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# Investigating the presuppositional realm of biblical-theological methodology: Part 1: Dooyeweerd on Reason

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**INVESTIGATING THE PRESUPPOSITIONAL REALM OF  
BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY,  
PART I: DOOYEWEERD ON REASON**

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*Introducing the Article Series*<sup>1</sup>

It has long been recognized that the field of biblical theology has an enormous plurality of competing and often mutually exclusive methodologies (e.g., literary, form, canon, structuralist, new, reader-response, sociopolitical, and depth-psychological criticisms),<sup>2</sup> resulting in many different theologies.<sup>3</sup> Together with the often-lacking awareness of the foundation of one's own methodological approach, this situation has complicated and politicized many dialogues. As a result, biblical theology, with its great methodological discord is, as such, becoming increasingly disreputable. Biblical theologians who take this diffuse methodological situation seriously and invest in theoretical thinking can be divided into two trends.

Adherents of the first trend seem to believe that the potential for developing completely new methodologies is exhausted. Here one either (a) discusses which methodologies should be ruled out or (b) accepts the intentionalities of the different methodologies as justified but limited aspects of biblical hermeneutics. As biblical hermeneutics is concerned with examining the relationship between the biblical text and its reader, it basically comprises

<sup>1</sup>I want to thank especially Danielle Koning for helping me to polish my English and Sven Fockner who took the time to proofread my article.

<sup>2</sup>See Steven McKenzie and Stephen Haynes, eds., *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1999); John Barton, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Manfred Oeming, *Biblische hermeneutik: Eine Einführung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998).

<sup>3</sup>Representative for the discipline of biblical theology, Rainer Albertz describes the present situation in OT theology as follows:

“Auffällig ist die verwirrende Vielfalt der über 20 Theologien, die seit 1933 erschienen sind. Mag man dies noch als Ausdruck der Lebendigkeit der Disziplin werten, so muß doch nachdenklich stimmen, daß auch 60 Jahre, nachdem der erste Band der epochemachenden Theologie von Walther Eichrodt publiziert wurde, immer noch kein Konsens darüber erreicht werden konnte, wie die Aufgabe, der Aufbau und die Methode einer Theologie des Alte Testaments zu bestimmen sind. Im Gegenteil, die Divergenz der Ansätze hat sich in jüngster Zeit eher noch erhöht.

“Hinzu kommt eine verblüffende Gesprächsunfähigkeit zwischen den verschiedenen Entwürfen. Kaum ein Verfasser einer neuen Theologie geht auf die vorangehenden ein, versucht, sie zu diskutieren, ihre Schwächen aufzudecken und zu einer nachweisbar besseren Lösung zu gelangen” (“Religionsgeschichte Israels statt Theologie des Alten Testaments!” in *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 10 [1995], 6).

the effective aspect of the author, the linguistic corpus, and the reader in the process of understanding. For biblical scholars who accept the intentionalities of different methodologies as justified, it is the different unbalanced emphases on hermeneutical aspects that underlie the methodological differences. This unbalanced treatment of hermeneutical aspects causes author-, text-, and reader-oriented methodologies.<sup>4</sup> Since the hermeneutical process of reading requires all three of these foci for a proper understanding, multiple methodologies are accepted as legitimate if their limited vantage point is recognized.<sup>5</sup> Since the intentionalities of the different methodologies are understood to represent the different possible, complementary, and necessary hermeneutical perspectives, methodological plurality is considered to be positive. This positive attitude, however, does not come without emphasizing the inherent limitations of the individual methodologies and, therefore, their exclusivist claims are also critiqued.<sup>6</sup> Hence, attempts are made to order them according to an appropriate procedural sequence.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Literary criticism, sociohistorical exegeses, historical psychology, and new archaeology are considered author-oriented approaches. Structuralism, new literary criticism, canonical criticism, and discourse analysis represent text-oriented approaches. Reader-response criticism, depth-psychological exegesis, liberation-theology exegesis, and feminist exegesis are considered reader-oriented.

<sup>5</sup>Eep Talstra does not agree “that adopting a new method implies that an earlier method has become superfluous” and thus states that “there is no need to present them in historical order” (“From The ‘Eclipse’ to the ‘Art’ of Biblical Narrative: Reflections on Methods of Biblical Exegesis,” in *Perspectives in the Study of the Old Testament and Early Judaism: A Symposium in Honour of Adam S. van der Woude on the Occasion of his 70th Birthday*, ed. F. G. Martinez and E. Noort [Leiden: Brill, 2002], 5). The order that is suggested by Talstra is thus of a procedural rather than a historical nature. To him, the methodological plurality is rooted in the plurality of the reading process. Consequently, methodological pluralism does not need to be overcome, but only critically organized.

<sup>6</sup>Like Talstra and Manfred Oeming, Barton has worked on the allocation of the many methodologies within the hermeneutical process of reading texts and (as a result) argues for the limitations of each method. However, he does not develop an order of methodologies. Similar to Barton, but with much more clarity, Oeming, 175, stresses the need of methodological plurality by quoting Merklein, “Die neueren Zugänge zur Bibel und die herkömmliche historische-kritische Exegese sind nicht als Alternative zu verstehen. Es handelt sich um unterschiedliche Fragestellungen, die sich in methodischer und hermeneutischer Hinsicht gegenseitig ergänzen. Wie die Verzahnung zu erfolgen hat, ist noch nicht abschließend geklärt.” Oeming predictably concludes: “Keine Methode kann mit Gründen exclusive monopolansprüche anmelden.”

<sup>7</sup>Epp Talstra suggests that, after having allocated the different methods with their aspects in the reading process, the theologian needs to start with the analysis of the text. Here the analysis of the text’s linguistic system is prior to the analysis of the text’s rhetorical composition. The specific methods developed for linguistic and rhetorical criticism find their application in this first step (text-orientation). Second, the analysis

The second trend is represented by those biblical theologians who do not consider the different methods to be complementary. Adherents of this trend, in their dissatisfaction with existing methodologies, see the need and possibility for further methodological development.<sup>8</sup> The plurality of methodologies is often not only problematic due to methodological incompatibility, but also because many methodologies are founded on a metaphysic that is foreign to the biblical testimony.<sup>9</sup> The latter obstructs a satisfactory understanding of the biblical text. Some scholars are therefore motivated to dispose of the Greek-Occidental metaphysic that forms the presuppositional character of most theological methodologies.<sup>10</sup> However, although the deconstruction of problematic metaphysical presuppositions is often made from a philosophical

of the author's intention, i.e., the background to the text's production and history, follows (author-orientation). Here the different historical-critical methodologies that focus on the author's intention are applied in order to reconstruct the text and its textual tradition. The third step is focused on the reader and his position in being confronted by the text (reader-orientation). Here reader-response criticism and poststructuralist methodologies can be applied in order to help the single reader or religious community to become part of the long hermeneutical tradition of participating in the biblical testimony ("Texts and Their Readers: On Reading the Old Testament in Context of Theology," in *The Rediscovery of the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Janet Kyk et al. (Maastricht: Shaker, 1999), 101-120; idem, "From the 'Eclipse' to the 'Art' of Biblical Narrative," 1-14; idem, *Oude en Nieuwe Lezers: Een inleiding in de methoden van uitleg van het Oude Testament* (Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok, 2002), 81-83, 97-120.

The practice of ordering methods in terms of procedure can also be found in Oeming's work. However, he disagrees with the procedural order of Talstra and starts with author-oriented methodologies (Oeming, 175-184).

<sup>8</sup>A variety of thinkers could be mentioned here. After critically surveying the methodological scenery, Gerhard Hasel concludes "that a basically new approach must be worked out" (*Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 194). The dissatisfaction about the methodological situation led Christof Hardmeier to develop a text-pragmatic study of literature (*Erzähldiskurs und Redepragmatik im Alten Testament: unterwegs zu einer performativen Theologie der Bibel* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005]). Contrary to Hardmeier, Rainer Albertz distances himself from methods that focus on the establishing of an OT theology by arguing for a history-of-religions approach (*A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1999]).

<sup>9</sup>E.g., the "loss of the author" within structuralistic methods could be mentioned.

<sup>10</sup>A good example is Christof Hardmeier, who tries to dissociate from the classical idea of "theology" as the designation of doctrinal display of the Christian credence. In contrast to "theology," he develops the idea of "theo-logy," in order to focus on the biblical text as "speaking about and speaking of God" ("Systematische Elemente der Theo-logie in der Hebräischen Bibel: Das Loben Gottes—ein Kristallisationsmoment biblischer Theo-logie," in *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 10 (1995) in *Erzähldiskurs und Redepragmatik im Alten Testament. Unterwegs zu einer performativen Theologie*, FAT 46 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), S. 339-354.

perspective, the construction of new methodologies seems to lack a newly developed basic metaphysical conception.

The two trends share a commonality in that they critically study the methodological situation and its hermeneutical backgrounds. This attitude is obligatory for any biblical theologian who desires to find a reasonable way to understand Scripture and who desires to be faithful to the discovery of truth. The present unsatisfactory situation of methodological plurality demands a thorough investigation of its very foundations in order to choose or develop one's own working methodology. Within Seventh-day Adventism, Gerhard Hasel has pioneered the critical investigation of methodologies used in exegesis and biblical theology.<sup>11</sup>

However, aside from praising both trends for their critical stance, I see a problem in their procedure. In order to better understand this problem, it is helpful to examine methodology from the perspective of the human act of interpretation. Fernando Canale explains that the human act of interpretation "moves from the subject that interprets to the issue or thing that is interpreted. The human act of interpretation, then, has a beginning, a movement, and an end. The end is the issue (object) interpretation seeks to understand. The movement is the process through which we interpret the issues. The beginning includes the thing (reality) and the perspective (presuppositions) from which we start the interpretative act."<sup>12</sup>

The problem, then, in the usual procedure of examining methodologies, is that methodologies are primarily judged in terms of functionality, focusing on what a specific methodology claims and is able to perform. The present debate, therefore, especially focuses on the methodological aspect of movement, i.e., on the procedure or functionality of a specific methodology. It loses sight of the importance to critically investigate methodological presuppositions, i.e., starting points. Generally, the application of functionalistic criteria does not take place in ignorance of philosophical presuppositions. The point is, however, that these presuppositions are not deeply examined.<sup>13</sup> James Barr stresses this observation in his critique on classical historical criticism by saying that "To this day there does not exist any really clear and philosophically valid

<sup>11</sup>See Hasel, *Old Testament Theology*; and idem, *New Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).

<sup>12</sup>Fernando Canale, "Evangelical Theology and Open Theism: Toward a Biblical Understanding of the Macro Hermeneutical Principles of Theology?" *JATS* 12/2 (2001): 20.

<sup>13</sup>E.g., Hasel has given an insightful critical analysis of the methodological plurality within biblical theology in his *Old Testament Theology*. However, although he engages the crucial issue within the debate of his time by pointing out that "the distinction between what a text meant and what a text means is at the core of the most fundamental problem of OT theology" (30), he still remains on the level of functionality and procedure. Although he recognizes the philosophical dimension that lies behind the "what it meant" and "what it means" problematic, he does not involve himself in a critical philosophical examination.

account of what traditional biblical criticism was doing!”<sup>14</sup> In his sensitivity to the situation, John Barton is aware of this imbalance. He explains that the core problem of methodological plurality will not be exhaustively tackled by a mere comparison of the functionality and knowledge-generating ability of methodologies. Barton asks for a thorough examination of the role of method as such.<sup>15</sup> This conclusion targets the epistemological foundations of methodology, which Barton describes as the “metacritical” issue that demands proper and specifically philosophical analysis.<sup>16</sup> However, like many other critical thinkers, Barton himself does not attempt to investigate the presuppositional level, as he does not consider himself to be an expert in the field of philosophy.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, on one hand, there is a general awareness by critics of methodological plurality, that methodology cannot be reduced to procedures that help one to arrive at an understanding of the specific objects in focus (e.g., the biblical text); rather it also includes philosophical presuppositions. However, on the other hand, the main focus in the evaluation of methods still remains on the practical ability of methodologies to deliver justified and relevant result, i.e., they remain procedure oriented. An examination in terms of functionality helps to grasp the consequences, i.e., the results or ends of specific methodologies for biblical exegesis. It does not go to the theoretical core of the problem, but remains on the surface level of practice.

<sup>14</sup>James Barr, “The Synchronic, the Diachronic and the Historical: A Triangular Relationship?” in *Synchronic or Diachronic? A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis*, ed. Johannes C. de Moor (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 9.

<sup>15</sup>John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 4.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>The result is that Barton critiques the different methodologies in regard to their applicational shortcomings and limitations. Contrary to Hasel, he does not eventually make a proposal for a basically new approach in methodology, but rather argues against the pursuit of a “correct” methodology, although he has not investigated the metacritical issue that he considers to be the root of the entire problem (*Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996], 237). Consequently, Barton’s suggestion, 246, is dissatisfying, hinting that the diversity of methods will only become a problem when a single method is perceived to be “correct,” i.e., the only way of approaching the human act of reading and understanding a text. Thus, the absolutization and exclusivity of a specific method is considered problematic, not the methods as part of a hermeneutical whole. If the latter would be critically analyzed, much more far-reaching and promising methodological considerations could be developed, as Klaus Berger states for the biblical historicist “Die Konsequenzen dieser Selbstbesinnung [Berger refers to the critical metaphysical reflection] des Historikers auf seine eigenen Möglichkeiten könnten erheblich sein, insbesondere angesichts der häufig zu konstatierenden Überfremdung der Historie durch Metaphysik aufgrund mangelnder Lust oder Bereitschaft der Historiker, sich auf systematische Erwägungen einzulassen” (*Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments* [Tübingen: A. Franke, 1999], 63).

Our situation within biblical theology is, however, far too serious for limiting our critical attitude to the watchword “whatever works is fine for me.”

Although we appreciate the efforts taken to critically examine the problematic pluralistic methodological situation, we need to look for new criteria that are able to examine not only the ends of methods, but their beginnings. An analytical frame needs to be developed that goes beyond a critical reflection on the pragmatic efficiency of methodologies to their very foundation. Any methodology is undergirded by a specific concept of human cognition (epistemology).<sup>18</sup> Thus if we really want to understand methodology in general and our present situation in particular, we need to come to grips with the structure of epistemology and its ontological foundation.<sup>19</sup> Through such a framework, both beginning and end, i.e., presuppositional starting points and theological consequences, can be critically examined.

The current methodological debate within biblical theology has been especially kindled through the conflict between the students of the history-of-religions approach (Lemche, Thompson, Albertz, Davies) and the adherents of the classical approach to OT theology.<sup>20</sup> Joachim Schaper’s latest contribution to this debate comes to the same conclusion that I am suggesting.<sup>21</sup> He reasons that it is because of the unawareness of the epistemological foundation of science that some thinkers create the impression of being naïve and ignorant.<sup>22</sup> According to Schaper, and I wholeheartedly agree, a reflection on

<sup>18</sup>Any research methodology implies an understanding of how one can come to true knowledge. Therefore, a concept of the process of cognition and knowledge in general is a precondition for any methodology.

<sup>19</sup>Any concept of human cognition already assumes a general understanding of what can and cannot be known. Hence there is no concept of the epistemic (specific epistemology) without a concept of the ontic (specific ontology). On the other hand, a concept of the ontic is dependent on the very process of cognition and the understanding thereof. Ontology and epistemology, then, are independent.

<sup>20</sup>See the debate in *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 10 (1995), and in the latest critical contention of Jens Kofoed, *Text and History: Historiography and the Study of the Biblical Text* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005).

<sup>21</sup>Joachim Schaper, “Auf der Suche nach dem alten Israel? Text, Artefakt um ‘Geschichte Israels’ in der alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft vor dem Hintergrund der Methodendiskussion in den Historischen Kulturwissenschaften Teil I, II” *ZAW* 118/1, 2 (2006): 181-196.

<sup>22</sup>Schaper, 8, writes, “Aus den Äußerungen Lemches, seines Kopenhagener und seines Sheffielder Kollegen sprechen eine bemerkenswerte Naivität und eine geradezu atemberaubende Unkenntnis der epistemologischen Problematik.” He, 10, also states that the contributions of the history-of-religions approach are “erkenntnistheoretisch völlig haltlos, einerseits in ihren naiven Forderungen nach ‘Tatsachen’ und ‘Beweisen’ einem spätestens seit Droysen obsoleten Vulgär-Rankeanismus huldigen und andererseits in der Art ihrer grundsätzlichen Infragestellung aller bisherigen historisch-philologischen Exegeses des Alten Testaments als ‘tendenziöse Rekonstruktion einer fiktiven Vergangenheit, die fundamentalistischen Absichten dient.’”

the epistemological foundation of science is needed if any further debate is to remain fruitful and if a solution to the current methodological crises in biblical theology is to be found.<sup>23</sup> Schaper, an OT theologian, shows how OT theology in general creates the impression that it has not yet reflected on the epistemological understanding of Max Weber.<sup>24</sup> He further shows how the history-of-religions approach is breathtakingly ignorant of the epistemological problem.<sup>25</sup> Schaper argues that serious biblical theologians can no longer work on the basis of the Rankian positivism, but need to acknowledge the shift toward the “autogenesis of cognitive reality” initiated by Heinrich Rickert and Max Weber. The idea of the “autogenesis of cognitive reality” supposes that the criteria for truth need to be sought within the logical realm of the subject and not within the material realm of the object, which is never accessible as *Ding an sich*. This shift automatically generates a change in the understanding and meaning of historical facts, ancient texts, and archaeological artifacts as objects of scientific research.<sup>26</sup>

Although Schaper concludes that epistemological reflection is necessary for a reorientation in the field of OT studies, he is surprisingly uncritical of the Kantian idea of a “universal logic of science” (universal *gültige Logik der Forschung*).<sup>27</sup> This is astonishing since the ontological foundation of the Kantian idea of the universality of the subject’s logic has been convincingly critiqued within postmodern philosophy. The latter has shown that science can no longer “rest on the absolute, unmovable ground of human reason, but on the hypothetical foundation of human imagination.”<sup>28</sup>

However, we see how Schaper shifts the basic issue in the current debate from the text-oriented “material” or procedural questions to the call for a proper understanding of the formal structure of human reasoning. We can consequently conclude that the debate about the problematic diversity of methodologies is no longer limited to discussing procedures of method that do not seem to do justice to the biblical text, its authors, and its readers, but points beyond procedure to the understanding of human reasoning

<sup>23</sup>Schaper, 5, formulates the need “das eigene Vorgehen auf der Höhe des geschichtstheoretischen Erkenntnisstandes epistemologisch zu reflektieren.”

<sup>24</sup>See Max Weber, “Die ‘Objektivität’ sozialwissenschaftlicher und sozialpolitischer Erkenntnis,” in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, ed. Johannes Winkelmann (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1982), 146-214. For a short introduction to Weber’s methodological understanding of science of culture and history, see Friedrich Jäger and Jörn Rüsen, *Geschichte des Historismus: Eine Einführung* (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1992), 156-160.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 8-9.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 9, 11.

<sup>28</sup>Fernando Canale, *Back to Revelation-Inspiration: Searching for the Cognitive Foundations of Christian Theology in a Postmodern World* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2001), 9.



(epistemology) that methodological procedures necessarily assume.<sup>29</sup> Thus the call for an examination of the epistemological ground of biblical studies increases in volume.<sup>30</sup>

So far, the need and duty of the biblical theologian and science to understand the epistemological foundation of methodologies and critically develop his or her own understanding in this matter is introduced. My goal in this series of articles is to contribute to critical and analytical thinking in order to stimulate further methodological deconstruction and development. In the first two articles, I will introduce the ground-breaking work of the Dutch Reformed Christian philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd (current article) and the Argentinean Christian philosopher and theologian Fernando Canale (second article) in regard to their respective structures and interpretations of human understanding from a radical Christian perspective.<sup>31</sup> Their pioneering work, in which they critically analyze the widely held claim of the neutrality of human

<sup>29</sup>Since epistemology lies at the foundation of any science, an understanding of epistemology in general and the development of one's own epistemology in particular will be most fruitful for both the inner theological debate and the encounter and debate with any other science. It is not only in the realm of theology in general and biblical theology in particular that a problematic methodological plurality is found. In every scientific activity, whether in the humanities or natural sciences, we encounter the same problematic (Roy Clouser, *The Myth of Religious Neutrality: An Essay on the Hidden Role of Religious Belief in Theories* [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005]). The lively debate within the field of linguistics among cognitive, generative, and functionalistic linguists is a good example of this reality. However, although the situation is different within theology, linguists recognized much earlier both the impact of epistemological conceptions and critically investigated them in order to uncover the origin of competing linguistic theories (cf. William Foley, *Anthropological Linguistics: An Introduction* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1997], 81-245; George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* [New York: Basic, 1999]).

<sup>30</sup>Besides Schaper, Kofoed, 247, should also be mentioned. In his latest extensive analysis of the methodology of the Albertz-Lemche-Thomson-Davies school, he stresses that "matter of method and presuppositions have been largely overlooked in the debate over the epistemological and historiographical value of biblical texts." However, we need to acknowledge that a critical analysis of the philosophical presuppositions involved is only one part of the story. Critical analyses of procedures and characteristics of data (object; e.g., Bible) are needed as well. Consequently, a critical assessment of the methodological analysis needs to include three aspects: man as subject with his presuppositional contribution, the characteristic of the data to be researched as object, and the methodological strategy as procedure for gaining understanding about the data.

<sup>31</sup>I will primarily follow Herman Dooyeweerd's thought as presented in his *magnus opus* (*A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, vols. 1 and 2 [Lewiston: Mellen, 1997]). The basis for the presentation of Fernando Canale's line of thinking will be his dissertation, *A Criticism of Theological Reason: Time and Timelessness as Primordial Presuppositions*, Andrews University Dissertation Series (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1987).

reasoning, responds to the present call for epistemological reflection, putting them ahead of their times. In a unique and intriguing way, Dooyeweerd and Canale involve themselves in a philosophical analysis of the structure of human understanding by which they are able to develop an analytical framework for deconstructing methodologies. It is this kind of analysis and framework that is demanded if we want to arrive at clarity for our methodological struggles. In the third article, I will first show how Dooyeweerd's and Canale's critical analyses of human understanding can be utilized to investigate the ontological foundations of specific methodologies. Then I will explicate the differences between Dooyeweerd's and Canale's thinking (through comparison). In the last article, I will attempt to critique Dooyeweerd's and Canale's analyses in order to prepare the work of transformation and further development. In this last step, I hope to suggest epistemological criteria that can enrich the framework of critical reflection on methodologies, their nature, and their impacts. Since all the articles will draw heavily on my philosophical research at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, I will often refer to that research.

My general expectation is that, by means of this series of articles, the reader might become more sensitive and critical to the realm of methodologies and realize that a reflection on biblical epistemology and ontology is not only fruitful for biblical theology, but for all scientific disciplines. Specifically, I expect that these articles will support the reader in reinterpreting the hermeneutical relation between author/event, text/artifact, and interpreter from the perspective of a biblical understanding of epistemology and ontology. This calls for the reader to involve himself or herself with constructing a biblical perspective on historical progression that integrates both normativity and subjectivity. The latter will enable a careful thinker to have a fresh look at the diversity of biblical-text tradition as well as the inner textual diversity of the biblical testimony.

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#### Part I/IV: *Dooyeweerd on Reason*

##### 1.1 Introduction to Dooyeweerd's Thought

It is widely held that rational thinking and its application in science and philosophy as theoretical thinking is neutral. It is this belief that is the foundation of many philosophical traditions and sciences, and even functions as a legitimatization and justification for the reliability of the latter. At the foundation of the claim that rational thinking is neutral lies the assumption that rational thinking is autonomous.<sup>32</sup> The central unity that the many different philosophical schools experience in their general assumption

<sup>32</sup>Autonomy is the presupposition for neutrality. This is because autonomy includes the idea of practical or material independence, i.e., self-sufficiency. Consequently, something which proposes to be autonomous cannot be influenced or determined in its being by something or someone else since the power of determination is of and in itself. If reason is considered to be neutral and as having the potential of "pure judgments," it is claiming an autonomous status.

about the neutrality of rational thought, however, stands in tension with the diversity of fundamental conceptions of the autonomy of rational and theoretical thought.<sup>33</sup> Unity is experienced in the claim that rational thought is autonomous, but not in the argumentation for the autonomy of rational thought. In the field of science and philosophy, the rationality of thought finds its most abstract application in theoretical thinking. If there is no unifying idea about the nature of theoretical thought, how can one claim unity in the idea of the neutrality and autonomy of theoretical thought and claim that science is neutral? How can one claim the autonomy of reason if there is not even an agreement about what reason is?

Behind this problem lies the answer of why, perhaps, the philosophical discourse of the twentieth century became increasingly a discourse of misunderstanding, unable to beget mutual apprehension among different philosophical schools. The doubt about the pretentious claim of neutrality of theoretical thought even increases when one considers the results and conclusions of depth psychology and existentialism, which show that in matters of truth, human reason cannot function as ultimate judge.<sup>34</sup>

This background urges any thinker to examine the deeper reason why there are so many conceptions about the nature of the autonomy of reason and what role and determining influence different presuppositions play in the formulation of a conception of reason. Dooyeweerd was motivated to inquire into the universal inner structure of theoretical thought itself. An understanding of the universal inner structure of theoretical thought promises the possibility for understanding the origin of the different philosophical conceptions of reason and their claim of the autonomy of reason. In addition, it might help the diligent thinker to grasp the underlying problems that are involved in philosophical discourse and provide answers about whether theoretical thought is really neutral.

The analysis of the universal structure of theoretical thought goes beyond an immanent analysis that looks for the inner logical consistency of any concept about reason. Such an analysis will even go beyond a transcendent analysis of reason that investigates the differences between existing conceptions. “Transcendental,” here understood as a technical term, refers to the formal conditions that are needed in order to allow for the acquisition of philosophical and theoretical knowledge.<sup>35</sup> That is why Dooyeweerd calls his

<sup>33</sup>Cf. Yong Joon Choi, *Dialog and Antithesis: A Philosophical Study on the Significance of Herman Dooyeweerd's Transcendental Critique*, Hermit Kingdom Studies in History and Religion (Cheltenham, PA: Hermit Kingdom, 2006), 76.

<sup>34</sup>Herman Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought: Studies in the Pretended Autonomy of Philosophical Thought* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1960), 2.

<sup>35</sup>The term “transcendental” is taken from Kant's philosophy, but receives a radical new interpretation that assumes a creational ontic order and that functions as the condition for our thinking (René van Woudenberg, “Theorie van het Kennen,” in *Kennis en werkelijkheid, Tweede inleiding tot een christelijke filosofie* [Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 1996], 62-69; L. Kalsbeek, Bernard Zylstra, and Josina Van Nuis Zylstra, *Contours of a Christian Philosophy: An Introduction to Herman Dooyeweerd's Thought: A Supplement*

analysis of the structure of theoretical thought a transcendental critique since it inquires into the “universally valid conditions which alone make theoretical thought possible, and which are required by the immanent structure of this thought itself.”<sup>36</sup> An analysis of the universal structure of reason will consequently be of transcendental character since it goes beyond the dogmatic examination of conceptions into the analysis of the structural realities. These realities are involved in any formulation of any theoretical conception. Only a critique that transcends any transcendent and immanent critique to become a transcendental critique will be able to critically inquire into the dogma of the autonomy of theoretical thought. We will see that through its ambition the transcendental critique receives a strong hermeneutical character.

The supposition that theoretical thinking is not neutral is based on the tension between the common claim of the autonomy of reason and the different contradicting conceptions of it. This supposition, along with the insights of depth psychology and existentialistic philosophy, shows that Dooyeweerd’s call for a transcendental critique is justified. The conclusion of his inquiry into the universal inner structure of theoretical thought shows that the dogma of the autonomy of theoretical thought, whether found in philosophy or science, can no longer be upheld. According to Dooyeweerd, the structure of reason itself shows that theoretical thinking is in need of a religious choice that cannot be found in reason itself, but necessarily transcends it.<sup>37</sup>

Dooyeweerd developed two analyses of the inner nature of theoretical thought—the first and second ways, which can be understood as two different possible routes for a transcendental critique. Both ways are built upon Dooyeweerd’s modal theory. Thereafter I will focus on the second way, as it draws more strongly on the modal theory and represents the later Dooyeweerd, which I am here focusing on.<sup>38</sup> Because of the dependent relation between the transcendental critique and the modal theory, I will first give a short explanation of Dooyeweerd’s modal theory before I describe his second way of analyzing the structure of theoretical thought.

## 1.2 Model Theory: On the Plurality of Being

### 1.2.1 *Interpretational Choice and Universal Structural Data*

Within the history of philosophy, the interpretations of the nature of empirical data in temporal reality can roughly be categorized into two opposing perspectives. The first perspective, taken in its extreme form, constitutes

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to the *Collected Works of Herman Dooyeweerd* [Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 2002], 172-174).

<sup>36</sup>Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, 1: 37.

<sup>37</sup>Choi, 52-53.

<sup>38</sup>For the *first way*, see Oliver Glanz, “Time, Reason and Religious Belief: A Limited Comparison, Critical Assessment, and Further Development of Herman Dooyeweerd’s Structural Analysis of Theoretical Thought and Fernando Canale’s Phenomenological Analysis of the Structure of Reason and Its Biblical Interpretation” (M. A. Thesis, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2006), 32-38.

the notion that the idea a person has when he or she experiences a thing (e.g., an event, an object, a living being) is the representation of the thing in itself. Human beings, therefore, have an objective understanding of the thing outside themselves. The second perspective, taken in its extreme form, constitutes the notion that the idea a person has when he or she experiences a thing is a representation of his or her (mental) creation of the thing he or she is experiencing. Human beings, therefore, have only subjective access to the thing outside themselves and can never know what is really external to their own subjective state. In this rather complex age-old and ongoing dilemma between the subjective and the objective perspective, Dooyeweerd wants to formulate an interpretation of the nature of empirical data in temporal reality by adopting a radical Christian starting point rather than joining either the subjective or the objective perspectives. In this way, his modal theory is nothing other than an interpretative analysis of the universally shared experience of temporal reality.<sup>39</sup>

According to Dooyeweerd, the naïve experience of temporal reality with all its diversities can only be interpreted correctly when one takes the sovereignty of God as the creator of reality (i.e., both of the thinking human being and his or her object of thought and experience) as the ultimate starting point for one's interpretation. Only when this starting point is taken, will one be able to do justice to the experienced datum that is present to anyone irrespective of his or her religious faith and philosophical frameworks.

Although interpretation can take place only when one chooses a starting point or basic paradigm of interpretation, critical inspection takes place by comparing the interpretational concept with the experienced datum.

Being aware of the different routes that interpretation (from a starting point as interpretational framework and the experienced datum toward a formulation of a concept of temporal reality) and critical inspection (from experienced datum towards the formulated concept of it) take, Dooyeweerd stresses that one cannot arrive at the same interpretation and analytical conclusion if one does not share his starting point. Thus, seen from the direction of the rational activity of interpretation, the construction of his interpretation of temporal reality is impossible if one does not accept the biblical God as being the creator of temporal reality.<sup>40</sup> However, seen from the direction of the rational activity of critical inspection, verification by thinkers who do not share his interpretational starting point is possible. Such a verification process can take place on the basis of empirical data (as state of affairs) and his many philosophical arguments, which stay strong even without his interpretational starting point. Consequently, Dooyeweerd's philosophy

<sup>39</sup>For Dooyeweerd, temporal reality is the naïvely experienced everyday reality. However, temporal reality is not the only realm of creation. He also knows of the created supratemporal self, which will be introduced in the course of this article. Here "temporal" refers to reality whenever the daily experienced reality is meant.

<sup>40</sup>Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought*, 53.

can have a persuasive impact on those who do not share the same religious choice.<sup>41</sup>

### 1.2.2 *Interpretation of Naïve Experience*

To avoid misunderstanding Dooyeweerd, it is important to see that the structural datum he is speaking of does not represent an ontology; rather, it refers to the empirical data of experienced temporal reality.<sup>42</sup> The structural datum that represents the reference for the justification of philosophical conceptions is the human experience of temporal reality. This experience is a universal datum that is independent of ontological conceptions. It is the task of philosophy to find conceptions and interpretations of the structural datum that can be justified by the experience of temporal reality. The structural datum then functions as the central focus of theoretical conceptualization and as the background for any critical assessment of theoretical concepts.

In order to introduce the modal theory as an attempt to interpret reality as structural datum, I would like to describe two characteristics of human experience as datum: naïve experience and experience of scientific analogies.

Rene van Woudenberg provides examples of structural datum that show that the diversity of experience of a particular thing among different persons raises the question of the origin of this diversity.<sup>43</sup> His example demonstrates how diverse the experiences of the same concert can be among different persons: This is not worth the money! What a scratching of horse hairs on cat's bowels! What an uplifting social atmosphere! What a pure music! These various opinions about the same experience reveal differing economic, biological, social, or aesthetic perspectives.

How, then, is it possible that the same thing is experienced in such a variety of ways? Further, how is it possible that everyone understands what is meant by the diverse expressions of others and relates it to the same event they themselves have described differently? As referred to at the beginning of 1.2.1, there are, in principle, two different answers given within the history of philosophy: the concept of the thing in focus is either the projection of the subject on the object, or it is the projection of the object on the subject. In some strands of postmodern philosophy, the latter opinion can no longer be taken very seriously since it is difficult to explain that the object projects different impressions on the different subjects unless one allows for the determinative nature of the subject's interpretational framework itself.<sup>44</sup> Dooyeweerd's approach to this question is different since he can see that all the different expressions relate to the different modes of being inherent to anything that is experienced and observed.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 57-58.

<sup>42</sup>Choi, 61.

<sup>43</sup>René van Woudenberg, *Gelovend Denken: inleiding Tot Een Christelijke Filosofie*, Verantwoording (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 2004), 66-70.

<sup>44</sup>Alvin Plantinga, *On Christian Scholarship* ([http://www.calvin.edu/academic/philosophy/virtual\\_library/articles/plantinga\\_alvin/on\\_christian\\_scholarship.pdf](http://www.calvin.edu/academic/philosophy/virtual_library/articles/plantinga_alvin/on_christian_scholarship.pdf)).

All things exist by a multitude of modes and express several aspects of their being simultaneously. The economic, biological, social, and aesthetic perspectives that were chosen by the people in our example refer to the different modes of concert-being. The different emphasis that is brought in through the subject's side reveals both the diversity of the observed thing and the aspectual perspective the subject chooses while describing the experienced thing. Thus both the object and the subject contribute to the interpretation of the structural datum. Such a modal interpretation helps to do justice to two moments of the structural datum. First, it explains why in our naiveté we feel that we have not understood the phenomenon of a thing fully by interpreting it from a certain modal perspective (the concert seems to have more functions than just a biological function). Second, it explains why people who have different expressions about the same thing can still understand each other and know what the expressions refer to.

The diversity of expression, then, can often find its background in the individual focus on a specific mode of a thing's being—a mode that anyone can recognize and talk about, although their subjectively chosen focus might be different. Thus, for example, a concert can be understood not only economically (and thus cannot be reduced to the economical perspective alone), but also reveals many other aspects. This is why a diversity of expressions about the same thing does not hinder communication about the thing, thereby making mutual understanding possible. In a certain way, then, diversity is inherent to the things themselves, independent of their observers.

The second characteristic of human experience concerns the scientific realm of human activity. From the scientific perspective, there is a drive to discover, through the application of a certain discipline, specific processes and laws. The results of this drive can be seen in the formulation of analogies. In biology, for example, the principle of "life" as the struggle for survival is applied to all of reality. Consequentially, all aspects of reality (e.g., religion, business, society, or morality) are understood to be a part and expression of the biological struggle to survive. The analogies of the biological aspect find themselves in words such as "religious life," "business life," "social life," and "moral life." The analogies of the psychic aspect find themselves in formulations such as feeling "for logical coherence, cultural feeling, linguistic feeling, aesthetic feeling, legal feeling, moral feeling."<sup>45</sup>

These analogies can tempt a scientist to place the origin of religion, business, society, or morality within the basic biological life-death struggle. This drive to understand all of reality through discovered principles, laws, and processes of a specific science shows that it is difficult to reduce any science to another since the reduced science (e.g., neuron-physics reduces psychology to a subcategory of neuron-physics) can also reduce any science to its own subcategory. Where such a reduction through the absolutization of one's scientific discipline takes place, we speak of the phenomenon of "isms" (e.g., biologism, physicalism, psychologism).

<sup>45</sup>Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought*, 10-11.

Because Dooyeweerd interprets the structural data of the temporal horizon of reality from his Christian starting point, he cannot allow any part of creation to become the originator of any other part. Therefore, he does not allow the absolutization of any aspect of reality or scientific discipline, but instead interprets the existence of a diversity of sciences. Further, he allows for the fact that the absolutistic attempts of any science, together with the diversity of naïve experience, does not hinder interpersonal communication, but actually hints toward the modal diversity of reality itself. Thus he can philosophically justify and support the existing diversity of scientific disciplines since different irreducible perspectives on reality are possible due to the multimodality of being.

As science has shown, there are laws and norms within reality that have a structural nature and which belong to reality itself. Since there are irreducible perspectives to reality, we relate the different modal laws not hierarchically but horizontally to each other. The laws of the psychic aspect of things cannot be explained by and do not originate from the biological-aspectual laws. Although one aspect is related to the other and necessarily dependent on the other modalities, this relation is not of a causal character.<sup>46</sup> The laws of one modal aspect cannot explain the laws of the other modal aspects, although mutual influence takes place in the sense that one modal aspect is present within any other modal aspect in an analogical sense.

### 1.2.3 *Being as Temporal Being*

Besides the fact that the structural data show that different expressions by different people about the same thing are possible without hindering communication and understanding, they also show that a person can decide to have different perspectives about something without experiencing a fragmentation of that thing. Thus, although different perspectives can be chosen, the structural datum always expresses coherence and unity. This is why it makes sense that Dooyeweerd describes the structural datum, which consists of a diversity of modal aspects, as a diversity of coherence rather than an antithetical diversity. The many modal ways in which we experience reality (*ervaringswijzen*, manners of experience) are of a coherent character pointing to a central unity. Therefore, the economic and aesthetic aspects of a concert are not experienced as contradicting or antithetical, but as integral parts of the concert.

Due to his Calvinistic viewpoint that accepts God's essential being as timeless<sup>47</sup> and his creation as temporal, Dooyeweerd concludes that time is the common factor of all modal aspects and that through time all aspects are bound into an inner coherence as indissoluble interrelations.<sup>48</sup> Cosmic time, as

<sup>46</sup>Herman Dooyeweerd, "Het Tijdsprobleem in de Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee," *Philosophia reformata: orgaan van de Vereeniging voor Calvinistische Wijsbegeerte* 5 (1940): 200.

<sup>47</sup>On the difference between Dooyeweerd's understanding of timelessness and the Greek understanding of timelessness, see note in Glanz, 16, n. 20.

<sup>48</sup>Herman Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, vol. 3 (Philadelphia:



created temporality, holds all modal aspects of reality together and guarantees the naïve experience of inner coherence of any particular thing and reality in general. Because of this temporal coherence between different modalities, analogical relations within the different scientific disciplines are possible from the perspective of any modal aspect (e.g., the analogical moments of the biological aspect of being find their expression in, for example, the economic, religious, moral, or inner life).<sup>49</sup> The reason for the coherence-function of time can only be understood when we see that Dooyeweerd interprets the different aspects of being as aspects of cosmic time or time-modalities. Time is, therefore, experienced in its diversity of modalities of being. The modal laws are nothing other than laws of cosmic time or, as Dooyeweerd puts it, “orders of time.” Every aspect of reality is characterized by a typical time-law. Dooyeweerd discerns fifteen different time-laws as temporal aspects of reality:<sup>50</sup>

-numerical	-historical (experience of the cultural manner of the development of social life)
-spatial	
-kinematic	
-energetic (physicochemical relations of empirical reality)	-linguistic (symbolic signification)
-biotic	-social
-psychic (feeling/sensation)	-economic
-logical (analytic manner of distinction lying at the foundation of all concepts and logical judgments)	-aesthetic
	-juridical
	-moral
	-faith

In “Het tijdprobleem in de wijsbegeerte der wetsidee” (the problem of time in the philosophy of the law-idea), Dooyeweerd explains his understanding and interpretation of time, detailing how every modal-law-sphere is a temporal order. Time expresses itself in different ways through the modal aspects. These aspects differ from each other in the ways they manifest themselves in time. For example, in numeric modality the order of numbers is to be understood in the temporal order of earlier and later numbers; in kinematic modality, time expresses itself as an order of succession of movement; in biotic modality, time is revealed through the order of the development of organic life (e.g., birth, maturing, becoming older, dying); in logical modality, item-order is expressed, for example, through the logical *prius* and *posterius*. The sovereignty of a modality is identified by its *zinkern* (meaning-kernel) and

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Presbyterian and Reformed, 1958).

<sup>49</sup>Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought*, 10-11.

<sup>50</sup>These orders of cosmic time are relating themselves in an anticipatory and retrociprocity temporal order of analogies. For the sake of this article series, it is not necessary to explain this any further. An introductory explanation can be found in Woudenberg, *Gelovend Denken*, 76-78.

its *wetskring* (circle of law).<sup>51</sup> The *zinkern* (meaning-kernel) refers to the central identity of a single modality. In the case of numeric modality, this would be the “discrete *quantiteit*,” which means that any particular thing can also be described by focusing on the aspect of its countability.<sup>52</sup> The modal meaning-kernel of every aspect guarantees the irreducibility of the specific modality.<sup>53</sup>

Besides the modal meaning-kernel, any modality can be characterized by its *wetskring* (circle of laws). The modal-specific circle of laws is an expression of the modal meaning-kernel. In the case of the numeric modal meaning-kernel of “countability,” the numeric circle of laws finds expression in the laws of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division.<sup>54</sup> The different modal laws refer “backward” and “forward” to other modal laws. In the same way, the spatial aspect refers back to the numeric aspect since there is no space without the modality of “more and less.” On the other side, the spatial aspect refers forward to the kinematic aspect since it is through movement that this aspect exists.<sup>55</sup> Thus all laws unite in their basic characteristic of referring and expressing to one another.

In order to better understand Dooyeweerd’s differentiation between naïve and theoretical thinking in his analysis of the structure of philosophical and theoretical thinking, it is necessary to introduce another concept. In the Dooyeweerdian view, everything that is created is subject to modal law. However, the ways in which created things are subjected to modal law differ extensively. To prevent a disproportionate introduction into Dooyeweerd’s thing-structures, I will discuss only two relevant terms: subject-function and object-function.

What is meant by thing-structures is that all things have all modal aspects, either as subject or as object.<sup>56</sup> For example, water does not have a subject-function, but it does have an object-function in its biotic aspect. That is, water does not live, but is needed for the life of other created things and beings. Consequently, plants and water relate to each other in their biotic aspect in the form of a subject-object relation. A stone can serve as another example. A stone does not have a subject-function in its linguistic aspect since it cannot speak, but it does have an object-function in this specific modality because one can speak about it. The stone’s linguistic object-function is only activated if it stands in relation with the linguistic subject-function of another entity. A subject-subject relation is also possible when two things have one or more subject-functions in specific modalities in common. For example, when two human beings communicate with each other, there will be a subject-subject relation within their linguistic modality.

According to the modal theory, time embraces and penetrates all reality. Being is always being in time and is always full temporal being. Within

<sup>51</sup>Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought*, 9.

<sup>52</sup>Woudenberg, *Gelovend Denken*, 75.

<sup>53</sup>Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought*, 9.

<sup>54</sup>Woudenberg, *Gelovend Denken*, 76.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 76-80.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 83-84.

creation, nothing transcends the dynamic temporal horizon of being except the supratemporal heart, as I will show. The supratemporal heart transcends time, but not creation, as it is itself created. Time expresses itself in temporal reality in a diversity of mutually irreducible functions or means of being. This is of utmost importance if one wants to understand Dooyeweerd's critique of classical philosophy. To him, even space is a time-category and was mistakenly taken for a static-timeless reality, creating a dichotomy between temporal and timeless reality.<sup>57</sup> To him, creation is characterized as meaning-being, a term referring to the radical dependence of creational being. This dependence can be seen on different levels. On the modal level, every law-sphere necessarily refers to other law-spheres and all temporal law-spheres to a supratemporal central unity.

On the supramodal level, the unity-heart refers to its own origin, as I will show. In fact, there is no self-sufficient created-being. Created-being is through its dependence on a [non-Greek]<sup>58</sup> timeless God. Consequently, timelessness and supratemporality should not be confused! Timelessness is a characteristic that belongs only to the self-sufficient creator-God. Supratemporality exists only within the realm of creation. Everything that exists through God's creation is meaning-being. Meaning-being, on one hand, is relative being because it expresses a radical dependence on the creator. On the other hand, the relativity of meaning-being is expressed through its interdependent relationship with the rest of creation that is subject to the same law.<sup>59</sup> This radical character of creation's dependence on the creator is also referred to by the term "concentric law."<sup>60</sup> The law, then, is the absolute boundary between God and his creation, and the origin of the law is God's sovereign creative will.<sup>61</sup>

#### 1.2.4 Coherence and Unity—Time and the I

In Dooyeweerd's thinking, there are at least two elements that contribute to human naïve experience as an experience of inner coherence. On one hand, we have the many analogical moments that time makes possible and which enable us to experience modal diversity not as antithetical diversity, but as a diversity of coherence. The modal aspects are the simultaneous *Seinsweisen* of a thing.<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, the experience of this diversity within inner

<sup>57</sup>Dooyeweerd, "Het Tijdsprobleem in De Wijsbegeerte Der Wetsidee," 167.

<sup>58</sup>Since Dooyeweerd's conception of the timelessness of God is explained as being different from the Greek-Aristotelian understanding of timelessness (cf. n. 47), I will from here on refer to Dooyeweerd's timelessness of God as [non-Greek] timelessness in order to prevent confusion. See here Glanz, 20, n. 35.

<sup>59</sup>Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, 4.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>61</sup>Choi, 17.

<sup>62</sup>Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought*, 6.

coherence refers necessarily to a basic unity as central totality.<sup>63</sup> This experience of unity is made possible through the self or the human heart that is created with the ability to bring the inner coherence of temporal modal diversity to a supratemporal unity. This is of crucial importance to understand.

Humanity was created in the image of God as an expression of the unity of the creator. The human self, then, is of supratemporal character since it makes humanity's unity-experience of the temporal modal aspect problematic and reductionistic.<sup>64</sup> Humanity's unity-self, however, receives its unity-ability only through God's creating man and woman as *imago dei*.<sup>65</sup> Thus the unity-self is not independent but dependent and, therefore, refers not only to the unity of the creator, but to the expression of the unity of the creator who is beyond created temporality and created supratemporality. Thus the supratemporal self-unity is dependent on and refers to the timeless unity of God. Further, it is within the creational order of time, which is broken into a diversity of time-aspects that stand in an indissoluble interrelationship. In this interrelationship, every aspect refers within and beyond itself to all the others. The temporal coherence, then, refers to a supratemporal unity, which, in turn, refers to the timeless unity of the creator God.

### 1.2.5 *The I and Living*

To briefly summarize, all being is temporal being and all being is expressing and living the whole temporal order of reality. It is only humanity that can transcend this temporal order through the self by expressing through its supratemporal unity-self the timeless divine unity-creator. Although Dooyeweerd does not seem to elaborate more on what he understands by the timelessness of God, he stresses that he does not have the Greek-Parmenidean idea of timelessness in mind.<sup>66</sup> This step from time to supratemporality should not be understood as creating a similar dichotomy as form and matter. To Dooyeweerd, the being of things is not matter, but the real thing as it is in time. Also to him, the relation between the temporal thing and its timeless creator is not a relation through which a phenomenon is pointing to the thing in itself, but is a necessary relation of a thing in itself that points to its creator.

As mentioned before, it is because of the created supratemporal characteristic of the self that the I which lives within temporal reality cannot be identified with a modal aspect. The I cannot be reduced toward a biological, psychological, or rational I. Therefore, the idea of *cogito ergo sum* is a fundamental misconception that identifies the I with a single temporal-order and forgets that rational thinking is an act of a human I. The I is the subject of any human temporal action. It is through the supramodal characteristic of the self that its acts and experiences are taking place within an inner coherence and unity. In contrast to the *cogito ergo sum* idea, the ego is expressing a meaning-totality,

<sup>63</sup>Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, 4.

<sup>64</sup>Dooyeweerd uses the terms "self," "heart," and "I" interchangeably.

<sup>65</sup>Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, 4.

<sup>66</sup>Cf. n. 47.

i.e., a “totality in the coherence of all its functions within all the modal aspects of cosmic reality.”<sup>67</sup> But this meaning-totality itself is meaning and therefore created. Meaning, however, has the universal structure of referring and expressing (as the central law of meaning). Every thing that has meaning is referring to and to a certain extent expressing something else within creation but also beyond creation, hinting to the origin of creation itself. This necessary ontic dependence is referred to as concentric law. In the heart’s dependence on the divine creator-unity it can find its identity; in the relation with its temporal acts and experiences the self can realize its identity within as an identity of freedom and responsibility that is made possible through its *imago dei*—being as an expression of the being of God as meaning-totality. The self is through this radical dependence on the creator God experiencing the call to responsibility and through its relation with the diversity of temporal-order it is experiencing the limited focus and field of its responsibility.

In order to understand the relation of responsibility of the self toward the modal diversity, it is necessary to return to the architecture of a single modality.

Cosmic time is to be understood as having a cosmonomic and a factual side.<sup>68</sup> The cosmonomic represents the time-order, while the factual side represents the duration of time-order as an activation of temporal order.<sup>69</sup> What is meant by this is that the cosmonomic side as time-order is referring to all the different modal meaning-kernels that are expressed in the form of the different modal *wetskringen* (circles of laws). The factual side refers to the specific living out of the modal laws as time-order by a thing or individual. Any thing or individual is subject to the time-order and creates through this subject-being an individual expression of the modal laws it is bound to. For example, the biological time-order of birth, maturing, adulthood, aging, and dying will find different expression in different subjects. The law-side of reality as time-order does not exist outside of being, but only as a *Seinsweise* (manner of being) of a subjective being. In reality, there is no time-order without time-duration, no law-side without a subject; the one cannot exist without the other.<sup>70</sup> This interrelation expresses creational reality. Without the subjective being of things the modal-laws would not exist. The time-order, then, is an order that has potentiality. In the realization of this potentiality within individual things or human beings, this potentiality becomes duration and actuality.<sup>71</sup> The result of this theoretical insight is that the opposition between rationalistic and irrationalistic conceptions can no longer be upheld. The cosmonomic side cannot be understood apart from its different individual expressions within the factual side. In this sense, the being of a thing or individual is always the factual actualization of the cosmonomic side of any

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 28.

<sup>69</sup>Dooyeweerd, “Het Tijdsprobleem in de Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee,” 194.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 195-196.

<sup>71</sup>Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, 105.

aspect. Any absolutization of the cosmonomic side will result in the loss of human responsibility, as any absolutization of the factual side will result in a loss of normativity. Since both responsibility and normativity belong to the structural data of our naïve experience, this theory claims to do justice to this universal datum.

Because of the two sides of created cosmic time (cosmonomic and factual), expressed through all modal aspects, and because of the need of positivization of the modal norms as a call that is addressing the supramodal self, the self can, within the boundaries of the norm-structure, freely decide how it wants to respond. Humans are not free in the sense of whether they should respond, but free in the sense of how they will respond.<sup>72</sup> As such, the relation between the self and the modal diversity of reality is not a deterministic one, but characterized by responsibility.<sup>73</sup> Within the realm of the modalities that have normative time-orders, the self will creatively respond to them in either positivizing them in a faithful direction toward the meaning of the *imago dei* or with an unfaithful direction away from God. The normative creational modal structure of reality is the “universally valid determination and limitation of the individual subjectivity which is responsibly subject to it.”<sup>74</sup> The self’s relation to its creator as *imago dei* enables the awareness of its call to individually, creatively and in a faithful manner disclose the potentiality in created reality. The self can realize its identity fully and only in temporal reality when it transcends it. As Viktor Frankl puts it: “Nur Existenz, die sich selbst transzendiert, kann sich selbst verwirklichen” (Only existence, which transcends itself can come to self realization.)<sup>75</sup> In regard to theoretical and philosophical thinking, the self only does justice to the *imago dei* as it develops a view of reality that allows for a concept that does not absolutize anything within the structural datum. To be able to do this, the self needs to acknowledge that of which it is an image as the truly absolute origin of any meaning-being.

### 1.2.6 *The Logical Modal Aspect*

As we have seen, the logical aspect is considered to be one aspect of reality, one *Seinsweise* of being that is lived through the self and is not to be identified with the self. Dooyeweerd describes the *zinkern* of the logical modal aspect as the “analytic mode of distinction.”<sup>76</sup> Making distinctions as qualifying characteristic of any act of analysis and conceptualization is one of the many modal ways of human being.<sup>77</sup> Dooyeweerd distinguishes between two attitudes

<sup>72</sup>To Dooyeweerd, positivization is still on the law-side, while the specific living out of the positivization is placed on the subject-side.

<sup>73</sup>Woudenberg, *Gelovend Denken*, 87-88.

<sup>74</sup>Choi, 13.

<sup>75</sup>Viktor Emil Frankl, *Der Mensch vor der Frage nach dem Sinn: Eine Auswahl aus dem Gesamtwerk*, Neuausg. ed. (Munich: Piper, 1998), 225.

<sup>76</sup>Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, 2: 118.

<sup>77</sup>The analytic mode of distinction finds its technical expression in the *principium*\

of thought, i.e., naïve thought and theoretical thought. Logical distinction can take place in a naïve attitude of thinking as well as in a theoretical attitude of thinking. The difference between these two is that in our naïve attitude we distinguish entities and things as a whole, while in our theoretical or scientific attitude we make distinctions within entities by abstracting the modalities in which they function. Thus in the naïve attitude we do not isolate the thing's ways of being, i.e., the modalities from the thing itself, but leave them in their inner coherence as belonging inseparably to the thing under observation. We can recognize the different ways of being but these ways are still experienced as characteristics that belong to the thing that exhibits them.

By the abstract attitude of theoretical thinking, we isolate a single way of the being of a thing, i.e., one of its modal aspects, and focus our "analytic eye" on one characteristic itself. We thus theoretically separate a nonlogical modality from a thing. Therefore, contrary to the naïve state of experience where the modal diversity is experienced in an intermodal cosmic coherence, in which no single aspect is experienced in singularity,<sup>78</sup> theoretical thinking by its analytic activity of distinction brings the modal diversity of temporal reality to a distinct consciousness. The modal diversity is made explicit and the modal nonlogical aspect that functions as the object of the theoretical thought-act is theoretically disconnected from the intermodal coherence in which it is experienced in the naïve state of living as it is given in the structural data. The theoretical attitude of thought thus breaks the intermodal coherence into many possible antithetical relations in which the nonlogical modality in focus is functioning as the *Gegenstand* of the logical aspect. The English translation of the German term *Gegenstand* would be "standing in opposition." The *Gegenstand* as object of theoretical thinking contrasts the object of our naïve thinking.<sup>79</sup>

In Dooyeweerdian terminology the relations that we experience in the naïve state are subject-object relations (or subject-subject relations),<sup>80</sup> while the relations that we experience in our theoretical thought-act are *Gegenstand*-relations.<sup>81</sup>

The basic understanding of the logical aspect will give us enough background to enter Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique.

*dentitatis, principium excludendae contradictionis, and principium exclusi tertii.* Cf. Woudenberg, *Gelovend Denken*, 89.

<sup>78</sup>Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, 3.

<sup>79</sup>*Gegenstand* is used "by Dooyeweerd as a technical term for a modality when abstracted from the coherence of time and opposed to the analytic function in the THEORETICAL attitude of thought, thereby establishing the 'Gegenstand relation.' 'Gegenstand' is therefore the technical precise word for the object of SCIENCE, while 'object' itself is reserved for the objects of NAÏVE EXPERIENCE" (Kalsbeek, Zylstra, and Zylstra, 348).

<sup>80</sup>Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought*, 14-16.

<sup>81</sup>Choi, 44.

### 1.2.7 *Summary*<sup>82</sup>

Through the lens of his modal theory Dooyeweerd finds nothing in created reality that is by nature independent or self-sufficient. Rather, he stresses that every single aspect of reality is dependent on every other aspect of reality and that, in the end, all of reality is dependent on the creator. Through these dependence structures, explained as different time-orders, reality is lived as meaningful in its being in time.

The modal theory, here only briefly covered, can however not fully account for the diversity of human judgments that goes beyond the modal diversity of a thing that is experienced. It does not account for the different theoretical conceptions of reality resulting from different abstract interpretations of the structural datum. There is more to the diversity of interpretations than the diversity of modal aspects. Man can, with different attitudes, choose different modal perspectives. Having said this, the next section will give a description of Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique of theoretical thought.

## 1.3 Theoretical Thinking and Its Religious Presuppositions

Dooyeweerd states that the great turning point in his philosophical thinking was his discovery that thinking itself necessarily has a religious root. The validity of this conclusion can be shown by two ways of argumentation. The differences of the two ways stem from the direction they take in order to come to the same conclusion. The first way starts from an analysis of the nature of philosophy. The second way starts from the inner structure of the theoretical thought-act as the actualization of the logical aspect of temporal reality on its abstract, nonnaïve level. Both ways end up with the enigmatic question: what is the identity of the self that philosophizes and that involves itself in theoretical thinking? Both ways of critique target the question of what the self brings into its thought-act as determining factor in the process of conceptualization. Dooyeweerd tries to show that the conceptualization of the modal diversity of the structural datum (as a result of theoretical thinking) necessarily involves the religious identity of the self.

Because both ways are assuming an influential difference between philosophical/theoretical thinking and naïve thinking, without which the inner structure of thought cannot be understood, first the present differentiation that was already introduced in 1.2.6 will be elaborated. After that the second way of Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique will be presented.

### 1.3.1 *General Characteristic of Theoretical Thinking versus Naïve Thinking*

In order to understand Dooyeweerd's distinction between theoretical thinking and naïve thinking, one needs to keep in mind the general modal diversity with its analogical relations and specifically the meaning of the analytic modal aspect.

<sup>82</sup>Cf. Glanz, 27.



The logical aspect, as the seventh aspect of the fifteen modal aspects, is the first aspect which is different from the earlier six aspects with regards to human action, in two ways:

1. The modal *zinkern* (modal kernel) contains specific norms and not laws in its *wetskring* (circle of laws). The difference is that the time-orders of these normative aspects, represented by the *zinkern*, can be violated. They function therefore much more as an appeal to the human freedom to live responsibly, to be recognized, and applied positively. Thus, in living out these norm-modalities we can choose to live them out in a responsible way. Here the theoretical distinction between *normbeginsel* (norm-principle) as the cosmomic side and *normpositivering* (norm-positivization) as the factual side of time reappears. There are many different positivizations of norms possible without transgressing or violating the norm. These modal norms are therefore not only appealing towards the human freedom for responsibility but are also an appeal to the human creativity to choose one positivization out of many good positivizations of the potentiality of the cosmomic side belonging to all of reality.

2. Man is the only creature that has subject functions in the modal aspects seventh to fifteenth. This underlines what has been said above, that the norms of the *zinkern* are appeals to human responsibility and creativity. Human beings are by creation subject to these norms and therefore called to positivize them.

In order to prepare the explanation of how man's responsibility comes to the fore in his theoretical thought-acts, one needs to understand the difference between the theoretical and naïve attitudes of analytic distinction.

Contrary to theoretical abstraction, naïve experience, or so-called "common sense" experience, lacks any antithetical modal constructions. In the naïve state, man experiences concrete things not in a theoretic-synthesized but in a systatical way.<sup>83</sup> Derived from the Greek *συστασις/συνιστημι* (in contrast to *εκστασις/εχιστημι*), *systase* means "staying conjoint with each other" or "staying united." The reason why we experience the temporal continuity of things in our naivety in a systatical way is theoretically explained by the subject-object relation in which all the different modal aspects relate to all the different modal aspects of the thing/event experienced. These modal relations can either take the form of a subject-object relation or a subject-subject relation.<sup>84</sup> In the integral cosmic coherence, things cannot exist by themselves but are dependent on other things for the realization of their subject or object functions.

### 1.3.2 *Transcendental Critique*<sup>85</sup>

Dooyeweerd argues in the *second way* from what the ego does when it is thinking theoretically. Thus the structure of the theoretical thought-act is the

<sup>83</sup>Woudenberg, *Gelovend Denken*, 128.

<sup>84</sup>Cf. Glanz, 32.

<sup>85</sup>For the *first way*, see *ibid.*, 32-28.

focus of the *second way*. Dooyeweerd argues that theoretical thought, in order to be able to conceptualize the inner coherence of the structural datum, is structurally in need of a self that brings in a religious decision that functions as a starting point beyond the *Gegenstand*-relation.

When Dooyeweerd looks at the inner structure of theoretical thinking, he uncovers three universal problematic characteristics of abstract thinking. The universal characteristics of any theoretical thought-act are abstraction, synthesis and the necessity of critical self-reflection.

### 1.3.2.1 The First Problematic Characteristic:

#### The *Gegenstand*-Relation

The first characteristic of theoretical thought is the abstraction of the subject-object and subject-subject relations of naïve experience into different *Gegenstand*-relations. Thus, this first problem refers back to a previously mentioned distinction between the theoretical and pretheoretical attitudes of the ego.

In the critical inquiry into the inner structure of theoretical thought, we see that modal aspects are intentionally and theoretically uprooted from their temporal coherence into antithetical relations and the logical aspect relates antithetically to the nonlogical aspect under investigation. Without this abstract attitude, the modal diversity of temporal reality could not be discovered with distinctiveness, for the subject-object relations do not experience an antithetical modal diversity of temporal reality within the pretheoretical attitude.<sup>86</sup>

It is important to notice that theoretical abstraction is not understood as abstracting reality from time. Theoretical abstraction only abstracts intentionally from the temporal coherence but not from temporal diversity. Since theoretical thought cannot transcend the realm of temporality, it remains not only in the realm of diversity but also within the realm of coherence. The inner coherence of the modal diversity belongs to the creational order from which the self cannot detach its theoretical thinking. Theoretical thinking therefore necessarily involves all modal aspects. As any other act, man's theoretical acting has a psychic, biological, aesthetic, etc. aspect. Consequently, the antithetical situation that the logical aspect enforces between all modalities and between its own modal structure and the *Gegenstand* is not a real, i.e., an ontic, but a theoretical, i.e., a specific epistemic, problem. This is testified to by the resistance the *Gegenstand* displays when one attempts to conceptualize it in logical terms.<sup>87</sup> This resistance necessarily evolves, because the logically qualified concept of the *Gegenstand* cannot account for its nonlogical modality that is not logically qualified. The different modal nonlogical analogies are even present when a modality is abstracted into a *Gegenstand*. The abstracted modal aspect (*Gegenstand*) expresses its ontic coherence with all other aspects

<sup>86</sup>See Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, 42-43.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 39-40.

through the cosmic temporal coherence (expressed in analogical moments; cf. 1.2.3/4) from which theoretical thought intentionally tries to abstract.

The basic question that arises from the first problematic characteristic in regard to the act of theoretical thinking is: what is the meaning of the continuous bond of coherence in the diversity of modalities that we cannot grasp through theoretical thought? This question cannot be answered because the real coherence is lost through intentional abstraction at the very moment one takes a theoretical attitude. Thus, in our theoretical attitude we lose the inner coherence that we are searching for.<sup>88</sup> Theoretical thought cannot autonomously establish a concept of modal coherence without having an idea of coherence that goes beyond theoretical thinking itself. With this in mind, one can understand why Dooyeweerd cannot accept the philosophical dogma of the autonomy of theoretical thought, that pretends to penetrate reality as it is by means of theoretical thought.

### 1.3.2.2 The Second Problematic Characteristic: The Search for Synthesis

If it is the aim of abstract thinking to form a theoretical concept of the pretheoretical datum, and this datum cannot be conceptualized without losing its coherence, how then can an explicit and theoretical formulation of the implicitly, naïvely experienced coherence be possible? The first problem addressed in the transcendental critique automatically leads to the second.

In order to be able to formulate a concept that does not defeat the coherence of the pretheoretical datum, one must have an idea as reference point that goes beyond the logical opposition and theoretical thought as a whole, and can thereby direct the process of theoretical thinking. This idea can allow for the possibility to theoretically formulate the inner coherence of reality as theoretical synthesis. It can function as a point of central unity that theoretically relates the modal aspects that were dissociated. We need a transcendent reference point from which we can receive an idea of such a central unity. To defend the dogma of the neutrality of theoretical thought, it is necessary to find this central reference point for theoretical synthesis within the *Gegenstand*-relation. The modal theory, however, has shown this to be impossible, for the *Gegenstand*-relation “offers in itself no bridge between the logical thought-aspect and its nonlogical ‘Gegenstand.’”<sup>89</sup> If the central reference point is sought in the *Gegenstand*-relation, it will lead to the absolutization of a specific modal meaning-kernel and reduce all other modalities to subcategories of the *Gegenstand*-relation.<sup>90</sup> It will cut all the lines of temporal coherence of the other modalities and will merely allow the analogical moments of the particular *Gegenstand*. If this takes place, there are as many possible theoretical syntheses as there are *Gegenstand*-relations. The theoretical syntheses that flow from the dogma of the neutrality of

<sup>88</sup>Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought*, 12.

<sup>89</sup>Dooyeweerd, *A New Criticism of Theoretical Thought*, 45.

<sup>90</sup>Cf. Glanz, 41, n. 101.

theoretical thought lead to multiple types of reductionisms (biologism, physicism, historicism . . . ). These types can be encountered in modern science and philosophy.<sup>91</sup> To Dooyeweerd this multitude of reductionisms proves that they are not results of theoretical thought itself but testify to the possibility of different supratheoretical decisions that are brought in by the thinking I. By the structure of theoretical thought, the starting point for theoretical thought cannot be found in thought itself, but most come from a supratheoretical decision of the thinking I. This decision, which is basically a religious one, will determine the outcome of the theoretical synthesis.<sup>92</sup>

How then can one find a supratemporal reference point that transcends the theoretical antithesis in such a way that the act of theoretical synthesis takes a direction that does justice to the structural datum? In asking this question, one is searching for a starting point that offers a total view on reality and is a necessity for any scientific thought at the moment it involves itself in synthetical thinking. This leads to the last problem in our theoretical thought-action. The self as the subject of all thinking activity is reflecting about itself.

### 1.3.2.3 The Third Problematic Characteristic: The Need of Self-reflection

Since a reference point for synthesis cannot be found in any law-structure of a single modality, unless one thinks reductionistically, the search for a supramodal starting point leads to that which guarantees the experience of the diversity-coherence: the modal-transcendent self. Structurally seen, theoretical thought is in need of a self that chooses a starting point that in turn makes theoretical synthesis possible. How can you get to the self, how to become aware of the self, and what actually is the self?

The question cannot be answered without self-knowledge. But how can you know yourself when a concept of the transcendent self is impossible? How can you arrive at self-knowledge when true self-reflection cannot be of theoretical character?

Biblically seen, the mystery of the central human ego is that it is nothing in itself. The central ego cannot be found in the modal diversity. In fact, as “soon as I try to grasp the I in a philosophical concept it recedes as a phantom and dissolves itself into nothingness. It cannot be determined by any modal aspect of our experience, since it is the central reference-point to which all fundamental modes of our temporal experience are related.”<sup>93</sup> If the transcendent self is intrinsically dependent, in which dependence relation can the I come to self-understanding? Is it the human I-thou relation, where we only seem to understand that our selfhood is nothing without the other?<sup>94</sup> Dooyeweerd answers in the negative, as this relation is as unable to come to

<sup>91</sup>Woudenberg, “Theorie van het Kennen,” 51.

<sup>92</sup>Choi, 53.

<sup>93</sup>Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought*, 25.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 28.

self-realization as our relation to the temporal horizon of its experience. The reason for this is that the encounter with the thou confronts us with the same mystery as our own selfhood.<sup>95</sup>

Clearly seen in the first way, the self necessarily needs to find its origin through its participation in the Archimedean standpoint, if it wants to be able to give its thought-acts a direction towards totality. Within the Archimedean standpoint the self comes to an understanding of the origin of its being and meaning. Because of the inner structure of theoretical thought, an ultimate idea of origin, also called "God," necessarily needs to be chosen.<sup>96</sup> True self-knowledge is therefore dependent on the knowledge of God; understanding of man is dependent upon the understanding of God. This understanding is generated through the relationship of the transcendent self with the divine creator, in whose image man is created, and who reveals himself through the words of the prophets within the human heart. This supratemporal self-identity penetrates all temporal activity and being of man in his experience and understanding, and allows man to engage in true theoretical synthesis in both science and philosophy.<sup>97</sup> Only by the understanding of the sovereignty of the true God, all idols (absolutizations of created parts) are excluded and all aspects of creation are taken as creation and not as gods. In contrast to real self-understanding, the transcendent self that does not truly understand itself always fails in its attempt to create a nonreductionist theoretical synthesis because of its reductionistic starting point.

To summarize, theoretical thought, seen structurally, needs a starting-point. The self will either find its true origin or will search for an idol that replaces the true origin. Idolization leads to a reductionistic concept of the totality of meaning, which in turn raises dualistic tensions, as the structural datum does not allow for any type of reductionism.<sup>98</sup>

### 1.3.3 *The Religious Ground-motive*

Both ways of the transcendental critique of theoretical thought reveal the necessity of a supratemporal starting point. The supratemporal starting point supplies the self with the answers to the three supratemporal questions of philosophical thought. The need for these transcendental ideas (idea of coherence, unity, and origin) was revealed through the different theoretical thought-act problems that belong to the universal structure of theoretical thought. Dooyeweerd includes all the three transcendental ideas in the so-called cosmomic idea. The first idea concerns the modal coherence-diversity. It is the transcendental idea of the whole of our temporal horizon of experience with its diversity of modal aspects and their mutual interrelations. The second idea concerns the central unity. It is referred to by the idea of coherence as that which guarantees the unitary totality of the coherence-diversity. The

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>96</sup>Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, 55.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., 472.

<sup>98</sup>Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought*, 31.

third idea concerns the origin of the totality of meaning. It relates all that is relative to the absolute and relates man as *imago dei* to the *deus*.

All three ideas are transcendental in character, for they spring not from the temporal diversity nor the transcendent self. They are instead provided by the religious ground-motive or man's religion.<sup>99</sup> This ground-motive functions as a *dynamis* that keeps a religious community together. The "religious ground-motive is the central mainspring of the entire attitude of life and thought"<sup>100</sup> and the condition for the specific content of the three transcendental ideas that express the starting point for any theoretical action. Because the transcendental ideas are required by the nature of theoretical thought, it is by means of the religious ground-motive that philosophical thought is controlled and a basic framework of interpretation created.

According to Dooyeweerd, every untrue religious ground-motive is of dialectical nature. "Dialectic" here means that there are two absolutizations of something creational that contrast irrevocably with other aspects of creation. The result of this dialectical antithesis is that the theoretical synthesis that is produced under its influence has many irreconcilable tensions and always lacks real unity. The source of the absolutizations of two creational aspects is to be found in the dogma of the autonomy of reason. This dogma motivates man in his theoretical pursuit to search for unity and coherence in aspects of temporal reality. The absolutization of a specific *Gegenstand*-relation automatically forces another modal aspect (functioning opposition) into a divinization, to battle its reduced status as mere subcategory. Dooyeweerd describes this process when he says "any idol that has been created by the absolutization of a modal aspect evokes its counter idol."<sup>101</sup> The reason for such a "counter-divinization" is that the modal diversity is characterized by an indissoluble interrelation in which all modal aspects are relative. They relate analogically and not genetically to each other on the basis of their sphere sovereignty. Only the biblical religious ground-motive can provide an "undialectical" starting point, as it warns against any absolutization of the relative-creational.

#### 1.3.4 Summary

We have seen by means of the second way of the transcendental critique that neither philosophical nor theoretical thought by its very inner structure can be autonomous, but necessarily demands a religious starting point of supramodal or supratheoretical character. Any religious starting point that is chosen, whether it is of real supramodal character or expressed in a *Gegenstand*-relation, structurally functions as supramodal and determines theoretical synthetical conceptions by directing the ideas of coherence, unity, and origin. In both ways of the transcendental critique, the need of a theoretical synthesis is the crux of philosophical thinking generally and

<sup>99</sup>Woudenberg, "Theorie van het Kennen," 52.

<sup>100</sup>Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, 63.

<sup>101</sup>Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought*, 37.

theoretical thought specifically. Thus, philosophical and scientific thought cannot be absolute, but is fallible like every other human activity. Only the origin of creation has an independence-status that can be considered truly absolute.<sup>102</sup> The religious starting point of man's thinking is delivered in the revelation of the creator God, which leads our fallible human activity to come to increasingly understand the meaning of relative reality.

It is the dogmatic view of the neutrality of theoretical thought that turned fallible and relative human activity into something absolute and consequently leads to exclusivistic, reductionistic ideas.

One needs to keep in mind, however, that with the discovery of the nonneutrality of abstract rational thinking, rational normativity was not lost. Rational thinking is through the normative principles of the logical modal aspect of universal normative character. At the same time it is also relative.

#### 1.4 Conclusion

For our reflection on methodology within biblical theology, Dooyeweerd's analysis is impacting. Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique of thought triggers the question to what extent the exegetical methodologies developed so far are influenced by transcendental ideas that absolutize one modal aspect of created reality. Is the unity and coherence of the writings of Holy Scripture not often sought in a *wetskring* of a specific modal kernel?

Let me give two examples that seem to affirm the latter question:

1. The depth-psychological approach of biblical exegesis tries to explain the value and truth of the biblical writings exclusively from the viewpoint of the Freudian principle of "individuation" and other related perspectives. For theologians like the well-known Eugen Drewermann, exegesis is performed in complete analogy to *Traumdeutung* as basically developed by Freud and Jung.<sup>103</sup> Biblical narratives and teachings are therefore primarily seen as the objectification of complex inner psychological processes which are to be decoded. Thus, the origin and motivation for the development of biblical/religious texts is located in the psychological *wetskring* of the complex process of man's self-discovery. Such argument results from the absolutization of the psychic modality.

2. Sociohistorical methodology (cf. Albertz, Lemche, Crüsemann, Schottroff and others) attempts to find the coherence and origin of biblical texts as of crucial methodological importance.<sup>104</sup> As consequence, the history of religion is made equivalent to the history of socioeconomic development. Thus, biblical descriptions of God's intervention in human history are easily reduced to interests of specific social classes. This type of exegesis results from the absolutization of the economic or social modality.

As Dooyeweerd pointed out, theoretical thinking runs the risk of absolutizing an aspect of created being. The laws of creational aspects can

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 54.

<sup>103</sup>Oeming, 103-104.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., 46-51.

start to deliver the content of the transcendental ideas, which influence the development of methodologies by which we interpret the world in general and biblical texts specifically.

Consequently, Talstra's call (see "Introduction") for "order" in regard to the plurality of methodologies is not enough. To move beyond our problematic methodological situation, one needs to uncover the transcendental ideas that are at work in specific methodologies and give them their proper nonautonomous place within the complex activity of interpretation.

However, this last suggestion cannot be realized without acknowledging that human reason is fundamentally dependent on transcendental ideas. Dooyeweerd explained that the very dogma of the autonomy of reason is responsible for the many different and mutually exclusive conceptions of reason. This dogma allowed the many absolutizations of theoretical abstractions to go unrecognized and thus a diversity of opposing philosophical views concerning human experience of reality were formulated—all of them lacking a truly critical justification. Thus, critical self-reflection for the biblical theologian is urgently required if he wants to receive his transcendental ideas from the One who is really autonomous.

These conclusions are drawn in the awareness that Dooyeweerd's argumentation has not yet been critically analyzed. This analysis will be featured in the following articles. However, the reader might already sense that there are persuasive reasons to appreciate Dooyeweerd's modal theory and his conception of the nonneutrality of human thinking to a certain extent, even though his line of argument must also be criticized.

Having introduced Dooyeweerd's structural analysis of the theoretical thought-act, we are prepared to compare and contrast it with the phenomenological structure of Reason and its biblical interpretation as it is presented by Fernando Canale. The understanding of the phenomenological structure of Reason will help us to set up a critical perspective on Dooyeweerd's understanding of thought-acts and allow us to provide an even deeper insight into the general structure of human understanding. The second article of this series, then, will introduce the phenomenological structure of Reason and its biblical interpretation.