Reason: Its Kaleidoscopic Ideological Interface Part 2 – Subsequent Historical and Systematic Considerations

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Samevatting

In opvolging van die eerste artikel wat die ideologiese vertekening van die sin van rasionaliteit vanaf die Griekse denke tot en met Immanuel Kant aan die orde gestel het wil hierdie tweede (van drie) artikel(s) die aandag vestig op die na-Kantiaanse denke en op betekenisvolle oorgangsmomente na die 20ste eeu. Opvattinge van Schelling, Fichte en Hegel word aan die orde gestel in die lig van die steeds aanwesige dialektiek van natuur en vryheid aan die wortel van hul denke. Waar Schelling verval in 'n gedupliseerde dialektiek, kies Hegel vir die primaat van die vryheid – wat volgens hom die hoogste bepaling van die 'Gees' is. Tegelyk voltooi Hegel die sirkel van die Griekse opvatting van denke en syn (vgl. Parmenides) deur die idee te sien as eenheid van begrip en werklikheid. Die miskenning van die goeie struktuur van die skepping in the nawerkende invloed van die dialektiese denktradisie (ook binne die neo-Hegeliaanse erfenis en in die sosiologie) word vermeld alvorens die opkoms van die 'historiese rede' bespreek word (Dilthey). Daarna word die onvervulde droom van die 'fenomenologiese rede' belig en ook stilgestaan by die 'dwase rede' van Thévenaz. Die in-mekaar-trek van taal en werklikheid voer die argumentasielyn tot by die postmodernisme en die idee van die (simboliese en sosiale) konstruksie van die werklikheid. Die laaste paragraaf skenk aandag aan die grense van begripskennis (in onderskeiding van idee-kennis – met verwysing na die 'taalwending' by Dooyeweerd) en dien as aanloop tot die opvolg-artikel waarin positief gefokus sal word op die ontiese onderbou van rasionaliteit.

1. Transition

In the first part of this study important contours of the unfolding shape of rationality in Western culture and its intellectual legacy were analyzed. It started with Parmenides who identified *thought* and *being* in early Greek thought and it continued up to and including Kant's view of 'pure reason.' We have noted that in Kant's case the modern ideal of *logical creation* led him to the extreme position according to which human understanding was elevated to become the *a priori* formal law-giver of nature. His characteristic statement in this regard reads: "understanding creates its laws (a priori) not out of nature, but prescribes them to nature" (Kant, 1783 par.36:320). Yet, as we have argued, this position only developed the one 'leg' of modern nominalism up to its ultimate rationalistic consequences by exploring the universalities of human reason. Since nominalism acknowledges universality only *within* human reason, whatever is outside the mind is stripped of all universality – concrete reality is viewed as purely and strictly *individual*.

2. Post-Kantian freedom idealism

Kant aimed at a restriction of the classical humanistic (natural) science ideal to the domain of sensory impressions (phenomena) in order to safe-guard the sphere of autonomous human freedom (i.e., the personality ideal). We have seen that since Kant saw the freedom of the human soul as a "thing-in-itself" (*Ding an sich*) his entire distinction between "thing-in-itself" and appearances actually served his dualistic separation of the two conflicting ideals, the science ideal and the personality ideal. However, what Kant considered to be a Copernican revolution in epistemology, namely the assignment of priority to the human thinking subject (and no longer the "object") was challenged by post-Kantian freedom idealism. In stead of aiming at a self-limitation of "theoretical reason," Kant's critical idealism was turned into an *absolute* idealism. Cassirer summarizes this situation as follows:

> In this turn-about Kant saw the core of his philosophical achievement, and he believed that through it he initiated a "total revolution" of metaphysics which could be compared with the revolution of Copernicus in the domain of astronomy. But the systems which appeared immediately after Kant and which linked on to him did not follow this road. They did not observe in the formulation of the transcendental problem of Kant, as the latter did, the certain means for the self limitation of human reason. Rather they believed that they dispose in it over an instrument capable of liberating reason from

all barriers which has been imposed upon it until now. Kant's critical idealism was transformed into an absolute idealism (Cassirer, 1957:10).[1]

Fichte interpreted the personality ideal of moral autonomy as the supersensory root and meaning-totality of all experience of nature by postulating that the entire diversity in reality ought to be derived from the continuity of the morally independent absolute I. In the thought of Hegel this led to a dialectical reconciliation of *nature* and *freedom* in the on-going process of the self-disclosure of the absolute spirit. "Yet the idea does not only have the more general sense of *true being*, of the unity of *concept* and *reality*, but also the more specific sense of *subjective concept* and of *objectivity*. A concept as such is namely itself already the identity of itself and of reality, …" (Hegel, 1949:240, cf. 239).[2] Hegel also states: "The idea is the unity of concept and reality, the concept realized as such."[3]

> Upon this basis he explains his distinction between art, religion and philosophy: "All three, art, religion and philosophy, are only distinct in respect of their form, their object is the same" (Hegel, 1931:143).[4]

What is striking is that Hegel directly relates *finitude* with *tension* and *opposition*. Wherever there is finitude the opposition and contradiction will always once again break through and the satisfaction never exceeds what is relative.[5] Subjective freedom is always opposed by objective

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1   "In dieser Umkehr sah Kant den Kern seiner philosophischen Leistung, und mit ihr glaubte er, jene 'gänzliche Revolution' der Metaphysik vorzunehmen, die er der Revolution des Copernikus im Gebiet der Astronomie verglich. Aber die Systeme, die unmittelbar auf Kant folgten und die direkt an ihn anzuknüpfen glaubten, sind ihm auf diesem Wege nicht gefolgt. Sie sahen in der 'transzendentalen' Problemstellung Kants nicht, wie dieser, das sichere Mittel zur Selbstbegrenzung der menschlichen Vernunft, sondern sie glaubten, eben in ihr ein Instrument zu besitzen, um diese letztere von allen Schranken zu befreien, die man ihr bisher auferlegt hatte. Der kritische Idealismus Kants wird zum absoluten Idealismus umgebildet" (Cassirer, 1057:10).
2   "Die Idee hat aber nicht nur den allgemeineren Sinn des *Wahrhaften Seyns,* der Einheit von *Begriff* und *Realität,* sondern der bestimmteren von *subjektivem Begriffe* und *der Objektivität.* Der Begriff als solcher ist nämlich selbst schon die Identität seiner und der Realität, ..."
3   "Idee ist die *Einheit des Begriffs und der Realität,* überhaupt realisierter Begriff" (Hegel, 1931:155).
4   "Alle drei Kunst, Religion und Philosophie sind nur der Form nach unterschieden; ihr Gegenstand ist derselbe."
5   "Wo aber Endlichkeit ist, da bricht auch der Gegensatz und Widerspruch stets wieder von neuem durch, und die Befriedigung kommt über das Relative nicht hinaus" (Hegel, 1931:148).

natural necessity – thus creating the need to reconcile this tension.[6] *Being* reaches the meaning of *truth* insofar as it is merely what the idea is, namely the unity of concept and reality. But the highest truth, truth as such, is for Hegel the resolution of the highest opposition and contradiction for in it the opposition between freedom and necessity, between spirit and nature, of knowledge and object, of law and drive, as opposition and contradiction as such no longer have any force and power.[7]

> The sharp opposition between *freedom* and *necessity* may suggest that Hegel got stuck in the inherent dialectic of the humanistic dualism between nature and freedom, but as soon as one considers the *highest determination* of the spirit in Hegel's thought it turns out that freedom is indeed appreciated as this *highest determination* of the spirit: "Freedom is the highest determination of the spirit" (Hegel, 1931:148).[8]

Proceeding from the primacy of the humanistic freedom motive Hegel identifies the (absolute) idea (as union of concept and reality) with the fullness of truth and with the origin of all oppositions en contradictions which are taken up and are reconciled in a harmonic unity. This brought post-Kantian freedom idealism to its ultimate consequences, for the (transcendental) idea of the fullness of meaning and the transcendental idea of the origin are identified *with* this fullness of meaning and *with* the origin!

In a certain sense one can see this view as completing the full circle, for once more Western metaphysics arrived at the point where Parmenides commenced – at the identification of *thought* and *reality*. Cassirer pulls these strings together when he says: "With this it seems as if the circle of philosophical thought is completed, and its aim, the identity of reality and reason, achieved. Hegel believes that his 'Science of Logic' is found at this juncture" (Cassirer, 1957:10).[9]

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6   "Indem nun aber die Frelheit selbst zunächst nur subjektiv und nicht ausgeführt ist, steht dem Subjekte, das nur Objektive als die Naturnotwendigkeit gegenüber, und es entsteht sogleich die Forderung, dieser Gegensatz zur Versöhnung zu bringen" (Hegel, 1931:146).
7   "Auflösung des höchsten Gegensatzes und Widerspruchs. In ihr hat der Gegensatz von Freiheit und Notwendigkeit, von Geist und Natur, von Wissen und Gegenstand, Gesetz und Trieb, der Gegensatz und Widerspruch überhaupt, welche Form er auch annehmen möge, als Gegensatz und Widerspruch keine Geltung und Macht mehr" (Hegel, 1931:149).
8   "Die Frelheit ist die höchste Bestimmung des Geistes."
9   "Damit erst schien der Kreis des philosophischen Denkens geschlossen und sein Ziel, das Ziel der Identität von Wirklichkeit und Vernunft, erreicht zu sein. An diesem Punkt glaubte Hegels "Wissenschaft der Logik" zu stehen."

3. The goodness of creation and the dialectical stance of Hegel

But a Christian view of reality can never accept the Hegelian starting-point, which implies that creation must necessarily – by virtue of its 'temporal finitude' – display inherent dialectical tensions (such as that between *nature* and *freedom*). God's Law-Word for creation is coherent and integral, and as such determines all concrete relations and events which are, even in their distortion by sin, constantly conditioned by this very creational order. Dialectical thought projects the effects of sin into the integral structure of creation itself, thus confusing the *distinctness* of (direction-giving) *structure* and (structured) *direction*.

Viewed from a biblical perspective the creation order is *good*. The mystery of the fall is given in the question how the *possibility* to be disobedient to God's creational principles became a *reality*. The opposition (antithesis) of sin and salvation/redemption (evil and good) shows the *directional distinction* within the *good order* of God's creation. Sin merely gives an idolatrous direction to the possibilities of creation, but (as parasite) cannot break apart the creation order itself. This insight elucidates a new perspective when we think about illogical thoughts, wasteful activities, unjust actions, unbelief, etc. The counterpart of disobedience comes in sight when we realize that redemption in Christ in principle liberates being human from the creation-wide rule of sin, since it entails the calling to turn away from evil and, out of fear of the Lord in all terrains of life, live in obedience to His will (cf. Job 28:28; Eccl.6:16 and Rom.12:21). Christians and non-Christians do not live in two different worlds (terrains) but in *one and the same creation*. Christians and non-Christians in no way are separated by the creation in which they (communally) live, but indeed by the *opposed directional choices* out of which they live. Christians and non-Christians do the same kinds of things – but they do them differently, i.e., from their different directional orientations: both think, love, buy and socialize, but within these shared dimensions of creation they life out their respective life orientations springing from different directional choices. Perhaps the most radical implication of the good news of God's (creation-wide) kingdom rule is that it calls us not to *deify anything* within creation. As soon as this happens, creation is split into a good part and an inherently evil part – with a dialectical mode of thought as the inevitable result.

The "left wing" of neo-Hegelian thought, particularly in the thought of Feuerbach and Marx, explored the dialectical legacy of Hegelian thought in terms of an atheistic, dialectical materialistic and deterministic view of history. In the thought of Karl Marx an attempt is made to explain the entire societal (*ideological*) *super-structure* (of law, morality, religion and

art) purely in terms of its supposed *historico-economic substructure*. According to Marx all phenomena belonging to the ideological super-structure are one-sidedly founded in and determined by relationships of production (cf. Marx, 1973:290). However, as Dooyeweerd correctly points out, there exist societies with practically the same mode of production but with huge differences in their constitutional forms, religious convictions, and so on (Dooyeweerd, 1962:80-81).

Another direction was explored in the neo-Hegelian thought of F. H. Bradley (the tutor of Bertrand Russell). The un-Biblical consequences of Hegel's idea of the *Absolute Spirit* revealed its *apostate* inclination in Bradley's view that the ultimate reality of the *Absolute Whole* cannot be identified with God. Hegel still wanted to safeguard God as the identical Object of art, religion and philosophy (as "Gottesdienst des Denkens"), though the latter assumed a higher position in his dialectical scheme than religion. Bradley emphatically states: "The Absolute for me cannot be God, because in the end the Absolute is related to nothing, and there cannot be a practical relation between it and the finite will" (Bradley, 1914:428).[10]

As it was the case in the thought of Hegel in Bradley's philosophy we also find a connection between *finitude* and *contradiction* (see Bradley, 1893:9 and Saxena, 1967:35, 240). According to Bradley it is only in the *Absolute Whole* that all contradictions are resolved and embraced in harmony. The inconsistency of reality as it is *given* stands in opposition to the *ultimate reality* which is such "that it does not contradict itself; here is an absolute criterion... And hence, as we find nothing not subordinate to the test of self-consistency, we are forced to set that down as supreme and absolute' (Bradley, 1893:120-121). "Everything, my self included, is essential to, and inseparable from, the Absolute" (Bradley, 1893:526).

Although there are some terminological deviations in the thought of Bradley when it is compared with the thought of Hegel, it is clear that his views are also in the grip of the dialectical humanistic ground-motive which degrades the creational order into a finite, self-contradictory appearance of the Absolute (in Hegel: the Absolute Idea). As a result Bradley construes a creation that transcends its boundaries in such a way that what is unique and fitted within the diversity is lost while being

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10   Within the context of the basic distinction between *Appearance* and *Reality* Bradley
      writes: "God is but an aspect, and that must mean but an appearance, of the Absolute"
      (Bradley, 1893:448).

absorbed in the all-embracing and all-harmonizing *Absolute Whole* – as the final reification of the speculative metaphysical construction of the humanistic personality ideal. This view is pan-*en*-theistic – everything is contained *in* and absorbed *by* the Absolute.

The heritage founded by Hegel and Marx was also continued within the dialectical trend in social thought – Simmel (1908), Rex (1961) and Dahrendorf (1961). Since *contradiction*, *conflict* and *antinormativity* are all realities that result from human disobedience to the normativity of God's creational order, it is understandable that theoretical accounts of *social conflict* will concern phenomena such as *power* and *influence* – the basic elements in the conflict theories of Pareto (1963), Sorel and others, that it concerns the transition of conflict into *accommodation* (cf. Park and Burgess –1929), that it addresses the question of *functions* and *dysfunctions* (Merton – 1968) or the way in which tension in social relations may use conflict to exercise an *integrative power* (Simmel and in his footsteps the extensive investigations of Coser – 1956, 1970). It appears nevertheless that the crucial element in all these divergent approaches is found in *anti-normative behaviour* of social subjects or in a conflict about alternative positivizations of social principles by competent social organs.

4. The rise of historical reason

By the close of the nineteenth century both W. Dilthey (1833-1911) and the neo-Kantian Baden school launched an attack against the causal analytical approach in the so-called humanities ('Geisteswissenschaften'). Dilthey reacts intensely to the positivistic mode of thought with its emphasis on explanation. He wants to find a new criterion to distinguish between the natural sciences and the humanities. This follows from the fact that the mental world is stamped by the presence of values and aims requiring a new method to capture this teleological domain. In contrast with Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* Dilthey develops a *Critique of Historical Reason*. This critique entails the human capacity to understand itself as well as society and its history, constituted by humankind. Karl Mannheim, one of the prominent sociologists of the first half of the 20th century and the founder of the sociological subdiscipline known as sociology of knowledge, had a solid understanding of the romantic roots of Dilthey's irrationalistic historicism:

> Dilthey is borne by, and may be the most important exponent of, that irrationalistic undercurrent which first became self-aware in Romanticism, and which, in the neo-Romanticism of the present, is

on the way, in altered form, to effecting its attack on bourgeous rationalism (Mannheim, 1982:162).

Only what can be experienced in the context of a historical, world-encompassing coherence, could serve as the immediately certain basis of knowledge acquisition – and only by means of empathy one can attain a genuine understanding (Verstehen) of spiritual reality. The natural sciences know, the humanities understand (Dilthey, 1927:86). Dilthey no longer supports the positivistic science ideal which seeks the typically human in some facet of nature. The historical aspect now occupies this vacancy: to be human means to be historically conditioned (Dilthey, 1927:275, cf. Diwald, 1963:38 note 11). Harbermas also mentions the implied linguistic framework present in Dilthey's hermeneutics:

> We don't understand a symbolic expression without an intuitive prior-understanding (Vorverständnis) of its context, because we are not capable to freely transform the presence of an unquestioned background knowledge of our culture into an explicit awareness.[11]

The emphasis on the historical perspective harbours dangerous tendencies for the certainty and validity of science which Dilthey does want to maintain. After all, if everything is historically determined all scientific certainties are also declared historically relative – merely caught up in the transience of particular changing historical situations. Dilthey is convinced that the awareness of the historical limitations and relativity of all social situations should be seen as the last step in the authentic liberation of humankind (Dilthey, 1927:290-291).

But this intended aim of liberation – a fruit of the humanistic ideal of freedom – entails the abyss of an anchorless historicistic enslavement leading to a pessimistic assessment of the future as could, for example, be seen from the title of a work written by Oswald Spengler: *The Decline of the West* (2 Vols. 1918). Bottomore remarks that the dispute of method largely refers back to the intellectual climate prevalent at the turn of the 19th century and then adds the following remark:

> The main tendency of recent sociological thought has certainly been antipositivist, and there has been a renewal of interest in what can be called broadly a 'hermeneutic' method which goes back at least to Dilthey (Bottomore, 1975:201).

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11   "Einen symbolischen Ausdruck verstehen wir nicht ohne das intuitive Vorverständnis seines Kontextes, weil wir das fraglos präsente Hintergrundwissen unserer Kultur nicht freihändig in explizites Wissen verwandeln können" (Habermas, 1983:17).

Yet the relative strong position of historicism by the end of the 19th century did not uproot the rationalistic orientation of Edmund Husserl. Initially, after he completed his doctorate in mathematics under the guidance of Weierstrass (1883), he was influenced by psychologism and on that basis even attempted to provide a foundation for a finitistic arithmetic. But in his 2 volume work of 1900-1901, *Logische Untersuchungen* (LU), the platonistic effects of his association with Georg Cantor surfaced in the form of an acceptance of "truths in themselves" (LU:229). The transition that took place in his thought during the first decade of the 20th century transcends this Platonism but it did not return to what he rejected as the rationalistic science-ideal (see Husserl, 1954:119). His own alternative is intuitionistic – whatever is given within our immediate intuition cannot be doubted. The world is now transformed into the correlate of the intentional human consciousness. Since according to him philosophy is borne from the spirit of reason, the crisis of Europe should be sought in what he calls a *misguided rationalism* (an "verirrenden Rationalismus") (Husserl, 1954:337). In opposition to such a misguided rationalism Husserl posits the unlimited possibilities of the *intuitionistic, phenomenological reason*.

Unfortunately it turned out that this trust was fundamentally threatened by the increasing influence both of *naturalism* and *objectivism* one the one hand and by *irrationalism* on the other. He writes:

> In order to comprehend what is wrong in the present crisis the concept Europe once again has to be viewed by means of the historical directedness towards the infinite aims of reason; it must be demonstrated how the European world was borne from reason-ideas, that is, out of the spirit of philosophy The crisis will then clearly emerge as the apparent failure of rationalism. The basis of this failure of a rational culture, however, … is not inherent to rationalism, since it is only found in its externalization, in its decay into *naturalism* and *objectivism*. The crisis of European existence provides only two options: the decline of Europe in the alienation from its own rational existential meaning, the decay into an animosity towards the spiritual and a lapse into barbarism, *or* the rebirth of European existence through the spirit of philosophy, particularly through a heroism of reason that will consistently triumph over naturalism (Husserl, 1954:347-348).

Particularly the growing irrationalistic spirit of the time forced him to realize that the ideal of his article of 1911 on philosophy as a rigorous science[12] will not be realized:

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12   At his 70th birthday he said that he aimed to do for philosophy what Weierstrass did for mathematics. Picker provided us with a sound analysis of the influence of his mathematical studies on his philosophical development (see Picker 1961).

Philosophy as science, a serious, exact, yes apodictic exact science – *der Traum ist ausgeträumt*" (Husserl, 1954:508 – "the dream has passed" / "the dream did not become true").

5. The "foolish reason" of Thévenaz

Thévenaz digested the crisis of rationalism in a historicistic sense. The methodical doubt of Descartes, that used the idea of God to imprint the feature of infallibility upon human thinking, is radically questioned by him:

> The methodical doubt of modern philosophy taught reason that it is not absolute and that it is impossible for this reason to determine its own uncontested value. It taught reason that it cannot provide its own ontic foundation accept by reifying itself or by pursing a self-assurance provided by an external guarantee in the form of a perfect God who does not deceive the human being and who arranges everything for the well-being of humankind (Thévenaz, 1969:23).[13]

According to Thévenaz philosophy was born on the day reason started to doubt itself (Thévenaz, 1969:30). This includes the possibility of its own foolishness, for reason is not only without any defense in front of God but also in relation to itself (Thévenaz, 1969:38). God said that our wisdom is foolishness – and even by attempting to bracket God out reason does no succeed in avoiding the problem. For reason cannot be isolated into an independent instrument of knowledge ((Thévenaz, 1969:52). In addition it is always at once confronted with certainty (that we know something) and with doubt (that we have not understood enough yet).[14]

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13   "De methodische twijfel van de moderne filosofische kritiek heeft de rede geleerd dat zij niet absoluut is en dat het haar onmogelijk is haar eigen onbetwistbare, waarde te bepalen; dat zij niet haar eigen zijnsgrond kan leggen tenzij dan door zich te hypostaseren, of door zich te verzekeren van een uiterlijke garantie in de vorm van een volmaakte God die de mens niet bedriegt en alles voor zijn bestwil heeft geregeld." In the philosophy of Descartes deified mathematical thought relied on God in order to attain truth on the basis of clear and distinct thinking: "all which I clearly and distinctly perceive is of necessity true" (Descartes, 1965:125); "for as often as I so restrain my will within the limits of my knowledge, that it forms no judgment except regarding objects which are clearly and distinctly represented to it by the understanding, I can never be deceived; because every clear and distinct conception is doubtless something, and as such cannot owe its origin to nothing, but must of necessity have God for its author – God, I say, who, as supremely perfect, cannot, without a contradiction, be the cause of any error" (Descartes, 1965:119).

14   "Misschien voelen we in de gang van ons filosoferen zeer paradoxaal op geen enkel moment gelijktijdig een zo grote zekerheid en een zo grote onzekerheid, waarin de zekerheid van de rede samengaat met een geschoktheid, een gevoel van aan alles te twijfelen: een zekerheid omdat we iets, een geschoktheid, een verbazing, omdat we nog niet genoeg gezien hebben" (Thévenaz, 1969:72).

It is remarkable that Thévenaz speaks about a "de-absolutization of the subject" (Thévenaz, 1969:107 ff.) and also about a conversion of the natural meaning of reason, against the background of 1 Cor. 3:18: "Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a 'fool' so that he may become wise" (Thévenaz, 1969:106).

In his appreciation of the complexity of human reason Thévenaz wants to avoid both an objectivist and subjectivist situation: "The condition of reason is neither the description of an objective situation which determines it, nor the description of a situation which is only subjective" (Thévenaz, 1969:112).[15] His plea is to reintegrate "human reason" with the human being, for it is the human being who lives, feels, thinks, believes, loves and so on (Thévenaz, 1969:114). Unfortunately in this integrated perspective the human being is characterized by Thévenaz as a "historical being" (Thévenaz, 1969:114) – and on the next page he declares that reason becomes the total human being (the accepted condition of reason embraces the believing, feeling, thinking and living person).[16]

In spite of his point of connection in the Biblical concern for 'wisdom' and 'foolishness' it ultimately turns out that for Thévenaz human reason finds its foundation in *historicity*.[17] This explains why he holds that a philosophy would be Christian not because of its structure, but on behalf of its radical experience.[18]

Although Thévenaz rejects a "faith in reason" (Thévenaz, 1969:157) he does not advocate a conversion of reason to God. His own position ultimately opts for a fully secularized choice:

> …the calling to reason emerges from human experience and therefore reason has to revert to the condition of being human. If one wants to speak with all force about a conversion, then it should have been the conversion of reason to what is human. Therefore far from a conversion to God, that

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15 "De conditie van de rede is noch de beschrijving van een objectieve situatie die haar determineert, noch de beschrijving van een situatie die alleen maar subjectief is."
16 "De rede in conditie is een rede die opnienw geïntegreerd is in de gelovende, voelende, denkende, levende mens, een rede waarvan de aanvaarde conditie dat alles omvat"; "*De rede wordt de totale mens*" (Thévenaz, 1969:115).
17 "De zelfreductie van de rede maakt van de mens een wezen dat tegelijk volop 'redelijk' is en radicaal historisch, waarbij de rationaliteit geen wortels heeft in het absolute maar in de mens, niet in een eeuwigheid maar in een *hic et nunc* van een tijdelijk bewustzijn, in de historiciteit van het bewustzijn" (Thévenaz, 1969:117).
18 "die filosofie zou christelijk zijn door haar radicale ervaring, niet door haar structuur" (Thévenaz, 1969:121).

is to say to a transcendent object, a supernatural principle. Reason let go of all its divine pretenses and of what is 'beyond' in order to acknowledge that its calling is in this world, in the 'here', in nature and on the level of being human (Thévenaz, 1969:155).[19]

Yet this does not mean that Thévenaz does not relate the human being in its totality to God (see Thévenaz, 1969:157)! Faith generates experience which mediates the process of reverting philosophical reason through a radical reduction towards itself, to a 'de-absolutized' self-consciousness, to reason in condition, converted *to* itself and through all of this, though not disentangled from faith (towards which it is *open*), reason is *not* directed towards God (Thévenaz, 1969:157-159).

What is remarkable is that Thévenaz continued the historicistic legacy during a period in which the turn to *language* searched for a new orientation.

6. The identity of language and reality

At the outset of the 20th century the identity of *thought* and *reality* as it was originally advanced by Hegel experienced a transformation into a new identity, that of *language* and *reality* (originally already defended by Herder). In Wittgenstein this shift is particularly evident where he states that the "limits of my language means the limits of my world" (Tractatus, 5.6). During the 20th century this new paradigm gave rise to the development of the *hermeneutical tradition* and to the emphasis which Habermas places on *communicative action*. Particularly within postmodern circles the claim is heard that *everything is interpretation*. In the final analysis this simply continues the legacy of *one-sidedness* which marked the origin of Western *reason* when the Pythagoreans made, formally seen, a similar claim by stating: *everything is number*.

The (postmodern) stance is made possible by introducing language as new horizon. Gadamer remarks that Heidegger did not once again wanted to introduce something essential or divine with his notion of 'Sein' ('Being'), since he aimed much more at something that would – like an event – *open*

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19   "… de oproep tot de rede komt uit de menselijke ervaring en dus moet de rede zich keren tot de conditie van de mens. Wil men met alle geweld spreken van een bekering, den zou dat zijn de bekering van de rede tot het menselijke. Wel ver dus van zich te bekeren tot God, d.w.z. tot een transcendent object, een bovennatuurlijk beginsel, ziet de rede af van al haar goddelijke pretenties en van het 'generzijds', om te erkennen dat haar roeping is in deze wereld, in het 'dezerzijds', in de natuur en op het niveau van de mens."

the space in which hermeneutics could become (without any 'final foundation') a new *universal* ('zum neuen Universale wird'). This space is the dimension of language ('Dieser Raum ist die Dimension der Sprache' – Gadamer, 1989:172; see Strauss, 2002:295 ff.).

Whereas the 19th century by and large worked within the horizon of (organic) development, philosophical thinking in the 20th century is embraced by language as horizon. As an alternative to the idea of an *organic coherence* the quest for the *meaning of life* surfaced. The original motive of *logical construction* is now reinforced because the human life-world is seen as a (symbolical or social) *construction* of the human subject. Consider the titles of the following books: *The social construction of reality*; *a treatise in the sociology of knowledge* (Luckmann & Berger, 1969); and: *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt* ("The meaningful construction of the social world," Schutz, 1974).

Postmodern reason – an effect of the strengthened combined effect of historicism and the linguistic turn – pretends to be uprooted and disintegrated by denying the possibility of any *grand metanarratives*. Yet its own story is nothing but just another *grand metanarrative* for it supplies the *universal basis* upon which whatever differs from it is disqualified and relegated to one limited stance amongst other equally limited points of view. True to the nature of modern nominalism – which is rationalistic in respect of the universality of words or concepts within the human mind and irrationalistic in terms of the supposedly strictly individual and contingent multiplicity of entities outside the human mind – postmodernism exhibits the same ambiguity: its own ('internal') claim is *universal* while all other ('outside') positions are relativized!

7. Coming to terms with universality and the limits of concept formation

Although "all-"claims – also found in everyday language – are not formalized they could easily be transformed into a propositional form in which what logic designates as the "universal quantifier" appears.[20]

Since it belongs to the classical legacy of philosophy and logic as such to account for concept formation in terms of *universal* features, it should be

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20   In universal and existential sentences modern symbolic logic employs universal and existential quantifiers (also known as a kind of operators). The general use of words such as 'every,' 'all,' 'a certain,' and 'some' exhibit, as Tarski points out, a very close connection with quantifiers (compare expressions like *all human beings are mortal* and *some human beings are wise*) (see Tarski, 1966:10).

clear that postmodernism indeed overstep the limits of what is acceptable when it rejects every idea of universality. Our primary awareness of universality is conditioned by the spatial intuition of 'everywhere' and it should be accepted as irreplaceable. The enemy of a sound understanding of 'reason' is not given in the acknowledgment of universality as such, but rather the misplaced rationalistic elevation of fallible human insights to the level of *unassailable universal validity*.

In addition we have to note that there are inherent limits to concept formation, for if concepts are always acquired on the basis of *universal* features, they are blind to what is unique, individual and contingent.[21] Any theory of rationality therefore ought to account for the kind of knowledge humans have of realities transcending conceptual knowledge.

At this point of our analysis it indeed is necessary to highlight the significance of a different understanding of the nature of *concept* and *idea*. In order to explain this new meaning it should be realized that an important task of concept-formation within the various disciplines is to "locate" the modal aspect in which particular (modal) *terms* find their "original seat." For example, a discussion of the term "development" (alongside terms such as "evolution" and "growth") ought to realize that its *modal seat* is found within the *biotical aspect* of reality. Similarly, since *continuity* "resides" within the spatial mode, synonyms for continuity (such as *coherence*, *connectedness*, *uninterrupted*, the *whole and all its parts / divisibility*) are all located within this aspect.

The phrase "a modal term" designates any term finding its seat within some or other *modal aspect* of reality. Whenever a modal term is employed to refer to phenomena manifesting themselves within the boundaries of any aspect, one can say that such a term is employed in a *conceptual* way. The numeral term "one," for example, is employed in a conceptual way when an answer is given to the question: how many moons does the earth have? This answer highlights the function of the moon *within* the quantitative aspect of reality. Similarly, determining the *size* or the *movement* of the moon requires the use of modal *spatial* and modal *kinematical* terms – all of them once again employed in a *conceptual* sense because they merely designate what functions within the boundaries of particular aspects.

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21   Frye mentions the fact that Nietzsche distanced himself from the idea of *natural laws* because he did not want to acknowledge the *Law-Giver* of such laws: "There are no laws of nature, Nietzsche says, only necessities" (Frye, 1990:16).

Of course creation contains many creatures *transcending the limits* of any given aspect – the dimension of entities is distinct from that of modal functions precisely because the reality of no single entity is exhausted merely by one of its modal functions. Whenever modal terms are used to refer to realities transcending the limits of the aspect in which those modal terms have their seat, such terms are employed in a *concept-transcending way*. For the sake of brevity one can also speak about using such terms in an *idea-context*.

Asserting for example that God is *one*, employs a numerical term in order to refer to God – not only transcending the numerical aspect but also creation as such. Likewise, distinct from the conceptual use of the biotical term "life" – for example when a plant is described as being "alive" – the Bible says "God is life." Here a biotical term is employed in a way transcending the boundaries of the biotical aspect, in an idea-context.

When the concrete "succession of events" occurring in reality is mentioned, we are implicitly using the numerical meaning of succession in an idea-context. Alternatively we can designate this process as a "genetic process" or as a "process of becoming." In both cases we are using modal terms referring beyond their original modal seat to the said (many-sided) process. The term "genetic" has a biotical meaning and the term "becoming" sometimes takes one the physical meaning of "change" and at other times the biotical meaning of "growth."

Consider now the following basic philosophical statements: *everything is unique*, *everything coheres with everything else*, *everything is constant* and *everything changes*. Although these four "idea-statements" clearly draw upon the core meaning of the first four modal aspects (number, space, movement and the physical), the meaning attached to each one of them *transcends* the modal boundaries of the aspect in which it has its original modal seat.

As long as idea-statements like these are *balanced* by other equally legitimate idea-usages of (different) modal terms, we know that we are not implicitly falling prey to an one-sided approach that actually over-emphasizes merely *one domain* (or a limited number of modal domains) as the source-domain of idea-statements. An atomistic approach in philosophy and the disciplines, for example, may be justified in employing numerical terms in an idea-context (such as asserting what we have stated above, namely that everything is unique and individual) – but as soon as it turns out that this is affirmed at the cost of other *equally legitimate* idea-usages of modal terms, then it dawns upon us that we are here confronted with a one-sided *ismic* position. Atomism (individualism), for example, advances its emphasis on the uniqueness of whatever there is

at the cost of acknowledging any genuine whole (totality) with its parts – it consistently wants to eliminate the idea of a whole or totality, thus ruling out in advance the meaning of idea-usages that are possible in employing these two terms.

When the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition emphasizes the whole-parts relation in a biologistic sense, we observe an excessive use of the "organic" idea (idea in the technical sense of a modal term used in a concept-transcending mode). The *ism* manifested in this abuse is known as *holism* or *universalism*. This "abuse" of the term "organic" is also found during the era of Romanticism (see Strauss, 2004) – overarching the thought patterns of thinkers who, in other respects, may be adhering to entirely different views of reality. Kuyper and Dooyeweerd (the latter during his early phase – until the late twenties and scarcely beyond the appearance of his Magnus Opus in 1935-36) are both "infected" by this universalistic legacy.

In terms of the qualification given above a balanced idea-manner in understanding reality ought to remain "dispersed" in the many options provided to us by the given modal diversity within creation. Therefore, when Dooyeweerd switched from the "organic" to an idea-use of a key term stemming from the lingual mode of reality (which should preferably be designated as the "sign-mode"), by exhaustively characterizing created reality as "meaning" (as the mode of being of all that has been created – Dooyeweerd, 1997-I:4), he on the one hand evinces his own "linguistic turn" and on the other implicitly demonstrates that this new "meaning"-characterization assumed a one-sided dominant role in his philosophy. An integral, all-encompassing sensitivity to the rich diversity of options provided to human reflection in this regard opens our eyes for the admissibility of *complementary* idea-usages of modal terms. For example, *merely* saying that *everything is constant* (thus employing the kinematical intuition of constancy in an idea-context) without at the same time being willing *also* to say that *everything changes* (an idea-usage of the meaning of the physical aspect), will lead to a distorted understanding of reality. Similarly, exploring the sign-mode in speaking about the *meaning* of reality, or about the *meaning-coherence* of the cosmic diversity of reality, should not exclude the employment of modal biotic terms in an idea-context – such as speaking about the *organic* coherence between various aspects. Implicitly Dooyeweerd became allergic to the excessive employment of the term "organic" – which indeed during the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century took on a one-sided universalistic (*holistic*) connotation – but then he threw out the baby with the bath-water in his subsequent avoidance of any idea-usage of modal biotic terms.

Speaking about the *unity* of reality, about the fact that whatever there is *coheres* with whatever else there is, about the *constancy* of reality (even captured in the physical law of energy-constancy – mistakenly designated as energy-conservation), about the *meaning-character* of reality, and so on should all be part of an articulated idea-manner of employing modal terms in a concept-transcending way.

At this point our assessment of the meaning of rationality implicitly moved beyond the scope of rationality, for rational knowledge – both in its conceptual and concept-transcending shapes – irrevocably points at an ontic reality lying at the basis of all our human rational endeavours. This will be the theme of our third (and last) article on reason.

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