
The antinomies entailed in Dooyeweerd's epistemological view of a *Gegenstand*

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Abstract

*This article investigates the way in which Dooyeweerd accounts for the difference between theoretical and non-theoretical thought. It will look at Dooyeweerd's view of the continuity of cosmic time as well as his idea that the non-logical aspects resist the attempt to grasp them in a logical concept. His conviction that the so-called *Gegenstand*-relation characterizes theoretical thought and that non-theoretical thought is exemplified in various subject-object relations will also be investigated. The most devastating implication for Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique will be articulated when it is argued that the entire idea of an inter-modal synthesis, lying at the heart of the transcendental critique, is intrinsically antinomic.*

Background observation

It should be noted that my initial interaction with Dooyeweerd's epistemology was articulated in my PhD on the distinction between *Concept and Idea* (1973). It was followed up by an article in *Philosophia Reformata* in 1984 – in response to a request by the Editorial Board of *Philosophia Reformata* (*An analysis of the Structure of Analysis, the *Gegenstand*-relation in discussion*). More than two decades later I once more returned to this issue in my work on *Philosophy: Discipline of the Disciplines* (Strauss 2009:359-

368). Recently a discussion on the WEB-group *Thinknet* regarding the notion of “resistance” in Dooyeweerd's thought prompted me to return yet another time to his epistemology and to explain why I consider his idea of the *Gegenstand*-relation as intrinsically antinomic.

Ontology and Epistemology

Traditionally philosophy is confronted with the task of accounting for the nature of reality (expressed in an *ontology*), and to explain how we can *know* it (articulated in an epistemology). One of the challenges of such an endeavor is to account for our everyday experience and the kind of knowledge involved in acquiring non-scientific knowledge. Simplistic theories, such as the copy theory are no longer advocated (disqualified as naïve realism). Yet a much older controversy is still alive today, namely the opposition between realism and nominalism. Although Plato depreciated knowledge of our everyday world of becoming (change) by favouring the transcendent realm of eternal static ontic forms, he discovered that change always presupposes something enduring (constant). Aristotle commenced with a primary (individual) substance, but then postulated a universal secondary substance in order to secure conceptual knowledge. By and large these two giants thus ensured that the subsequent historical development of philosophy continued to struggle with two pairs of problems: individual/universal; and constancy/change.

Of course, these problems were throughout embedded in the opposition of thought and experience (or even: thought and being). Noteworthy are the opposing positions assumed by Plato and Kant. Plato not only accepts ideal (ontic) forms as having a supra-sensory existence, but in addition also considers them to be the source of true knowledge. Within the sensory world of becoming (*genesis*) the given changeful reality is incapable of providing us with true knowledge. Kant proceeds from sensory experience, by assuming chaotic appearances (*Erscheinungen*) that are ordered by logical concepts. But behind these appearances there is an unknowable “thing-in-itself” (*Ding an sich*). Plato argues that the changefulness of the world of becoming precludes knowledge because whenever one arrives at a knowing of something *that* something has already changed into something else. For Kant it is the logical categories that ultimately order our sense experience, although a provisional ordering takes place through space and time as external and internal forms of intuition (*Anschauung*). The sensory intuitions cannot bring the provisionally ordered appearances to a unity – that is the

task of understanding (*Verstand*).

Throughout the history of Western philosophy accounts of the acquisition of knowledge wrestled with obstacles. Plato had to set his ontic forms off against the world of becoming, Aristotle struggled with the tension between his primary (individual) substance and his secondary (universal) substantial form. Immanuel Kant aims at safe-guarding human freedom (the freedom of the soul) as *Ding an sich* by restricting knowledge to appearances. “For if appearances are Things in themselves, then freedom cannot be rescued” (Kant 1787-B:564). This tension between nature (causality) and freedom underlies the subsequent dualism between (theoretical) knowledge and faith: “Ich mußte also das Wissen aufheben, um zum Glauben Platz zu bekommen” [I had to restrict knowledge in order to make room for faith – Kant 1787-B:xxx].]

Dooyeweerd developed a NEW critique of theoretical thought

Against this background Dooyeweerd launched a critique directed against the idea of neutral and objective academic disciplines. After the appearance of his *magnum opus* in Dutch (*De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee*, Three Volumes, 1935-1936) he developed the second way of his transcendental critique as an alternative to Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*. For this reason, he decided to publish the revised and extended English version under the title, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* (4 Volumes, 1953-1958). In 1937 he published an extensive Chapter on “The dangers of the intellectual disarmament of Christianity in Science” (Dooyeweerd 1996:67-104). This Chapter sheds light on the eventual aim of his transcendental critique. It was meant to show that by virtue of the inner nature of theoretical thought every scholar is guided by a philosophical ground-idea (a theoretical view of reality), which is directed by an ultimate commitment (by a ground-motive). This outcome will open the way for the Christian scholar also to participate in the Western thought-community of the West and it undergirds his statement in 1937:

All Christians who in their scientific work are ashamed of the Name of Christ Jesus, because they desire honor among people, will be totally useless in the mighty struggle to recapture science, one of the great powers of Western culture, for the Kingdom of God. This struggle is not hopeless, however, so long as it is waged in the full armour of faith in Him who has said “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me,” and again, “Take heart! I have

overcome the world" (Dooyeweerd 1996:104)

The way in which he wanted to create room for a Christian approach to reality had to pass through his new critique of theoretical thought. This critique commences with the remark that in theoretical thought "we oppose the logical, i.e. the analytical function of our real act of thought, to the non-logical aspects of our temporal experience. The latter thereby becomes "*Gegenstand*" in the sense of "opposite" (*Widerstand*) to our analytical function. These non-logical aspects, as well, belong to our real act of thought in its temporal concreteness and are consequently not to be sought exclusively outside the full temporal structure of the latter. In other words, the antithetic structure of the theoretical attitude of thought can present itself only within the temporal total-structure of the act of thinking" (Dooyeweerd NC-I:39).

Resistance?

On the same page Dooyeweerd also speaks about the *resistance* offered by the non-logical aspects: "Any attempt to grasp the former in a logical concept is met with resistance on their part. From this resistance the theoretical problem originates" (NC-I:39). Note that Dooyeweerd provides us with the following reason for this resistance:

Now we have seen, that the non-logical aspects of experience offer resistance to a logical analysis of their structure. 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 have not been chosen as the field of inquiry (NC-I:40).

In passing we should mention that the authentic conception of Dooyeweerd in this regard is that the special sciences do not investigate the modal aspects themselves but merely whatever functions within a specific aspect: "Every scientific discipline does this when it seeks to investigate empirical reality from a specific point of view. But in this investigation it does not focus its theoretical attention upon the modal structure of such an aspect itself; rather, it focuses on the coherence of the actual phenomena which function within that structure" (CP:11).

Implicit in this argumentation is the assumption that something *non-logical* in nature resists the attempt to grasp it in a *logical* concept. Saying that the "antithetic relation only bears an intentional character" (CP:11) does not solve the problems generated by the idea of a *Gegenstand*-relation as such.

The explicit aim of Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique unfolds along the following line of argumentation: from the resistance of the opposed aspect one should proceed to obtain a *concept* of the non-logical *Gegenstand* – which means for Dooyeweerd that one should arrive at a concept of the *Gegenstand* by means of a synthesis between the logical aspect of the theoretical act of thought and a non-logical aspect. The outcome of this process is designated as an inter-modal (meaning-)synthesis. Dooyeweerd argues that neither the logical aspect nor any non-logical aspect of the *Gegenstand*-relation can serve as starting-point for this synthesis because this will inevitably result in a one-sided *ism*. Consequently, what is needed is a supra-modal central starting-point.

The entire line of argumentation stands and falls with Dooyeweerd's peculiar construction of a *Gegenstand*-relation and the assumed *inter-modal meaning-synthesis*.

Let us first of all look at the status of the non-logical *Gegenstand* in Dooyeweerd's argument.

Dooyeweerd holds that by "opposing" one or another non-logical aspect to the logical aspect of the theoretical thought-act no *concept* is yet formed of the *Gegenstand*-aspect. This interpretation is confirmed by the remark on page 44 (Volume I). There we read in connection with overcoming "the intended antithesis" that we must proceed from the antithesis to the synthesis between the logical and non-logical aspects in order to obtain a "logical concept" of the non-logical *Gegenstand*:

We cannot stop at the theoretical *problem*, born out of the resistance offered by the non-logical "Gegenstand" to our logical function in its analytical activity. We must proceed from the theoretical *antithesis* to the theoretical *synthesis* between the logical and the non-logical aspects, if a logical concept of the non-logical "Gegenstand" is to be possible.

However, not having a *concept* of the non-logical *Gegenstand* raises serious questions. Note that Dooyeweerd speaks of (i) non-logical (ii) aspects.

- (i) This entails that, before knowledge of any non-logical aspect is available as *Gegenstand*, theoretical thought has already made the distinction between the *logical* and the *non-logical*.
- (ii) Without being specific, multiple non-logical *aspects* are nonetheless implied. Moreover, to enter into an inter-modal meaning-synthesis with these non-logical modal *aspects* they must be similar to the logical-analytical aspect, at least insofar as the "*Gegenstand*-aspects" continue to express their "coherence (of meaning) with the modal aspects *y* which

have not been chosen as the field of inquiry" (NC-I:40), and insofar as they are *aspects*.

Dooyeweerd formulates the second transcendental problem as follows:

"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?" (NC-I:45).

The *resistance* at stake flows from the assumed problem: how can we obtain knowledge of aspects that are *non-logical* in nature? The answer given by Dooyeweerd is: by means of an inter-modal meaning-synthesis between the logical and non-logical aspects, proceeding from a supra-modal central starting-point ("betrekkingspunt") determined by a religious ground-motive.

Before this stage of Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique is reached the following all-important question should be raised:

how can we set non-logical aspects apart (or oppose them to each other or to the logical aspect of an act of thought) without having *identified* and *distinguished* them in and through this act of theoretical abstraction (modal analysis)?

The situation is further complicated because, according to Dooyeweerd, we have an *implicit* awareness of the aspects that could be made *explicit* through theoretical thought (I am emphasizing the words "implicitly" and "explicitly" in the three quotations below):

Implicit knowledge of modal aspects

Although the intent of Dooyeweerd's idea of a *Gegenstand*-relation is to restrict knowledge of the non-logical modal aspects to the theoretical attitude of thought, he sometimes does concede that an implicit knowledge of them is possible in our pre-theoretical knowledge. In the first Volume of his *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* a footnote explains that in theoretical thought the logical aspect could be explicitly disclosed even though it is only implicitly present in pre-theoretic logical conclusions: "... a real act of theoretical thought, which does *disclose explicitly* the logical aspect of time which is present only *implicitly* in pre-theoretic logical conclusions" (NC-I:30, note 1). Three pages further this concession is expanded to include all the "different" modal aspects: "in naive experience the different modal aspects do not *explicitly* come to consciousness, but only *implicitly* and conjointly" (NC-I:34). In the same vein Dooyeweerd holds that we do have an *implicit awareness* of the aspects: "and we do not become aware of the modal aspects unless

implicitly. The aspects are not set asunder, but rather are conceived of as being together in a continuous uninterrupted coherence” (NC-I:38).

Of course, these concepts are *proper concepts* – the only difference is given in the fact that in pre-theoretic thought our awareness of them is *implicit* while within theoretical thought they are made *explicit*.

The problem, however, is that if we need the *Gegenstand*-relation to arrive at an *explicit* theoretical concept of the modal aspects, how then is it possible to acquire an *implicit concept* of them in our pre-theoretical experience – without the aid of the *Gegenstand*-relation?

The situation is further complicated when we consider that Dooyeweerd characterizes naïve experience in terms of the *subject-object relation* as well as through the contrast between “intact” and “setting reality apart”:

Through the subject-object-relation we consequently experience reality in the total and integral coherence of all its aspects, as this is *given* within the temporal horizon of human experience. Naive experience leaves the typical total structures of this reality *intact*. The antithetic relation of the theoretical attitude of thought, on the contrary, sets reality apart in the diversity of its modal aspects (NC-II:471).

Dooyeweerd’s intention is clear: distinguish between *naïve experience* (characterized by the *subject-object relation*) and *theoretical thought* (characterized by the *Gegenstand*-relation). This distinction assumes the restriction of the *Gegenstand* of theoretical thought to the *non-logical* aspects of reality for otherwise the theory of an **inter**-modal meaning-synthesis collapses. The moment the logical aspect itself is presented as a *Gegenstand* of theoretical thought this relation changes into an **intra**-modal synthesis. Dooyeweerd in fact contradicts himself at two places in *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* in this regard. In the second Volume we read: “As a ‘*Gegenstand*’ of theoretical analysis the modal structure of the logical aspect is itself theoretically abstracted from the cosmic continuity of the cosmic temporal order” (NC-II:463). And in the first Volume in a footnote on page 40 he explains that “in the theoretical attitude of thought we can analyze the structure of the analytical aspect; but only in its theoretical abstraction and opposition to the non-logical aspects.”

Observation:

In passing we may note that the neo-Kantian thinkers, Heinrich Rickert and Paul Natorp, explicitly wrestled with the problem of the logical and the a-logical. Rickert pointed out that within the theoretical sphere the

problem of number requires from us a distinction between the *logical* and the *non-logical*: “We therefore do not succeed in posing the problem of number as such without drawing a distinction between the logical and the a-logical *within* the theoretical sphere” (Rickert 1924:9). This view is formally equivalent to Dooyeweerd's understanding of the *Gegenstand*-relation. Natorp relates this issue to the difference between a sensory multiplicity and the logical unity of a concept: “Much rather, in order to achieve this synthetic unity, our understanding should first of all unite itself with something external to it, something foreign, “sensibility”. Alternatively, there must be a third instance, transcending both sensibility and understanding, which can perform this synthesis (Natorp 1921:48). While Natorp opted for a purely logical unity and multiplicity, his third option was taken up by Alexander Varga von Kibéd who believed that this synthesis is possible in the “metaphysical-religious sphere”: “The solution of the unsolvable problems, recovering the lost unity of our being and our thought is only to be expected from this deepest layer” (Von Kibéd, 1979:38). Dooyeweerd also made an appeal to a supra-modal central point of departure (determined by the religious ground-motive as communal dynamic).

Clearly Dooyeweerd continued to struggle with the problem of distinguishing the logical and non-logical and accomplishing a “synthesis” between the logical and the non-logical. Without this background the restriction of the *Gegenstand* to the non-logical aspects would not have arisen, as well as the inconsistency of calling the logical aspect itself also a *Gegenstand* of theoretical thought.

Consistent with this inconsistency Dooyeweerd in some instances took refuge in the logical subject-object relation in order to account for our knowledge of the various modal aspects. A sub-heading on page 471 of NC-II reads: “The deepening of the logical object-side of reality in theoretical thought. The objective-analytical dis-stasis” – to which the following explanation is added: “At the same time the logical object-side of reality is deepened in the subject-object relation. It changes from an objective logical systasis, merely embedded in temporal reality, into an objective logical ‘standing apart’, the objective dis-stasis of a functional multiplicity in the analytical aspect” (NC-II:471).

Consider the two statements:

- (i) The *Gegenstand*-relation “sets reality apart in the diversity of its modal aspects” and:
- (ii) The systasis changes (through the antithetic relation) “into an objective logical ‘standing apart’.”

How is it possible that setting reality apart in its diversity of aspects through the *Gegenstand*-relation results in an objective *logical* “standing apart” – if the relation should not be identified with the logical subject-object relation? Does this not result in acquiring an inter-modal synthesis from the perspective of the logical aspect? Moreover, why can the *deepened logical subject-object relation* transcend this restriction? Suddenly the inter-modal meaning-synthesis which, according to Dooyeweerd, differs in principle from the logical subject-object relation, is now intimately linked to it.

Let us investigate the nature of subject-object relations briefly, followed by assessing the possibility of “setting apart” (NC-I:45) the various aspects embedded in the continuity of cosmic time.

Are the various subject-object relations similar?

A physical entity, such as a stone, displays active subject-functions in the aspects of number, space, the kinematic and the physical and latent object-functions in the cosmic-later aspects. When someone observes the stone its latent sensitive-psychic object-function is made *patent*, is *disclosed*. One can also say that the stone is objectified in the sensory mode. Likewise, it could be objectified within the sign-mode by *naming* it, in the economic aspect by *buying* it, in the moral aspect by *adoring* it, and so on.

These latent object-functions await being disclosed without *resisting* any effort to make them patent. What is the case with logical objectification? The stone could be identified by distinguishing it from other kinds of stones (or non-stones). Discerning similarities presupposes that differences are detected, i.e., *identification* presupposes similarities and *distinguishing* presupposes differences. But identification and distinguishing are the two legs of analysis. As soon as some feature or entity is identified and distinguished, logical objectification takes place. A concept presents itself whenever a multiplicity of identified and distinguished (universal) traits are united into the unity of such a concept.

Since the beginning of philosophical reflection in the West the nature of a concept has been explained in terms of a unity-in-the-multiplicity (unity-and-multiplicity). Cassirer holds that “[T]he determination that a concept is [a] ‘unity in multiplicity’” belongs “to the classical basic and original legacy of logic and philosophy as such” (Cassirer 1929:339). These traits, features or characteristics must be *universal*, for – as medieval philosophy already realized – what is individual exceeds the grasp of a concept. One representative statement claims: “Individuum ineffabile” (what is individual is inexpressible and cannot be described). Another one explores this issue further: “de singularibus non est scientia” (there is no science of what is singular) (see Janich 2009:110).

Unfortunately, Dooyeweerd does not have a well-articulated understanding of the nature of a concept, even though he did develop a proper concept of law (see for example Dooyeweerd 1997-II:406 and see also Strauss 2009:570). Indeed, most academics lack a concept of a concept (Cassirer 1928:134).

According to Dooyeweerd immanence-philosophy “assumes that the theoretical-logical function of thought in its abstract isolation can be *actual*” but then add “whereas the isolation is in reality the product of theoretical abstraction” (NC-II:463). The word “isolation” is misleading here, because from the outset Dooyeweerd emphasized that part of the “resistance” of the non-logical aspects derives from the fact that even in their abstracted condition they continue to remain, through their retrocipatory and anticipatory analogies, connected to the other aspects.

Nonetheless Dooyeweerd states, as we have noted earlier, that the “deepened meaning of analysis” sets “the modal structures of the law-spheres apart from each other by *breaking up the continuity of the cosmic meaning-coherence into a logical discontinuity*” (I am italicizing – DS: NC-II:470). Earlier we read: “The aspects are not set asunder, but rather are conceived of as being together *in a continuous uninterrupted coherence*” (My emphasis – DS: NC-I:38). We add another similar statement: “The antithetic relation of the theoretical attitude of thought, on the contrary, sets reality apart in the diversity of its modal aspects (NC-II:471).

The continuity of which Dooyeweerd here speaks is sometimes also characterized as an unbreakable coherence: “in the structure of every aspect of reality is expressed the unbreakable integral coherence with all the others” (NC-I:176). Earlier in this Volume the same point is highlighted: “Our hypothesis maintains the unbreakable inter-modal coherence of meaning between all experiential aspects” (NC-I:50; NC-II:201, see also NC-II:222, 252, 275, 285, 301 and 553).

Some observations of Dooyeweerd regarding the continuity of cosmic time in which reality is embedded, and which undergirds the possibility of abstracting from this continuity, are considered below.

Abstracting from the continuity of time?

Having amply emphasized the unbreakable coherence between all the modal aspects, Dooyeweerd proceeds by acknowledging that although we can form concepts of the different modes of time, time itself can only be approximated in an idea:

We can form, a theoretical concept of the separate modal aspects of time. But time itself, in its all-embracing cosmic meaning can never be comprehended in a concept, because the former alone makes the concept possible. It can only be *approximated* in a theoretical *limiting-concept* in critical self-reflection as to the necessary *pre-supposita* of the theoretical attitude of thought. We then get a transcendental idea of cosmic time-order in the theoretical discontinuity of its different modal aspects. This discontinuity is caused by logical analysis. In the logical or analytical aspect, itself, cosmic time discloses a *modal-analytical sense* (NC-I:30).

Furthermore, Dooyeweerd equates continuity and discontinuity with the distinction between concept and idea: “With regard to its fundamental analytic aspect the concept is necessarily *discontinuous* and is incapable of comprehending the cosmic *continuity* of time, which exceeds the modal boundaries of its aspects” (NC-I:106).

This explanation is now employed in answering the earlier-mentioned question: “what is abstracted in the antithetic thought-relation from the integral structure of the horizon of our experience”? His answer is: “the inter-modal coherence of time” ... “Universal time envelopes all the modal aspects of the horizon of our experience; it expresses itself in each of these modes in the specific meaning of that modality but exhausts itself in none of them. (Dooyeweerd CP:12). “But in a genuinely transcendental-critical attitude we begin to realize that, in order to bring all fundamental modes of time openly into view, one has to abstract them from this inter-modal continuity” (CP:13). Why does Dooyeweerd emphasize the “inter-modal continuity” and neglect the inter-modal *discontinuity* (i.e., the mutual sphere-sovereignty) of the various aspects? Everyone of the first four modal aspects enables us to formulate concept-transcending statements pertaining to the entire universe, namely: everything is unique; everything coheres with everything else, everything is constant; and everything changes (see Strauss 2017:16-17).

First Dooyeweerd says that “what is abstracted in the antithetic thought-relation” is “the inter-modal coherence of time” and then he holds that “in order to bring all fundamental modes of time openly into view, one has to abstract them from this inter-modal continuity.” Do we (i) abstract the modes of time from the inter-modal continuity of time or (ii) do we abstract the inter-modal coherence of time?

However, there is an even more fundamental question at hand. If all the aspects are fitted in an *unbreakable (continuous) coherence*, how is it possible to “set them apart” in “logical discontinuity”?

What are the implications entailed in the logical subject-object relation for these issues? Are we capable of breaking apart the **unbreakable** continuity of the given temporal coherence within creation?

If abstraction is “lifting out” and “disregarding” it is hard to see what is *abstracted* from the inter-modal continuity of time. Identifying and distinguishing (i.e. abstracting) modal time orders or factual time durations are nothing but acts of logical-analytical *objectification*. The *idea* of cosmic time is articulated by using certain modal terms in a concept-transcending way. Consider the terms used in phrases such as “the inter-modal coherence of time” and “inter-modal continuity.” The term *modal* stretches the physical meaning of operating (functioning – derived from the physical aspect) beyond the limits of this aspect. The terms *coherence* and *continuity* respectively embody an *idea-use* of spatial terms and kinematic terms (*coherence* derives from the connectedness of spatial continuity and *continuity* here derives from the sense of *constancy* (*persisting* or *enduring*)).

When we discern or identify modal (and typical) time-orders and their correlated time-durations the real continuity of cosmic time is not set apart in logical discontinuity. We merely identify and distinguish traits of reality and then juxtapose them through our theoretical acts of logical objectification. It is comparable to the difference between numerals and numbers. Multiplicity is what is ontically given, while numerals are the signs which we use to designate what is given. Likewise, the modal aspects are ontically given (embedded in cosmic time). The continuity of cosmic time could be approximated in an idea, but logical identification and distinguishing merely discloses the logical object-function of whatever is identifiable and distinguishable, i.e., whatever is logically objectifiable. Yet logical objectification itself remains fully embedded within the cosmic continuity of time and therefore does not “break” the “unbreakable” continuity of cosmic time. Just consider once more Dooyeweerd's (earlier mentioned) explanation:

This universality can only reveal itself in the deepened meaning of analysis. It sets the modal structures of the law-spheres apart from each other by breaking up the continuity of the cosmic meaning-coherence into a logical discontinuity.

Logical objectification occurs *within* the “continuity of the cosmic meaning-coherence” and therefore does not terminate this coherence into “a logical discontinuity.” The concepts which we form of the various modal aspects are comparable to the *numerals* mentioned above. Distinguishing between aspects that are (theoretically) identified does not “break-up” the coherence or continuity of cosmic time, for it constantly presupposes this cohering continuity. The identified – and named – aspects could be further analysed in their inter-modal coherence. Consequently, abstracting them from “the inter-modal coherence of time” does not make sense, because at most one can discern (identified) structural features of temporal reality [such as those captured by “numerals”] and then distinguish them.

Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique on the cross-roads

If we can only *know* modal aspects after they have been abstracted from the continuity of cosmic time, it would be impossible to hold, as Dooyeweerd does, that the pre-logical aspects could be logically objectified without invoking the *Gegenstand*-relation. Dooyeweerd writes: “Only now are those aspects which precede the logical law-sphere distinctly objectified in the latter” (NC-II:472).

In fact, the entire idea of an “inter-modal meaning-synthesis” terminates in a genuine *antinomy*. Thought through consistently one of the two aspects to be “synthesized” must give up its sphere-sovereignty. It does not help to say, as Dooyeweerd does, that the starting-point of the inter-modal synthesis cannot be found in the logical aspect or one or another non-logical aspect if the idea is maintained that in theoretical thought two sphere-sovereign aspects are *synthesized*.

One can identify and distinguish (i.e., logically objectify) any aspect – including the logical, but one cannot “fuse” or “synthesize” two *irreducible* aspects. Dooyeweerd advocated in his transcendental critique the idea of a supra-modal point of departure without recognizing that the idea of a “synthesis” of two irreducible aspects as such is an antinomic stance *par excellence!*

This entire problem is a left-over of Kant's epistemology, as well as its after-effect in the Marburg school (Natorp) and the Baden school of thought (Rickert). The idea of "resistance" merely underscores the problematic idea of a *Gegenstand*-relation as such.

We may now return to some of the issues related to the *Gegenstand*-relation and the transcendental critique.

Although presented and elaborated right at the beginning of NC, the transcendental critique presupposes both the theory of modal aspects and the theory of individuality-structures.

Dooyeweerd's argument opens by contrasting modal aspects "opposed" to each other. In our non-theoretic experience, according to him (as noted earlier), there is an implicit awareness of those aspects, primarily revealed in the multiple subject-object relations in which we are fitted. *Functions* are *modal aspects*, not *concrete things*. The next presupposition of the transcendental critique is given in the idea of an individuality-structure that in principle functions in all aspects of reality. How else could the transcendental critique argue that the non-logical aspects are opposed to the logical aspect of the *real act of thought* in the *Gegenstand*-relation?

Combining these two suppositions underlies the way in which the *Gegenstand*-relation is characterized, namely as opposing one or another non-logical aspect to the logical aspect of a *real thought-act*. Without an implicit awareness of the nature of the logical and non-logical aspects of reality (acknowledged by Dooyeweerd) it would be impossible to oppose them to each other. Moreover, the knowledge concerning what is logical or non-logical clearly contains an understanding of the distinctive character of each identified and juxta-posed ("opposed") aspect.

However, in order to be able to *identify* any "to-be-opposed" modal aspect entails that it has already been *conceived*, i.e., identified and distinguished from the others. This refutes the entire second problem of the transcendental critique where Dooyeweerd argues that we must proceed from the theoretical opposition to a synthesis: "We must proceed from the theoretical antithesis to the theoretical synthesis between the logical and the non-logical aspects, if a logical concept of the non-logical 'Gegenstand' is to be possible" (NC-I:44).

Opposing aspects presupposes an (at least implicit) *concept* of them. On top of this difficulty the entire idea of an inter-modal synthesis has to be questioned. Why would concept-formation require a synthesis between

aspects that are intrinsically different *and* irreducible?! Alternatively, it should be acknowledged that “knowing” does not need a synthesis of what is irreducible but merely requires an insight, through logical objectification, into the unique (or shared) properties of what is identified and distinguished.

The idea of a *Gegenstand*-relation inevitably runs into the *antinomic* attempt to synthesize what is irreducible. I am still amazed by the fact that a genius like Dooyeweerd got caught in the trap of Kant and neo-Kantianism. Natorp claimed that the logical pole should be the starting-point for the synthesis between the logical and the non-logical; Rickert advocated the idea that within the theoretical sphere one should distinguish between the logical and the non-logical and Von Kibed believed that the starting-point for the synthesis should be sought in the sphere of religion (see my earlier *Observation* and Strauss 2009:359-368).

The challenge to anyone still in doubt about this issue should be to contemplate the (im-)possibility of an inter-modal synthesis and consider the fact that the entire idea of an inter-modal synthesis is intrinsically *antinomic*. We have seen that in Dooyeweerd’s argument this antinomy was hiding itself behind the alleged supra-theoretical starting-point of an inter-modal synthesis, thus drawing the attention away from the real mistake, namely the view that an *inter-modal synthesis* is a consistent idea.

What is throughout surprising is that the discussion did not in the first place come to terms with this huge antinomy before other options were considered.

On page 366 of *Philosophy: Discipline of the Disciplines* (2009) I remarked:

This is an implicit left-over of Kant’s rationalism in Dooyeweerd’s epistemology, generating the antinomial idea that two irreducible aspects could be ‘synthesized’ instead of realizing that it is only through a deepening (disclosure) of the analytical aspect that identifiable and distinguishable features could be logically objectified, i.e. united on the basis of their distinctive, objective logical standing apart – ironically enough an insight explicitly advanced by Dooyeweerd himself.

This “distinctive, objective logical standing apart” does not suspend the unbreakable coherence between aspects because it merely identifies and distinguishes whatever has been noticed.

* * *

Dooyeweerd's remark that his transcendental critique may be of enduring value calls for another observation.

The normal reaction of someone reading the transcendental critique for the first time is that it serves as a *theoretical proof* of the religious determinedness of theoretical thought. Yet on pages 56-57 of *A New Critique of Theoretic Thought* (NC) Volume I Dooyeweerd warns against this misunderstanding: "the demonstrative force of our critique has been negative in character, so far as it, taken strictly, can only demonstrate, that the starting-point of theoretical thought cannot be found in that thought itself, but must be supra-theoretical in character"

Strangely enough, but underscoring the point I am making, his own successor, Henk Hommes, stated in a brief response to my criticism of the *Gegenstand*-relation that the implication of my critique is that the entire transcendental critique as the theoretical proof of the religious determinedness of all theoretical thought comes to a downfall – in the discussion which Dooyeweerd, Hommes and I had in the study of Dooyeweerd's home (Oranje Nassaulaan, Amsterdam, June 1973).

Conclusion

Dooyeweerd's non-reductionistic ontology has an enduring intrinsic soundness but not his Kantian-infected transcendental critique! Dooyeweerd's reverse expectation may perhaps be viewed as still partially infected by this implicit "proof" value of his transcendental critique. However, having shown that the *Gegenstand*-relation is intrinsically antinomic does not eliminate Dooyeweerd's sound account of diverse philosophical ground-ideas and direction-giving ground-motives. Scholarly communication should proceed by exercising factual criticism (an appeal to undeniable states of affairs), immanent criticism, transcendental criticism and finally an providing an explanation of an alternative view (see Strauss 2008).

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