Introducing Christian Philosophy

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Abstract

Establishing a new philosophical school of thought in the course of its development naturally generates the need for understandable introductions. The new philosophical movement, initially known as "De Wijsbegeerte der Wetdsidee" (the Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea), is no exception. After its main contours took shape during the twenties and thirties of the previous century, its innovating and penetrating systematic analyses inspired first of all J.M. Spier to write such an Introduction. The fourth edition of a largely expanded version appeared in 1950 and the second edition of its English translation in 1976. After establishing special chairs in Reformational Philosophy at various state universities, the respective professors each wrote their own orientations in this philosophy (Popma, Mekkes, and Van Riessen). This process was continued in the appearance of a new generation of Introductions (Kalsbeek, Strauss and Hommes). Soon introductory texts, providing an opportunity for their authors to introduce new insights and developments, entered the scene as well. Hart published a work on "Understanding our World" and Jan Dengerink one on the meaning of reality. Roy Clouser wrote his The Myth of Religious Neutrality and Strauss published a work on Philosophy: Discipline of the Disciplines. Recently we witnessed the appearance of a number of 21st century Introductions, published by Troost, Bartholomew and Goheen and Ouweneel. While appreciating these new efforts the main focus of this article is directed at demonstrating that

simplifying matters may often result in inaccuracte and even mistaken conceptions, illustrated in terms of examples taken from the works of Bartholomew and Goheen, and Ouweneel. The article is concluded with reference by emphasizing the need for a different kind of introduction not yet available in print.

1.   An array of introductory works

Almost a hundred years ago Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven commenced their academic careers and before 1920 obtained their respective PhD degrees. Dooyeweerd submitted his PhD in the Science of Law in 1917 (on the *Cabinet in Dutch Constitutional Law*) whilst Vollenhoven completed his PhD on the *Foundations of Mathematics* in 1918. During the early twenties they jointly developed the first rudimentary design of their new understanding of reality, which initially became known as the *Philosophy of the Law-Idea* and eventually was designated as the *Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea*. Although they differed on some minor issues, they presented their new philosophical insights by accentuating what they agreed upon.

Since 1926 the new movement of reformational philosophy acquired momentum and soon counted among its adherents scholars from all over the world. Owing to the all-encompassing and penetrating analyses advanced within this young philosophy and in particular, as a result of the relatively complex theory of reality developed within reformational philosophy, a need for easy-to-understand *Introductions* emerged. As a result a number of introductions were written soon.

In this regard ground-breaking work was done already in 1937 by J.M. Spier with his first Introduction, "Founded on God's Word" (*Op Gods Woord Gegrond*). It was followed by "What is Calvinistic Philosophy" (*Wat is Calvinistische Wijsbegeerte*) in 1950 and in the same year the fourth, revised and expanded edition, of his more extensive work, "Introduction to the Philosophy of the Law-Idea" (*Inleiding in de Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee*), marked the growing interest in this new philosophical trend. The second edition of the English translation of this work appeared in 1976.

The Association for Calvinist philosophy soon established special chairs in reformational philosophy at various state universities in the Netherlands and almost all of these professors wrote their own Introductions to the *Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea*. These were produced by Van Riessen (1959,

1963, 1970), Popma (1956) and Mekkes (English translation, 2010). The last *Introduction* by Spier appeared in an Afrikaans translation (Spier, 1972).

The next generation of *Introductions* commenced with Kalsbeek (1970), Strauss (1980) and Hommes (1982). At the same time the second and third generations produced a number of more substantial works which may serve as introductory texts and at once provided an opportunity for their authors to introduce new insights and developments. Henk Hart published his work "Understanding our World" in 1984 and Jan Dengerink delivered a work on the meaning of reality (1986). The contribution of Roy Clouser, *The Myth of Religious Neutrality*, should also be mentioned – the second revised edition of his work appeared in 2005.

Within this category Strauss published his work on *Philosophy: Discipline of the Disciplines* (2009). The intellectual biography on Dooyeweerd, written by Marcel Verburg should here be mentioned as well (1989).

The most recent genuine *Introductions* were authored by Troost: *Antropocentrische Totaliteitswetenschap, Inleiding in de 'reformatorische wijsbegeerte'* (2005 – an English translation appeared in 2013) by Bartholomew and Goheen (2013) and by Willem Ouweneel (*Wisdom for Thinkers, An Introduction to Christian Philosophy* – 2014). In the same year Ouweneel also published *Power in Service. An Introduction to Christian Political thought* and *What then* IS *theology? An Introduction to Christian Theology*.

The above-mentioned works are all *Introductions* to reformational philosophy which more or less followed the same pattern. They focus on the ultimate (religious) foundation of philosophy, the dimension of modal aspects, the dimension of time, the dimension of entity structures and epistemological issues (among them: *truth*). This not necessarily done in the same order. Popma, for example, commences with the idea of structure, proceeds to the theory of modal aspects, to what is individual, what is temporal and only then addresses the religious root-dimension, concluding with a chapter on knowledge. Van Riessen on the other hand starts with reflections on *wisdom* and the relationship between philosophy and religion, then explains the nature of science, and then proceeds to an analysis of law and meaning, the modes of being and finally the existing entities.

Two *Introductions* gave prominence to Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique, namely Hommes (1982) and Bartholomew and Goheen (2013). Interestingly, these two works do not refer to the eight points of immanent criticism on Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique formulated by Strauss in 1973 (Part

II, Chapter 2, pp.,89-129). In 1984, on request of the Editorial Board of *Philosophia Reformata*, an assessment of the epistemological discussions within *Reformational Philosophy*, particularly in relation to Dooyeweerd's view of the *Gegenstand*-relation, appeared in this Journal. The most recent explanation of the problems attached to the idea of a *Gegenstand*-relation is found in Strauss 2009 (pp.359-370).

Dooyeweerd is widely known for his theory of modal aspects (law-spheres), but in 1970 at the occasion of the Annual Conference of the Association for Reformational Philosophy he said that although it is best known for this part of his philosophy, it still is the least understood part of it!

Although an introduction to reformational philosophy is supposed to be understandable to the newcomer, this does not entail that it should not still meet the standards regarding the basic systematic distinctions which it presents. Selecting some sections and explanations found in the work of Bartholomew and Goheen and in some of the introductions written by Ouweneel will demonstrate how difficult this task actually is!

We shall illustrate it with reference to two recent *Introductions*, the one published by Bartholomew and Goheen (2013) and the one written by Ouweneel (2014). But keep in mind that the critical remarks following below do not in any way have scant regard to what these authors have done. Wherever *misinterpreted* them I would be the first to acknowledge it.

2. Assessing some elements of the *Systematic and Narrative Introduction* of Bartholomew and Goheen

2.1 The basic structure of reformational philosophy

It is unfortunate that the authors of this work attempt to explain Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique on the basis of a less thorough understanding of it (as will be argued below) and without taking into consideration the inconsistencies and antinomies present in this critique. It would have been better to omit this altogether and stick to a positive statement in which the direction-giving centrality of the human heart is mentioned, such as it is indeed done on page 245 of this chapter where they state: "Dooyeweerd aims to show that all thinking is rooted in religion – that is, in the heart of the knower."

If the aim in this part of the work is simply to present a concise account of what *Reformational Philosophy* entails, one should at least expect an exposition of the *basic structure* of this philosophy. This should first of all

pay attention to ultimate commitments (religious ground-motives) and to the idea of law (wetsidee/transcendental ground-Idea) underlying all theoretical thinking, as it is done in Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique.

In addition, an explanation is needed concerning the distinction between God and creation (acknowledging creational laws as God's command for existence) as well as the four dimensions of created reality, namely (i) the central religious dimension, (ii) the dimension of time, (iii) the dimension of modal aspects and (iv) the dimension of individuality-structures (entity structures).

Precisely because nothing within creation should be *deified*, is it important to emphasize that this philosophy advocates a *non-reductionist ontology* (normally Dooyeweerd gives preference to the term "cosmology", but in some instances he does use the term "ontic" – for instance when he explains that the modal aspects are "ontic aprioris" of reality). In the context of a *non-reductionist ontology* the fundamental difference between the logical principle of contradiction and the ontic principle of the excluded antinomy (*principium exclusae antinomiae*) should be the guiding star, because in its interaction with non-Christian trends of thought the *Reformational Philosophy* of Dooyeweerd finds its most powerful instrument in demonstrating to which antinomies the absolutization of anything within creation leads.

2.2 Scholarly communication

This forms the basis of meaningful scholarly communication: commence with *immanent criticism* and *factual criticism* and then proceed by articulating an alternative systematic perspective. In elaborating his non-reductionist ontology Dooyeweerd emphasizes the need for fellow reformational thinkers working independently within their own (special scientific) fields. Dooyeweerd writes: "I am strongly convinced that for the fruitful working out of this philosophy, in a genuinely scientific manner, there is needed a staff of fellow-labourers who would be in a position to think through its basic ideas in the special scientific fields" (Dooyeweerd, 1997-I:vii).

The implication of this statement of Dooyeweerd is that any introduction to his philosophy should include a demonstration of its significance for the various academic disciplines. It also explains at once why Dooyeweerd first tested his new insights within his own field of specialization before he explored their general philosophical impact: "I wished to assure myself that this philosophical theory has a principal value for special scientific thought before I drew any provisional systematic conclusions" (Dooyeweerd, NC-I:vi-vii). We shall return to this at the end of this article.

Insofar as Bartholomew and Goheen addressed most of these issues, their account appears fairly balanced, but once the detail elements of their explanations are considered, problems arise. Consequently we have to highlight a number of critical issues.

2.3 Cosmic Time rejected

Interestingly these authors simply reject Dooyeweerd's entire philosophy of time without any argument or reference – as if no one takes his philosophy of time serious! They state: "His theory of time is controversial, and it has few followers nowadays" (Bartholomew & Goheen 2013:248). For example, within the broad scope of Dooyeweerd's philosophy of time, when compared to the standard restriction of time to *physical time*, one cannot account for *different modes of time*. In his *Encyclopedia of Law* Dooyeweerd points out that *jural time* sometimes requires a different "calendar", recognizing no public holidays and Sundays in its contractual or legislative "count-down", while one also has to acknowledge juridical laws having a *retroactive effect*. Through a declaration of age (*venia aetatis*) or as an effect of getting married, the jural time involved in "coming of age" may differ from the generally specified age of majority in the legal order of Western states.

Likewise, empirical biological research has shown that biotic time-phases, such as birth, growth, maturation, ageing and dying, are not (like *physical* time) *homogeneous*. And what about *emotional time*, where five minutes of a boring event may *feel* like an hour, whereas a fascinating experience of an hour may feel like five minutes? The physicist Stafleu has explored the uniqueness of time within the first four modal aspects and related these orders to the history of time-measurement:

> *This is most clearly shown by an analysis of the historical development of time measurement. Initially, time measurement was simply done by counting (days, months, years, etc.) Later on, time was measured by the relative position of the sun or the stars in the sky, with or without the help of instruments like the sundial. In still more advanced cultures, time was measured by utilizing the regular motion of more or less complicated clockworks. Finally, in recent developments time is measured via irreversible processes, for example, in atomic clocks (Stafleu, 1980:16).*

The centrality of the human self-hood

Bartholomew and Goheen quote Dooyeweerd (page 244) saying that "the great turning point in my thought was marked by the discovery of the religious root of thought itself" and on the next page we find the (above-quoted) statement: "Dooyeweerd aims to show that all thinking is rooted in religion – that is, in the heart of the knower."

After this positive mentioning of the centrality of the human heart it is therefore strange to find the remark later on that "Dooyeweerd has a rather unusual concept of the transcendental heart" (Bartholomew & Goheen, 2013:247) which is further elaborated in footnote 9 on this page: "Basically Dooyeweerd turns Kant's transcendental ego into a transcendental heart. This revolutionizes Kant's philosophy but introduces serious problems since Dooyeweerd argues that the heart is supratemporal."

Already in 1971 Henk Geertsema made the same mistake. At the time a response to Geertsema's misunderstanding appeared in *Philosophia Reformata* where it is shown that Dooyeweerd does distinguish between *transcendent* and *transcendental*, but that he never designates the human heart as *transcendental* (see Strauss, 1971:157-160).

Add to this that Dooyeweerd responded to the objection raised by Van Peursen regarding the term "supra-temporal" by saying:

> *Now I am not once more going to enter into a discussion regarding the question if it is desirable to call the heart, as the religious centre of human existence, supra-temporal. It is sufficiently known that amongst the adherents of the* Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea *there is no consensus in this regard. Probably the term supra-temporal, with which I never meant a static condition but merely intended to capture a central direction of consciousness transcending cosmic time, can best be replaced by another one"* (Dooyeweerd, response to Van Peursen on NC in PR, 1960:137).

Note that when it is said that there is "a central direction of consciousness transcending cosmic time" then "transcending cosmic time" applies to this *central direction* of consciousness and *not* to the heart *itself*. On the basis of an unfounded misunderstanding (probably derived from Geertsema's artikel in the Dooyeweerd legacy book of the 1996 conference at Redeemer) Bartholomew and Goheen both accept and reject Dooyeweerd's understanding of the heart.

2.4 Attempting to explain Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique

The account of the transcendental critique reflects multiple misunderstandings.

(a) In connection with the *Gegenstand*-relation (in which the logical aspect of our act of thought is opposed to the non-logical aspects of reality – see Dooyeweerd, 1997-I: 39), it is said by Bartholomew and Goheen that "*Abstraction* involves separating off part of reality from its connectedness with all of reality and analyzing it independently" (Bartholomew & Goheen, 2013:246). This contradicts what Dooyeweerd says in connection with the *resistance* of the non-logical aspects when theoretically abstracted. He

states: "This resistance arises from the fact that, even when theoretically abstracted, the modal structure of the non-logical aspect *x* which is made into a 'Gegenstand' continues to express its coherence (of meaning) with the modal aspects *y* which has not been chosen as the field of inquiry" (Dooyeweerd, 1997-I:40). The entire footnote 1 on this page underscores this continued connectedness. It should be noted that in *Philosophy: Discipline of the Disciplines* (Strauss 2009) Strauss articulated immanent critique on Dooyeweerd's antinomic notion of the *Gegenstand*-relation (see PDD:360-368 – in particular the 8 points of immanent criticism (Strauss, 2009:364-365) and the alternative proposal not exhibiting these problems (Strauss, 2009:367).

(b) Bartholomew and Goheen do not properly understand the relationship between the (i) *transcendental ground-idea* and the idea of an (ii) *Archimedean Point*.

Re. (ii): Dooyeweerd stipulates three requirements "which the Archimedean point must satisfy" in his *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* (Dooyeweerd, 1997-I:12). His own view states: "The Archimedean point of philosophy is chosen in the new root of mankind in Christ, in which by regeneration we have part in our reborn selfhood" (Dooyeweerd, 1997-I:99).

Bartholomew and Goheen confuse (i) and (ii) (Bartholomew & Goheen, 2013:246). The transcendental ground-idea is a *hypothesis* which brings to theoretical expression what gives direction from the heart of a thinker. The transcendental ground-idea is a triunity of ideas "through the medium of which the religious basic motive controls this thought" (Dooyeweerd, 1997-I:88). It concerns an idea of the *Archè* (Origin), and idea of the meaning-totality of creation (given in Christ as the fullness of meaning of creation), and an idea of the uniqueness and mutual coherence of the diversity within creation.

2.5 The ambiguous term "religion"

It is a pity that authors within the reformational tradition, particularly in introductory works, sometimes forget to alert readers to the fact that within reformational philosophy the term "religion" is employed in such a way that it should not be confused with *cultic activities* that are qualified by the certitudinal or fiduciary aspect of reality. First of all we have to remember, as Dooyeweerd on the first page of *Series B*, 2014. Volume 12 of his *Collected Works* [*Christian philosophy and the meaning of history*] states: "Abraham Kuyper, under whose inspiring leadership this new reflection took place, pointed out that the great movement of the Reformation could not continue

to be restricted to the reformation of the church and theology. Its biblical point of departure touched the religious root of the whole of temporal life and had to assert its validity in all of its sectors."

The first time the term "religion" surfaces it should be explained that the word *religion* has two different but related senses: (1) it may refer to the radical, central and integral depth dimension of creation, touching the heart of being human and therefore giving direction to all the issues of life proceeding from this core dimension; (2) it may designate one amongst the many articulations of life, familiar to us in faith and confessional activities found alongside all the other differentiated issues of life (see Proverbs 4:23). One may reserve the word *religion* for (1) and *faith* for (2), or alternatively employ the expressions religion-1 and religion-2. In English, the word religion is normally used to designate only the faith function of reality or activities qualified by it, so-called "religious endeavours". The important distinction is therefore between religion-2 (understood in the aspectual sense of faith), and religion-1 in its life-encompassing radical and integral sense, where radical means *touching the root of human existence,* and integral means *embracing all of life*. However, it is often unproblematic to use the term "religion/religious" when it is clear from the context which meaning-nuance is intended, namely religion-1 or religion-2.

2.6 Some additional shortcomings

There might have been a space restriction, but the exposition of the four ground-motives paid the toll. It is too concise to convey the powerful reality of these motives at work in the history of Western civilization. In addition their discussion of Dooyeweerd's ontology lacks precision. They list the items "central to a Christian transcendental ground idea" (Bartholomew & Goheen, 2013: 253) – and then mention five items:

(a) Christ as Archimedean point;   (b) the anthithesis;
(c) the Origin;   (d) the meaning-totality; and
(e) the coherence in the modal diversity of meaning.

However, none of what they mention here is "central to a Christian transcendental ground idea"! Apart from the fact that Christ is not the Archimedean point of a Christian philosophy (see Dooyeweerd, 1997-I:99 quoted above), we have to realize that Dooyeweerd claims that an *idea* of the Origin (and not the Origin as such), an *idea* of the meaning-totality (and not the meaning-totality as such), and an *idea* of the meaning-diversity (and not this diversity as such) constitute the triunity of transcendental ideas designated by him as the "transcendental ground-idea of philosophy" (Dooyeweerd 1997-I:68 ff.).

Bartholomew and Goheen explains modal aspects by mentioning that a concrete entity like a book functions in all fifteen aspects of reality and then the various aspects with their meaning-nuclei are mentioned. Unfortunately, just as we find in Willem Ouweneel's "Wisdom for Thinkers" (see Ouweneel, 2014:39-58), no account of the *full structure* of a modal aspect is given. Of the ten features captured in the Sketch below only *two* are mentioned.
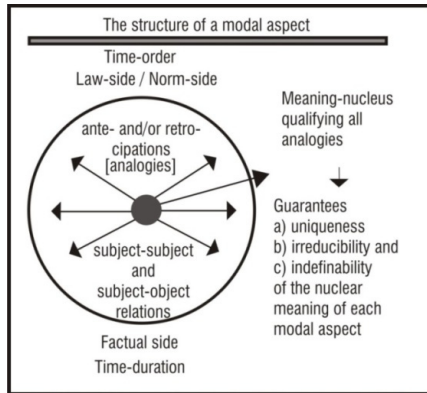
Sketch 1

The discussion of "Individuality Structures" in the work of Bartholomew and Goheen kicks off by correctly distinguishing between the structures *of* concrete things and God's law *for* such things. Yet what was not realized is that Dooyeweerd himself *confuses* the *law-conformity* of entities with the *law for* their existence. In Strauss 2009 a detailed account is given of the problems inherent in Dooyeweerd's preference for the expression *individuality structures* (see Strauss, 2009:449-453). Here (and elsewhere in Strauss, 2009) one can find good reasons why it is preferable to speak of *type laws* (also advocated by Roy Clouser) and not of individuality-structures.[1]

2.7   Bartholomew and Goheen on the nature of reformational philosophy

The remarks by these authors on *reformational philosophy* as "Missional" and as "Orthodox, Evangelical Christianity" are well-formulated and inspirational. Their aim is to introduce key elements of this philosophy to students by

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1   Although this work received the Dooyeweerd prize for work in the fields of systematic philosophy or the history of philosophy that most furthers the cause of the "Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea" (Amsterdam, August 18th, 2011) one does not find any signs that Bartholomew and Goheen are acquainted with its contents.

paying attention to Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique and the basic contours of his Christian philosophy, alongside an explanation of *Reformed Epistemology, postmodernity* and various historical matters.
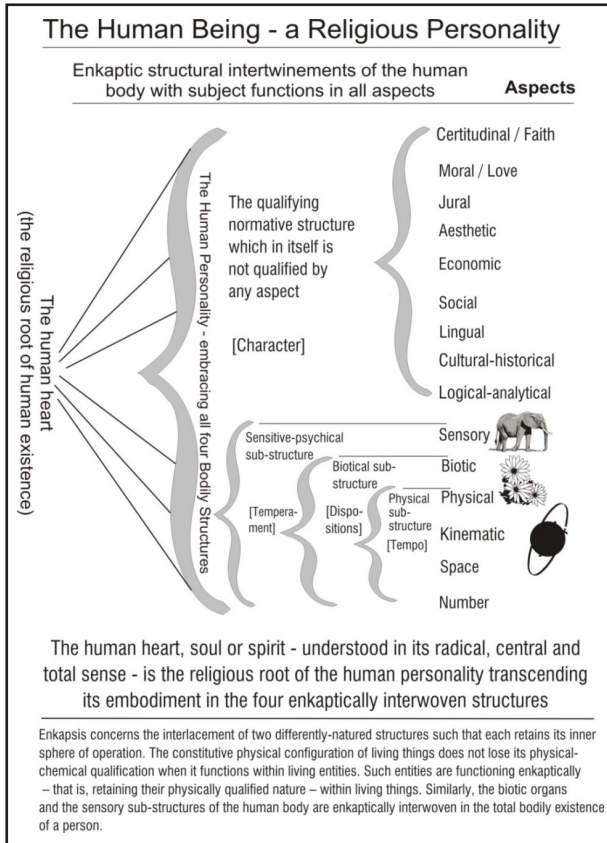
Unfortunately their Chapter 15, which deals with reformational philosophy, in spite of the goodwill of Bartholomew and Goheen, is burdened by multiple errors which will be briefly discussed now.

It is certainly fine when (on page 265) these authors appreciate the aesthetic aspect in terms of Seerveld's view of *allusivity* (*nuancefulness*). Yet one might have expected a reference to and a brief interaction with the genesis of this view of Seerveld. Initially Seerveld wanted to avoid the idea of "beauty" or "beautiful harmony" because it was considered to be a Greek aberration. His own alternative was to speak of "coherent symbolical objectification of meaning" and subsequently of ambiguity, until his ripened perspective opts for *allusivity* (sometimes also associated with *imaginitivity*). However, in the "Werkcolleges" of Van Riessen in 1969 it was pointed out that "coherence" is just a synonym for *continuous spatial extension* which is supposed to be connected in all its *cohering* parts. Unfortunately, while trying to move away from the numerical and spatial descent of the Greek idea of beauty, allusivity or nuancefulness became a victim of the same fate, because nuancefulness simply (aesthetically) reflects the meaning of the numerical and spatial aspects: many-sidedness (*many = number* and *side = space*), thus arriving at the position it wanted to avoid from the beginning (see Strauss, 2009:250-253).

Another problematic explanation is found in the attempt of Bartholomew and Goheen to explain Dooyeweerd's theory of entities (individuality-structures), of being human and his transcendental critique.

One of the most basic distinctions of Dooyeweerd in respect of individuality-structures is misunderstood when we read that the "highest mode in which an entity functions as a subject is called its qualifying mode" (Bartholomew & Goheen, 2013:255). This remark is wrong for it ignores Dooyeweerd's analysis of different types of objects. A painting is a cultural artefact with an *objective aesthetic qualifying function* in spite of the fact that its highest *subject function* is found in the physical aspect! A painting is therefore not qualified by its highest *subject function*. When Bartholomew and Goheen point out that "an entity does not cease functioning in the modes above its qualifying one" they continue the mistaken view that the highest subject function is the qualifying function of an entity (see Bartholomew & Goheen, 2013:256).

In discussing the *Human Person* Bartholomew and Goheen use Calvin Seerveld's "Tin-Can Theory" (Bartholomew & Goheen, 2013:257-259). Having mentioned that a person functions in all modes of reality one expects them to continue and explain Dooyeweerd's novel theory of *enkaptic interlacements* – but nothing of this creative theory is presented. What one would have expected is captured in the Sketch 2 below – The Human Being – a Religious Personality:

The Human Being - a Religious Personality

Enkaptic structural intertwinements of the human body with subject functions in all aspects

Aspects

The Human Personality - embracing all four Bodily Structures

The Human Personality

The qualifying normative structure which in itself is not qualified by any aspect

[Character]

Certitudinal / Faith
Moral / Love
Jural
Aesthetic
Economic
Social
Lingual
Cultural-historical
Logical-analytical

The human heart (the religious root of human existence)

Sensitive-psychical sub-structure
Biotical sub-structure
Physical sub-structure [Tempo]

[Tempera-ment] [Dispo-sitions]

Sensory
Biotic
Physical
Kinematic
Space
Number

The human heart, soul or spirit - understood in its radical, central and total sense - is the religious root of the human personality transcending its embodiment in the four enkaptically interwoven structures

Enkapsis concerns the interlacement of two differently-natured structures such that each retains its inner sphere of operation. The constitutive physical configuration of living things does not lose its physical-chemical qualification when it functions within living entities. Such entities are functioning enkaptically – that is, retaining their physically qualified nature – within living things. Similarly, the biotic organs and the sensory sub-structures of the human body are enkaptically interwoven in the total bodily existence of a person.

Sketch 2

Bartholomew and Goheen correctly explain that humans are not *qualified* by the "pistic mode" (Bartholomew & Goheen, 2013:258). But when the decisive step was expected, namely stating that the act-structure (normative structure) is the qualifying but in itself an unqualified structure of the human body, the

argument collapses in a reference to Seerveld regarding the embodied human openness to receive God's Word, which in itself is correct but is irrelevant at the point where the qualifying structure had to be explained.

This leads us to their remarks about human society. Although the points regarding human society which they conveyed, namely *sphere-sovereignty* and the *process of societal differentiation*, are well-formulated and to the point (Bartholomew & Goheen, 2013:260), it would have been helpful if, by contrast, a succinct characterization of the relatively undifferentiated medieval society would have been incorporated, such as the *feudal system*, *manors* and the *guild-system*. On the next page the word "founded" replaces the need for the idea of a *foundational function* (point 1). They do not explain how Dooyeweerd's distinction between "verbande, gemeenschappen en maatschapsverhoudingen" is rendered in English and apparently they did not realize that the Dutch term "verband" was translated as "organized community" in English. They speak about natural and social institutions (page 261, point 1) and then continues in point 2 by mistakenly calling the state, the family and the church "communities" instead of "organized communities". Dooyeweerd connects "verbande" to a historical foundational function – not mentioned by Bartholomew and Goheen. For Dooyeweerd "verbande" are *historically founded communities*. One way to translate the Dutch term "verband" is to refer to it as a "societal collectivity" (see the argumentation in Strauss, 2006 Chapter 4).

What is said about structural and confessional pluralism is also sound and worth explaining. However, it could only be done in a meaningful way if it is preceded by a more articulated explanation of the nature of the *state* and its place within a *differentiated society*. Such an explanation illuminates why the only way to speak of the citizens of a state is precisely by *disregarding* all the social ties citizens may have in diverse non-political societal entities. Asking whether or not a person is a citizen of a state is therefore at once *disregarding* a person's denominational stance, whether or not a person is married, studies or teaches at a particular university, is a member of a sport club, or has shares in one or another business enterprise. Yet, there is an important catch in speaking of *disregarding* the various non-state ties of citizens, because every one of those connections forms part of a societal entity with its own particular *legal interests*. Therefore, while disregarding these societal ties the government of a modern constitutional state under the rule of law at the same time has to integrate these legal interests within its unified public legal order, while acknowledging that the internal spheres of operation of these non-political entities are not *generated* or *brought into being* by the state. The state can merely *acknowledge* these legal interests,

with their accompanying limited (non-state) spheres of competence. If these spheres of competence would be derived from the state – and not merely acknowledged – then the state in fact would have been the all-encompassing totality of human society – which then would have been totalitarian in the fullest sense of the word, eliminating every form of structural pluralism.[2]

Reconsidering some explanations found in the introductions of Ouweneel.

3.   Wisdom for Thinkers

3.1 Ouweneel on modal aspects

Already in Chapter 3 Ouweneel inserted a paragraph on "Properties of Modal Aspects" (Ouweneel, 2014:51-52) and in Chapter 4 he expands this discussion of "Law-Spheres" (Ouweneel, 2014:59 ff.). But nowhere does he actually provide the reader with a concise presentation of the *structure* of a modal aspect. What I have in mind is something like Sketch 1 inserted earlier. There are at least 10 criteria for identifying modal aspects – a crucial issue not addressed by Ouweneel (see Strauss, 2009:77-79).

We restrict ourselves to Chapter 4 in order to highlight additional systematic problems in "Wisdom for Thinkers".

Owing to the modal universality of the modal aspects all things, events and processes function within them – therefore they are, strictly speaking, not *aspects of matters of fact* (repeated in the second last paragraph on page 60). Matters of fact function within them. This error is found throughout the work.

3.2 Is and ought

Ouweneel has a confused understanding of *is* and *ought* – "natural laws tell us what is, whereas norms tell us what ought to be" (Ouweneel, 2014:61). This goes back to Kant and the neo-Kantian Baden school (Rickert and Windelband distinguished between *generalizing* natural sciences and *individualizing* humanities or between *nomothetic* and *idiographic* sciences). An illogical concept, a revolutionary event, etc. are all factual givens (belonging to the "is") within the *normative* aspects. Both within the natural

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2   In a different book, *Reintegrating Social Theory* (RST) [Peter Lang, 2006], Strauss has shown that Dooyeweerd should *liberate* his classification of forms of social interaction from their *foundational* function, because by doing this one cannot properly distinguish between *marriage* and the *nuclear family*. For him they are both biotically founded and ethically qualified communities (Strauss, 2006:248-251).

modes and in the norming modes do we find the correlation of law-side and factual side.

The notion of "permanent universal norms" (Ouweneel, 2014:63) employs a kinematic analogy within the physical aspect instead of accounting for a compound basic concept of all the humanities. An encompassing formulation of a principle, employing terms derived from the first nine modal aspects, reads as follows: "A principle is a universal and constant point of departure that can only be made valid through the actions of a competent organ (person or institution) in possession of an accountable (responsible) free will enabling a normative or antinormative application of the principle concerned relative to the challenge of a proper interpretation of the unique historical circumstances in which it has to take place" (Strauss, 2009:297).

Within the normative aspects there is a difference between "a" (or "non"): the words "ahistorical" and "non-historical" point at an aspect *different* from the historical mode. What is historically antinormative is designated as "un-historical". Ouweneel uses the word "ahistorical" where it should have been "un-historical" (Ouweneel, 2014:69). On the same page a similar mistake is made with the term "asocial".

3.3 Entities and aspects

Sometimes a mode of speech is used by Ouweneel reflecting a confusion of entities and aspects, for example when he states that numbers *function* as subjects (Ouweneel, 2104:66). The proper way to address this issue is to say that numbers are numerical subjects for only entities *function* in aspects. It is therefore meaningless to say that modal subjects function within aspects. Likewise, instead of saying (on the same page) that geometrical figures *function* as subjects within the spatial mode, one can simply state that they *are* spatial subjects. Of course spatial figures evince numerical analogies, such as dimension (law-side) and magnitude (factual side). As a one-dimensional spatial subject a line presupposes the meaning of number (its dimension is specified by the number 1 and its spatial extension is captured in its length, also specified by a number). *Dimension* and *magnitude* are therefore numerical analogies within the spatial aspect.

When it comes to the kinematic mode (still on page 66), we once more meet a *reification* of the functional nature of an aspect, in this case designated as "motion": "Motions" function "as subjects or have subject functions". Once again it would be correct to state that moving entities have a subject function within the kinematic aspect, thus avoiding a formulation giving the erroneous impression that "motions" are (entitary-like) kinematic subjects.

Ouweneel questions the fact that humans may be objectified in various ways. He writes: "However, thinking about, or naming, a human being does not turn him into a logical or a lingual object, because such thinking and naming are always embedded in the social relationships that humans have among themselves, such as the parents giving names to their children" (Ouweneel, 2014:68). Without eliminating the human subject functions within the two mentioned aspects, these subject functions may be objectified in acts of identification and distinguishing and naming. He denies that these functions are indeed object functions without giving an argument for his denial. For example, one can say that the physical substructure of the human body (its constituent atoms, molecules and macromolecules) could be perceived in their configuration within the human body (from the perspective of an *observer* a human person is then a *sensory object*). Object functions like these do not eliminate the human being as a sensory subject. Objectifying human subject functions does not entail that the human person in its totality has been objectified (such as in the institute of slavery).

A similar confusion surfaces when Ouweneel says that the law-side of cosmic reality *functions* within the various modal aspects (Ouweneel, 2014:70). This is wrong because only natural and societal entities (subjects and objects) function within the various aspects which have a law side and factual side. These entities are determined and delimited by their peculiar *type laws*.

3.4 Idionomy and type laws

Chapter 4 should at least have mentioned the idea of *type laws* or contemplated this phrase in arguing for the term "idionomy". He holds that the Greek word "idios" means "proper to" (Ouweneel, 2014:87), whereas it in fact points at what is *unique*, *individual* or *distinct*. In our everyday language we know the term "idiosyncratic". In his early development Dooyeweerd sometimes even referred to "individual structures" – which is problematic because "structures" display universality and therefore cannot be qualified as "individual" (see Strauss, 2009:449-454). The term "idionomy" literally qualifies "nomos" (= universal law) as *individual* ("idios"). The phrase "proper to" is anyway ambiguous because every concretely existing entity displays at once a universal side and an individual side – *this* atom is *an* atom (*this* points at what is individual while *an* designates what is universal).

We conclude this section by looking at the explanation given by Ouweneel of "kernels" and "analogies". He dedicates about one-and-a-halve page to "Kernels". The first two mentioned are incorrect – the "meaning-nuclei" or "kernels" of the arithmetical and spatial aspects are not "number" and

"extended form" but rather "discrete quantity" and "continuous extension". He then plays with the distinction between the "thing-side" and "aspect-side" of reality and briefly refers to the kernel of the economic side of reality – "value and equilibrium" – not realizing that the term *equilibrium* refers to phenomena functioning within the physical mode (see Ouweneel, 2014:71-72, see also 74). He mentions the aesthetic aspect (kernel: "harmony and beauty"), the jural aspect (kernel: "justice" – which is mistaken since "[re-]tribution" captures the core meaning of the jural), and so on. Yet, the most important property of modal meaning-nuclei ("kernels") is not discussed, namely the fact that they constitute the *primitive* (indefinable) *terms* employed in the various academic disciplines. The intuitive insight into the unique meaning of an aspect belongs to the domain of concept-transcending knowledge – something not touched upon by Ouweneel. The irony of the section is therefore that it does not really discuss the nature of meaning-nuclei!

A similar shortcoming concerns the treatment of analogies. It is done *without explaining the nature of an analogy* (see Ouweneel, 2014:72-74). Modal analogies appear when two aspects are similar in that respect in which they differ from each other. It is left to the reader to figure out what a modal analogy means by discussing the different analogical appearances of the term "strength".

4. Outlining an alternative approach

Surely there are more than enough "standard" introductions available within the tradition of reformational philosophy. The alternative would be to imitate the path pursued by Dooyeweerd in his own intellectual development, namely first to test the fruitfulness of his new insights and distinctions within his own field of specialization (the science of law) and then to broaden the perspective towards the general philosophical implications of his new insights and systematic distinctions. Approaching his philosophy from this angle will enable one to highlight from the outset why this philosophy is so fruitful for relating an understanding of reality to an analysis of what takes place within the various academic disciplines, including the natural sciences.

However, such a work will have to reflect on Dooyeweerd's basic ideas elaborated both in terms of a systematic perspective and where necessary placed in historical perspective. Finally, their relevance for the various academic disciplines (natural and social sciences) should also be considered consistently. This aim should explore key elements of his significant *Inaugural Address* of 1926 which has laid the foundation for a non-reductionist ontology

and then proceed to the theory of modal aspects, the dimension of ontic time and the dimension of (natural and social) entities, including the basic contours of a non-reductionist philosophy of human society.

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