only the term function and never spoke of modal aspects (see Dooyeweerd, 1931).

Consider now statements like:

Naive experience makes a distinction between subject-functions and object-functions. For instance, it knows very well that water by itself is not alive, but that it still has an essential object-function in the biotic modality as a vital “means of life”. It knows very well that a bird’s nest by itself is not the subject of life but that it fulfills an essential objective function in the life of the bird. It knows that a church building cannot be a subject in the aspect of faith but that it nevertheless serves an objective purpose in the worship of a faith-community, a purpose which comes to objective expression in the structure of the building itself. Furthermore, these subject-object relations are grasped, in naive experience, as structural relations within empirical reality itself (Dooyeweerd, 1996:9-10).

Consider the logic of Dooyeweerd’s argument: in naive experience we do not know the aspects *explicitly*, we only have an implicit awareness of them, but no *concept*. Yet, without a concept of an aspect or **function**, in our naive experience we are nonetheless capable to “know very well” that *water* “has an essential object-**function** in the **biotic modality**”. What Dooyeweerd *explicitly* says is that naive experience very well *knows* about an object-function and about the “biotic modality” in which this object-function of water is found!

If Dooyeweerd would have distinguished between *modal properties*, such as modal subject-functions and modal object-functions, and the general modal structure of modal aspects, his argument could have been that naive experience knows (typical) *modal properties*, but that in spite of that the aspects in which these modal properties are discerned are themselves always experienced as *attached* to the concrete things and events that we experience, without identifying these aspects themselves in their general modal structures as such – something that can only be accomplished through *modal abstraction*.⁴

Dooyeweerd did not succeed in making clear distinctions in this regard. If one cannot have a concept of an aspect or function, how is it then possible to *very well* know *specific* functions (i.e. *modal properties*), such as subject-functions and object-functions?

The alternative is to employ the said distinction:

In our naive experience we know modal properties (specific modal functions) without lifting out the modal aspects as such, and in

4 The latter does not need the (antinomous) Gegenstand-relation account, for it can be explained, without any antinomies or logical contradictions, through the distinct logical objectification (i.e. logical identification and distinguishing) of the modal aspects (in their modal universality).

theoretical knowledge we proceed to the identification and distinguishing of the aspects themselves (in their unspecified modal universality).

In different contexts Dooyeweerd says different things in respect of *abstraction* – and they are not compatible with each other. On the one hand he does speak of abstracting modal aspects from things (actually *typical modal properties*), but at the same time says that, in the *Gegenstand*-relation, we are not abstracting from things, but from the inter-modal coherence (or from the continuity of cosmic time). Let us consider another context. When Dooyeweerd discusses the multi-facetedness of someone buying cigars, inviting different special scientists to the ‘scene’ (see Dooyeweerd, 2002:13-15) he explicitly confuses the mentioned two ways of abstracting:

Each aspect of the concrete transaction which took place in the cigar shop, having been described, of course, in general and provisional terms only, is abstracted from concrete temporal reality by the science pertaining to it (Dooyeweerd, 2002:15).

What Dooyeweerd here intends is *theoretical abstraction*, which, as noted, he normally explains as an abstraction from the inter-modal coherence or from the continuity of time; but what he now says is that *each aspect* is “abstracted from concrete temporal reality by the science pertaining to it”! Since the phrase **concrete reality** refers to the many-sided (multi-aspectual) *things* and *events* we experience, this account flatly contradicts his alternative account in terms of which theoretical thought is only possible by means of a(n) (*Gegenstand*-relation mediated) abstraction from the cosmic *coherence* or from *time*.

Consider another example, implicitly referred to above when the beads of an abacus was mentioned.

A child, for example, may learn to count by moving the red and white beads of an abacus. Such a child begins to learn numerical relationships by means of these beads, but soon sets the abacus aside in order to focus on the relationships themselves (Dooyeweerd, 2003:45).

What does it mean “to learn numerical relationships”? It means that the child can *count* the beads. When the child is asked *how many* white beads there are, the child can *ac-count* for this act of *counting* by exploring the numerical relationships involved and answers: “there are 3 white beads”. The numeral “3” is experienced in relation to the multiplicity of white beads. Yet, this answer primarily concerns the *how*, not the *concrete what* of the beads. Clearly, in order to answer this quantitative *how many*?

question, the child must be able to focus on numerical relations only, disregarding other modal relations (such as how *big* they are or what their *shape* is – *cubical* or *spherical* for instance; or that they can be *moved* from left to right and vice versa – the kinematic and physical relationships – consider Newton’s laws).

What is now the difference between learning numerical relationships while using an abacus and understanding such numerical relationships within the context of theoretical thinking? The difference is that in order to focus on the modal structure of the numerical aspect as such this aspect ought to be understood in its abstraction from the concrete reality of abacus operations – where the author takes abstraction to mean: disregarding *both* the concrete reality of the abacus **and** disregarding all non-numerical aspects, while lifting out the general structure of the numerical aspect.

Given the fact that differences presuppose similarities (and vice versa) we ought to mention the similarity as well. Both in naive thinking and in theoretical thinking we understand *numerical relationships* – in the one case attached to the concreteness of the abacus with its multiplicity of beads and in the other case in abstraction from this concreteness (by lifting out the numerical aspect while disregarding the abacus and its non-numerical aspects).

In terms of above-argued distinction between knowing *modal properties* (found in naive experience) and knowing *modal aspects as such* (typical of theoretical thinking), this means that in naive experience we have access to a quantitative modal property, namely when we know *numerical relationships* as they are displayed by concrete empirical reality (such as by an abacus), whereas, through modal abstraction, we obtain theoretical knowledge of numerical relations understood within the context of the (unspecified) *universal modal structure* of the numerical aspect.

The act of analysis (identification and distinction) takes place within the logical subject-object relation – whenever an aspect is identified (by distinguishing it from other aspects) it is at once *logically objectified*. But in order to account for the diversity of aspects *criteria* are needed. The following 10 yardsticks may serve as a guide in search of the uniqueness of different aspects, which is a presupposition for their mutual coherence.

- (1) Throughout its entire history, Western philosophy always had to account for a given diversity within reality. This awareness is an indirect indication of the existence of distinct aspects.
- (2) Also, in our non-scientific (naive) experience, we find this diversity – as reflected in the shared human analytical awareness of this diversity.

- (3) The great variety of ‘isms’ in philosophy and the special sciences reflects the modal diversity within reality. At least in the case of monistic ‘isms’ a different aspect of reality is elevated to provide the all-encompassing theoretical perspective to an understanding of the universe, also indirectly implies distinct aspects of reality.
- (4) Reflection on the various realms in nature (material things, plants and animals), as well as on the various human societal collectivities (such as the state, church, sports club, school, cultural society, theater group, marriage, business firm or language association) directs us towards the various modalities (aspects) that provide access to the modal function uniquely characterizing those social entities. An analysis of these characteristic (or: qualifying) functions may be helpful in the search for unique aspects.
- (5) The occurrence of antinomies in theoretical thought is an indication that certain aspects of reality are confused. Introducing the appropriate modal distinctions should then be able to resolve the antinomies concerned.
- (6) The development of independent special sciences, delimited in their area of study by a particular aspect of reality, indicates the variety of aspects of reality.
- (7) Another aid in the identification of a particular aspect is given in the appeal to our immediate intuition (experiential insight), when reference is made to the meaning of any distinct aspect.
- (8) All the special sciences use typical entity concepts (such as: atom, molecule, plant, animal, tool, book, money, painting, murder weapon, engagement ring, church building), as well as functional concepts unmistakably appealing to the modal aspects of reality (such as mass, volume, life, feeling, control, meaning, exchange, beauty, lawfulness, love, trust, faith).
- (9) An indirect method of analysis, such as the indication of an analogical structural element in the modal structure of an aspect, can lead to the identification of the original, non-analogical nature of a particular aspect. The fact that something like jural agreement and disagreement – legitimacy and illegitimacy – exist, refers to the logical aspect in which agreement and disagreement first appear.
- (10) In the case of the normative aspects of reality, a negative indication, or even the negation of a negative indication, can sometimes help to express our insight into the nature of a core of meaning. The core of meaning of the economic aspect can be captured as an “avoidance of excess.” Economic normativity requires non-excessive actions. The negation of this negative formulation highlights that it refers to a

manner of having enough (and how many large businesses, with their incredible striving for excessive profits, do not know when they have earned *enough*). Without sensitivity to the modal demand of having enough, a person may simply ignore his/her responsibility for economic stewardship.

4. Dependence upon coherence

The core meaning of every aspect guarantees the uniqueness, indefinability and irreducibility of every aspect. Yet its unique meaning only comes to expression in its coherence with other aspects and it is recognized in the context of the distinction between aspects of things and things.

For example, similar to the important distinction between the concrete, many-sided historical process and its normative cultural-historical aspect, and similar to the distinction between actual language use and its sign function, we have to avoid the identification of art with its aesthetic aspect. A work of art functions in other aspects as well, albeit the case that the aesthetic aspect is dominant.

Finding appropriate terms to capture the unique meaning of this aspect caused serious differences of opinion, also within the tradition of reformational thinking. There are many contraries present in our everyday experience of life, such as those between logical and illogical, kind and hostile, legal and illegal, thrifty and wasteful, and beautiful and ugly. The latter contrary, known to us from early childhood, cannot be located in any other aspect than the aesthetic. Closely connected to this understanding of beauty, is that of harmony, explaining why one of the initial formulations of the meaning-nucleus of the aesthetic given by Dooyeweerd is *beautiful harmony*. Calvin Seerveld by contrast suggested that this designation should be discarded because it is burdened with distortions from the Greek culture and by the 19th century ideal of beauty.

In Greek culture, we indeed find a pagan view of beauty embedded in a particular understanding of harmony. It found expression in the Pythagorean conviction that everything is number, because the mutual relationship between the integers 1, 2, 3, and 4 apparently provides the basis for all harmony, such that the cosmos itself ought to be appreciated as a work of art. This formative harmony is opposed to the formless corruptibility and transience of the visible world of change. Ultimately, the Greek view of beauty and harmony is rooted in the radical opposition between form and the formless operative within Greek culture – an approach that cannot do justice to the unity and goodness of creation.

However, without becoming a victim of this Greek ideal of beauty (or even of that of the 19th century), it cannot be denied that the contrary *beautiful – ugly* belongs to the horizon of our experience of modal properties and that therefore it has to find a ‘home’ in a specific modal aspect. What should be guarded against, is selling out the nuclear meaning of the aesthetic to any specific art forms or positivizations of aesthetic style. We consider the aesthetic aspect as an example.

5. The meaning of the aesthetic aspect

The development in Seerveld’s thinking on the meaning of the aesthetic aspect is particularly significant when measured against an awareness of inevitable elementary (analogical) basic concepts. This development started with the notion of the “coherent symbolical objectification of meaning” (Seerveld, 1968:45). He particularly reacted against the Platonic view of beauty as a “matter of measure and proportion; a thing of beauty is one with appeasing, fitting harmony”. Later, he proceeded from ambiguity to allusivity. In an article on “Modal Aesthetics” the term allusivity surfaces (Seerveld, 1979:284 ff.). In a footnote he concedes, positively reacting to the criticism of A.T. Kruijff, that his idea of the “law of coherence” was redundant (Kruijff argued that coherence still made an appeal to the rejected notion of ‘harmony’). His account of the “ontic irreducibility” of allusiveness mentions related terms, such as “suggestie-rijk” (P.D. van der Walt) and “nuanceful” (L. Zuidervaart) (Seerveld, 1979:286). The implication of this change is that his well-known formulation of what constitutes art ought to be revised to read: “Art is the symbolical objectification of certain meaning aspects of a thing (better: “meaning-realities” – to accept a corrective comment from N. van Til), subject to the law of allusiveness” (Seerveld, 1979:290; see Seerveld, 1980:132; note 12). The fact that he also started to assign a significant aesthetic function to imagination requires a brief assessment as well – in the light of the conditioning role of the dimensions of aspects and entities in human knowing.

Human knowing indeed seems to be ‘gearing’ towards these two fundamental dimensions of reality, the knowing of modal aspects and knowledge of entities. The former is known through functional relations and the latter through imaging that takes on the shape of imagining in the uniquely human acquaintance with the world. These two legs of knowing – modally directed and entitary directed – imply each other and open the way to account for our knowledge of universality and individuality – compare the conceptions of Croce.

Knowledge has two forms: it is either intuitive knowledge or logical knowledge; knowledge obtained through the imagination or knowledge obtained through the intellect; knowledge of the individual or knowledge of the universal; of individual things or of the relations between them: it is, in fact, productive either of images or of concepts (Croce, 1953:1).

Remark: It should be noted in passing that the issue of invariance and constancy, as opposed to transience and changefulness, discussed by Zuidervaart in connection with his notes towards a social ontology of the arts (cf. Zuidervaart, 1995:41 ff.), needs to take into account Dooyeweerd's dependance on nominalism. We argue below that in a nominalistic fashion Dooyeweerd fuses universality at the factual side of reality – normally evinced in what is designated as lawfulness, law conformity or orderliness – with the law side of reality, such that entities are strictly individual.

However, imaginativity, as the manifestation of a specific directedness of human knowing towards the dimension of individuality-structures, cuts across this entire dimension and cannot be restricted to aesthetic imaginativity alone. The archeologist, Narr, correctly emphasizes that the human formative fantasy must be able to invent something different from what is presented to the senses (Narr, 1974:105 and Narr, 1976:99-101). This view is complementary to Kant, who defines the *Einbildungskraft* (imagination) as the capacity to have a representation of an object without its presence to the senses (Kant, 1787-B:151). This enable human beings to have a historical awareness: memory (historical past) and expectations or planning (historical future).

From a historical perspective, one may suspect that both Dooyeweerd and Seerveld, each in his own way, digested too much of the linguistic turn in modern philosophy – as a reaction to the conceptual rationalism of the 18th century and the historicism of the 19th century, Dooyeweerd switched from the idea of organic coherence to that of meaning coherence, and Seerveld explored his new understanding of symbolical objectification, ambiguity, and allusivity. The title of Croce's work of 1920 is quite significant: *Aesthetic, As science of expression and general linguistic* (see Croce, 1953 – 'expression' is indeed as "general linguistic" term). Also compare the terms used by Zuidervaart: the aesthetic qualifying function is designated as "interpretable expressions" (purely semantic-hermeneutical categories!). Even in 2001, when Seerveld once more argues in favor of 'allusivity', he remarks that it "is more sound for doing justice to the symbolic character of Western as well as non-Western craft and art" (Seerveld, 2001:163).

Croce, in his preface to *Aesthetic* (Naples, December 1901), writes,

If language is the first spiritual manifestation, and if the aesthetic form is language itself, taken in all its true scientific extension, it is hopeless to try to understand clearly the later and more complicated phases of the life of the spirit, when their first and simplest moment is ill known, mutilated and disfigured (Croce, 1953:xxvii).

One should not be surprised that Rookmaaker's first reaction to Seerveld's Ph.D. thesis (1958) was that in his aesthetics he argued the aesthetical aspect away (cf. Birtwistle, 1996:342).

The linguistic turn might have been more influential than it seemed to be at first. The strange thing about Seerveld's proposal is that, after he 'locates' "beautiful harmony" as being analogies of number and space (something surely not found in the nuclear meaning of either of these two aspects), these analogies scarcely form an integral part of his aesthetics. It seems as if he never managed to come to terms with the everyday reality of the normative contrary of what is experienced as beautiful and ugly. I cannot find any other modal aspect than the aesthetic to serve as the "home base" of the beautiful-ugly contrary – and that not merely as the numerical and spatial analogies within the aesthetic aspect as Seerveld later on attempted (Seerveld, 2001:175). It should be pointed out, furthermore, that the term harmonization – as used in a jural context when reference is made to the *harmonization of a multiplicity of legal interests* within a public legal order – says much more than the mere numerical and spatial analogies within the structure of the jural aspect. The numerical analogy concerns the unity in the multiplicity of legal norms – basic for any legal order – and the spatial analogy is reflected in jural relations of super- and subordination, next-to-each other, as well as in the understanding of a specific sphere of competence.

Remark: One should also keep in mind that the whole-parts relation is originally spatial in nature (cf. Strauss, 2002a). Without an awareness of this basic spatial relation – or analogies of it in aspects appearing later in the modal cosmic order – the notion of 'fit' (designated by Zuidervaart as a technical norm – 1995:54) and 'fittingness' (cf. Wolterstorff, 1987:96 ff.) would be meaningless. Aesthetic 'fit' and 'fittingness' therefore first of all reflect modal spatial analogies in cosmic later modalities. Although the meaning of any aspect can only be revealed in its coherence with other modal aspects, as we repeatedly pointed out, it must be clear that the unique meaning of the aesthetic aspect cannot be captured merely by referring to one or more of its retrocipatory analogies.

Duncan Roper provides a good overview of different reformational perspectives on the aesthetic in an article on this theme (cf. Roper, 1992:17). He may be correct in pointing out that the scope of imaginativity transcends the aesthetic as such. If imaginativity concerns our epistemic involvement in knowing the entitary dimension of reality it certainly can take on any normative modal qualification. However, where Roper wants to support Seerveld in seeing the “kernel” of the aesthetic aspect in “suggestiveness, nuancefulness or allusiveness” (Roper, 1992:8), we have to pay attention to the following considerations.

These three terms are not synonymous. Suggestiveness and allusivity relate to the ambiguity of lingual phenomena, i.e. they stem from the sign mode of reality where meaning presupposes choice and requires interpretation. Moreover, the term *nuancefulness* unmistakably analogically reflects nothing but precisely the meaning of the numerical and the spatial aspects of reality – those aspects in which Seerveld wants to “locate” and restrict the meaning of beauty/harmony and from which he wants to escape in his characterization of the core meaning of the aesthetic! Nuancefulness is synonymous with *many-sidedness* – and it does not require much reflection to realize that the term *many* originally appears in the numerical mode while the element of “sidedness” refers to spatial configurations or sides. Let us summarize the situation.

Initially, in order to side-step numerical and spatial analogies, Seerveld introduced his idea of the “law of meaning-coherence” – until it became clear that the term coherence still evinces a spatial descent. But afterwards – with the introduction of nuancefulness and allusivity – the same fate strikes again: Seerveld (and Roper) in their designation of what they consider to be the supposed unique and irreducible meaning-nucleus of the aesthetic aspect simply do not escape from the trap of numerical and spatial analogies. In her Ph.D. dissertation on the problem of meaning and identity in the art of George Grosz, Magda Van Niekerk explicitly discusses various stances within the reformational tradition regarding the position of the aesthetic aspect. At different places in this dissertation she formulates a variety of arguments challenging Seerveld’s postulation of a different modal order (see Van Niekerk, 1993).

All-in-all it seems that a detailed analysis of analogical concepts substantially contributes to an understanding of the core meaning of the aesthetic aspect. Acknowledging the numerical and spatial descent of the term nuancefulness (many-sidedness) rules out the possibility of using it as a designation of the meaning-nucleus of the aesthetic aspect.

6. Conclusion

What binds the legacy of reformational philosophy to the history of philosophy and the various academic disciplines is the undeniable diversity of modal aspects. However, instead of attempting to explain all of them merely in terms of one or of some of them, the reformational tradition accepts them as given and on that basis then sets out to account for their uniqueness and mutual coherence, while in principle (although in practice we may still fail) liberate us from surrendering to something temporal elevated to the level of the divine. In this way it at once also developed a significant contribution to a better understanding of the basic concepts of the disciplines, ultimately referring beyond creation the God who created and sustained it and Who will bring this universe to its final destination, the coming kingdom of God.

Bibliography

- ALTNER, G. 1976. *The nature of human behaviour*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- BEHE, M.J. 2003. *Darwin's black box*. New York: The Free Press, Paperback edition.
- BIRTWISTLE, G.M. 1996. Filosofie van de kunst en de aethetica. In: *Kennis en werkelijkheid*. Van Woudenberg, R. et al. (Eds). Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperhijn. pp. 342-370.
- CROCE, B. 1953. *Aesthetic as science of expression and general linguistic*. 3rd impression of revised ed. Transl. from the definitive Italian edition of 1920. New York: Noonday.
- DEKKER, C., MEESTER, R., & VAN WOUDEBERG, R. 2005. *Schitterend ongeluk of sporen van ontwerp?* Kampen: Ten Have.
- DOOYEWEERD, H. 1931. *Crisis in de humanistische staatsleer*. Amsterdam: N.V. Boekhandel W. Ten Have.
- DOOYEWEERD, H. 1941. De transcendentale critiek van het wijsgeerig denken en de grondslagen van de wijsgeerige denkgemeenschap van het avondland. *Philosophia reformata*, 6:1-20.
- DOOYEWEERD, H. 1996. *Christian philosophy and the meaning of history*. Collected Works, B Series, Volume 1. General Editor Strauss, D.F.M. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen.
- DOOYEWEERD, H. 1997. *A new critique of theoretical thought*. Collected Works of Herman Dooyeweerd. A-Series Vols. I-IV. General Editor Strauss, D.F.M. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen.
- DOOYEWEERD, H. 2002. Encyclopedia of the Science of Law, Volume I, Introduction, A Series, Volume 8. General Editor Strauss, D.F.M. Special Editor Cameron, A.C. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen.
- DOOYEWEERD, H. 2003. *Roots of Western culture, pagan, secular and Christian options*. B Series, Volume 3. General Editor Strauss, D.F.M. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen.
- KANT, I. 1787. *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. 2nd ed. Hamburg: Felix Meiner edition (1956).
- McINTIRE, C.T. (Ed.) 1985. *The legacy of Herman Dooyeweerd*. Lanham: University Press of America.
- NARR, K.J. 1974. Tendenzen in der Urgeschichtsforschung. Luyten, N.A. (Ed.).
- NARR, K.J. 1976. Cultural Achievements of Early Man. In: Altner, G., *The nature of human behaviour*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- ROPER, D. 1992. The Reformational contribution to aesthetic theory. *Issues*, 7: 3-31. November.

- SEERVELD, C.G. 1958. Benedetto Croce's earlier aesthetic theories and literary criticism. Kampen: J.H. Kok N.V.
- SEERVELD, C.G. 1968. *A Christian critique of art and literature*. Toronto: Guardian.
- SEERVELD, C.G. 1979. Modal aesthetics: Preliminary questions with and opening hypothesis. In: Kraay, J. & Tol, A. (Eds), *Hearing and doing, philosophical essays dedicated to H.E. van Runner*. Toronto: Wedge Publishing Foundation. pp.263-294.
- SEERVELD, C.G. 1980. *Rainbows for the fallen world: Aesthetic life and aesthetic task*. Toronto.
- SEERVELD, C.G. 1985: Dooyeweerd's legacy for aesthetics: Modal law theory. In: McIntire, C.T. (Ed.), *The legacy of Herman Dooyeweerd*. Lanham: University Press of America. pp. 41-79.
- SEERVELD, C.G. 2001. Christian aesthetic bread for the world. *Philosophia reformata*, 66(2):155-177.
- STRAUSS, D.F.M. 1973. *Begrip en idee*. Assen: Van Gorcum.
- STRAUSS, D.F.M. 2002. Philosophical reflections on continuity. In: *Acta academica*, 34(3): 1-32.
- WOLTERSTORFF, N. 1987. *Art in action*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- ZUIDERVAART, L. 1995. Fantastic things: critical notes towards a social ontology of the arts. *Philosophia reformata*:37-54.