After Dooyeweerd: Truth in Reformational Philosophy

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Abstract (August 2008)

A transformed idea of truth is central to the project of reformational philosophy. This paper lays groundwork for such an idea by critically retrieving Herman Dooyeweerd’s conception of truth. Section 1 explicated relevant passages in *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*. Section 2 demonstrates several problems in Dooyeweerd’s conception: he misconstrues religious truth, misconceives its relation to theoretical truth, and overlooks central questions of epistemology and truth theory. Section 3 proposes an alternative reformational conception of truth, in five stages. First I compare my “critical hermeneutics” with other reformational models of critique. Then I summarize my account of artistic truth and indicate its origins in reformational ontology. Next I sketch my general conception of truth and show how it responds to issues in Dooyeweerd’s conception. Then I take up the topics of objectivity and propositional truth. Finally I introduce the notion of “authentication” as a way to appropriate insights from Dooyeweerd’s emphasis on “standing in the Truth.” While abandoning his idea of transcendent truth, I seek to preserve the holism and normativity of Dooyeweerd’s radical conception.
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The decisive blow against the idea of religiously neutral philosophy must be delivered on the field of the problem of truth … The postulate of neutrality always stands and falls with an idea of truth that takes theoretical truth to be self-sufficient.

—Herman Dooyeweerd

A transformed idea of truth is central to the project of reformational philosophy. If, as Dooyeweerd claims, the postulate of religiously neutral philosophy depends upon the purported self-sufficiency of theoretical truth, then reformational attempts to free scholarship from “immanence philosophy,” without returning to “Christian synthesis thinking,” will stand and fall with their articulating an idea of truth that does not take theoretical truth to be self-sufficient.

Surprisingly, little progress has occurred on this idea beyond Dooyeweerd’s own efforts in *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* and Vollenhoven’s insistence on “the necessity of a Christian logic” (1932). Yet considerable headway has been made on closely related topics such

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as the postulate of religious neutrality and the structure of theoretical thought. Now reformational philosophers need to rearticulate the insights into “truth” formulated by Dooyeweerd, Vollenhoven, and their generation, while building on subsequent contributions about religious neutrality and theoretical thought.

That is why “truth” has become my primary research project. Inspired over the years by Hendrik Hart’s work on epistemology, and by the genial insights of my Doktorväter Calvin Seerveld and Johan van der Hoeven, I have begun a thorough reexamination of the philosophical idea of truth. This inquiry will proceed in critical dialogue with leading figures in both analytic and continental philosophy. The project has two stages. The first stage, published in 2004, concerns the contentious concept of “artistic truth.” The second stage, on which I am currently at work, will explicate a comprehensive idea of truth, for which the concept of artistic truth provides one articulation.

My book on Artistic Truth proposes a theory of truth in art. It also sketches in preliminary fashion a more comprehensive conception of truth. Both the proposed theory and the preliminary sketch have raised questions among reformational philosophers. In a March 2005 book symposium at the Institute for Christian Studies, Adrienne Dengerink Chaplin and Calvin Seerveld asked how the book’s theory of artistic truth relates to the main lines of reformational ontology. A year later, in a review published in Philosophia Reformata, Sander Griffioen (2006) posed a similar question. Both Seerveld and Griffioen also wondered whether the book lacks the depth of critique and structural insight that comes with the reformational project of transcendental critique.

These are important questions. I should like to address them by indicating show how my conceptions of truth and of artistic truth appropriate earlier efforts in reformational philosophy.
In the first two sections I summarize Dooyeweerd’s reflections on “truth” in his *New Critique* (section 1) and explain where I agree and disagree with his reflections (section 2). The third section presents my proposals about artistic truth and my preliminary account of truth in general, in order to show how they address problems in Dooyeweerd’s reflections. Although other reformational thinkers have made contributions in this area, the scope of this paper does not allow me to take them up in detail. Occasional comments and endnotes will need to suffice.

1. Dooyeweerd’s Conception

Opposing any attempt to isolate “theoretical truth” from the “religious fulness of meaning,” Dooyeweerd insists on the “perspectival structure of truth.” By this he does not mean that truth is simply a matter of personal or communal perspective. Rather, he means that any particular truth claim, and any type of truth, derives its truth character from its location within layered and interlinked horizons of human experience and of creaturely reality, and vis-à-vis “transcendent Truth.” After Nietzsche, however, subjectivistic connotations often accrue to the terms “perspective” and “perspectival.” So I prefer the term “horizontal” and often substitute it for Dooyeweerd’s “perspectival” (*perspectivisch*).

1.1 Synthesis and Intuition

Dooyeweerd introduces the notion of truth’s horizontal character in a chapter titled “The Structural Horizon of Human Experience and of [Creaturely] Reality” (*NC* 2: 542-98, *WW* 2: 474-534). This is the last and longest chapter—chapter 4—in Part II (“The Epistemological Problem in the Light of the Cosmonomic Idea”) to Volume 2 of *New Critique*. The notion of truth’s horizontal character responds to what Dooyeweerd identifies as the central problem of theoretical knowledge, namely, to explain how the “intermodal synthesis of meaning” is possible. Not surprisingly, this problem belongs to the three transcendental questions posed in

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the Prolegomena to *New Critique*, where Dooyeweerd asks about the universally valid conditions that make theoretical thought possible. As I have formulated these questions elsewhere, they are as follows. (1) “[W]hat makes it possible for theorists to engage in abstraction from ordinary experience and from the structures of creation, which people ordinarily experience in a holistic fashion?” (2) “What makes it possible for theorists to achieve a synthesis between those aspects of experience and of creation which must stand in opposition when theorizing occurs?” (3) “What makes it possible for theorists to engage in … theory-transcending and critical self-reflection?” (Zuidervaart 2004a, 68-9) The second of these questions poses the “problem of intermodal synthesis,” which Dooyeweerd now identifies as the central problem of theoretical knowledge.

His solution has two parts. First, he distinguishes and relates three types of epistemic coherence. Second, he claims that all three types, including intermodal synthesis, are made possible by and informed by a radical unity that exceeds all three. Because this unity is fundamentally religious in character, no knowledge and no truth can be religiously neutral, including theoretical knowledge and truth in general and philosophical knowledge and truth in particular.

The three types of epistemic coherence are “meaning-systasis” (*zin-systase*), “logical synthesis” (*logische synthesis*), and “intermodal meaning-synthesis” (*inter-modale zin-synthesis*). *Meaning-systasis* is not a type of synthesis, strictly speaking. It is the pre-synthetic coherence that makes possible the integral and full-bodied experience people ordinarily have when they are not engaged in theoretical inquiry. Dooyeweerd calls this “mature naïve pre-theoretical experience” (NC 2: 433, WW 2: 364). He insists that ordinary meaning-systasis has
“cosmological priority” over theoretical intermodal synthesis. In fact, anyone who ignores this priority “cannot even properly pose the [problem of knowledge]” (NC 2: 429, WW 2: 359).

Logical synthesis, the second type of epistemic coherence, occurs within both ordinary experience and theoretical inquiry. It has to do with the logical unity we achieve among distinct concepts and judgments, always in relation to “the logical object-side.” Dooyeweerd claims that the achievement of such logical synthesis is related to (toegeordend aan) an objective logical systasis (NC 2: 434, WW 2: 365). As he explains in an earlier section on the logical subject/object relation (NC 2: 386-404, WW 2: 317-23), the logical object functions of entities and the like are not the same as “the intentional logical content” of the concepts that logical subjects form and employ. These object functions “must be disclosed [ontsloten]” by logical subjects. Without such disclosure, logical object functions remain “latent, hidden [verborgen] in the meaning-coherence of temporal reality” (NC 2: 389-90, WW 2: 321-2). Only because of this logical object side can we form concepts about entities and the like, and only because we form concepts can we acquire knowledge of the various aspects of reality. Accordingly, Dooyeweerd defines logical objectivity as “the objective connectedness of logical multiplicity into modal logical unity comprised in the systatic meaning-coherence of reality” (NC 2: 390, WW 2: 322).

Unlike meaning-systasis and logical synthesis, intermodal synthesis occurs only in theoretical contexts. Although it is made possible by both meaning-systasis and logical synthesis, it is made necessary by the peculiar structure of theoretical thought. For in theoretical inquiry we must abstract the various aspects of experience and reality from their systatic meaning-coherence and make explicit distinctions among them, such that the logical aspect virtually stands over against the nonlogical aspects. In Dooyeweerd’s terms, theoretical thought is uniquely
characterized by this “Gegenstand relation” between logical and nonlogical aspects. That is why the problem of “intermodal synthesis” arises here and not in ordinary experience, where we do not explicitly abstract and distinguish the aspects, and where multiple subject/object (and subject/subject) relations sustain thought: “[T]he epistemological ‘Gegenstand’ owes its origin exclusively to a theoretical disjunction [uiteen-stelling] of the cosmic temporal meaning-systasis. Our ‘selfhood’ is not to be found in [this temporal meaning-systasis]. The correlate to the ‘Gegenstand’ must consequently be sought within the temporal diversity of aspects, not in the I-ness. The resistance [tegenstand] as such is due to an antithetical opposing act [tegenoverstellen], which is essentially a theoretical act of setting apart [uiteen-stellen] the several aspects of the cosmic meaning-systasis” (NC 2: 467-8, WW 2: 400).

The cosmological priority of ordinary meaning-systasis and the operation of logical synthesis in all thought do not solve the central problem of theoretical knowledge. The first two types of epistemic coherence enable an intermodal synthesis between logical and nonlogical aspects, but they do not secure it. To secure intermodal synthesis requires deeper transmodal connections. Dooyeweerd finds these deeper connections in two locations: theoretical intuition, and cosmological self-consciousness.12

“Theoretical intuition” gives Dooyeweerd a way to connect theoretical abstraction with that from which abstraction is made. Thanks to the Gegenstand relation, theoretical thought typically abstracts from the continuity of cosmic time that pervades and sustains all experience and all creaturely reality. Yet the act of theoretical abstraction cannot itself occur in abstraction. Rather, our thought’s logical function, which we oppose to nonlogical functions, remains “embedded in cosmic time itself.” This embedding occurs through intuition. Intuition is the “temporal bottom layer” (tijdelijke dieptelaag) whereby logical thought remains “in continuous
temporal contact with all the other modal functions [that] our selfhood can claim in time as its own” (NC 2: 473, WW 2: 408). Insofar as this connecting of logical and nonlogical functions specifically supports our achieving intermodal synthesis, it can be called “theoretical intuition.”

Theoretical intuition does not rest with simply making transmodal connections, however. It also pushes toward cosmological self-consciousness, and thereby refers beyond itself to the “religious root” of all knowing: “In the transcendental temporal direction of theoretical intuition, our selfhood becomes cosmologically conscious of itself in the temporal coherence and diversity of all its modal functions.” And this means the selfhood becomes aware of itself as “the religious root” of all knowing, a root that “transcends” all of the self’s “temporal acts and modal functions” (NC 2: 473, WW 2: 408). So the notion of theoretical intuition is pivotal for our discovering both the “transcendental” and the “transcendent” conditions of intermodal synthesis, namely, “the direction of the meaning-synthesis to the selfhood” and “the selfhood as the religious root of all cognitive activity” (NC 2: 472, WW 2: 407). These conditions return in Dooyeweerd’s discussion of the “transcendental” and “transcendent” horizons of experience, and in his distinguishing between “transcendental” truth and “transcendent” Truth.

Before turning to his discussion of horizons, we should note four characteristics of theoretical intuition that are important for Dooyeweerd’s conception of truth. First, theoretical intuition is founded in the meaning-systasis that typifies ordinary experience. Ordinarily all people, theorists too, have an “enstatic,” knowing, and lived experience of or experience into “full temporal reality,” as presented in actual creatures and their interrelations (NC 2: 474, WW 2: 410). Theoretical insight into modal aspects, including the logical aspect, depends on this foundation. Theoretical insight is possible, Dooyeweerd claims, only as “the disclosure, opening,
and theoretical deepening” of that which is “essentially self-given” in pretheoretical, knowing, and lived experience (NC 2: 475, WW 2: 410).¹⁵

Second, unlike the “pre-theoretical intuition” that sustains ordinary experience, theoretical intuition is characteristically free. It is free to disclose the meaning of ordinary experience and reality and to point in a transcendental direction toward that which transcends cosmic time. Such freedom undergirds the freedom of theoretical thought both to engage in abstraction and to reconnect the results of abstraction with ordinary experience and reality.¹⁶

Third, theoretical intuition is a source of insight without which theoretical thought would not be possible. To analyze anything, we must know intuitively how to think logically, and to acquire scientific knowledge, we must have “an intuitive insight into the ‘Gegenstand’” (NC 475, WW 2: 411).¹⁷ Theoretical intuition is the meaning-connecting and meaning-distinguishing insight at work in theoretical thought (NC 2: 479, WW 2: 414).

Fourth, as a precondition whose “continual temporal character” exceeds the grasp of theoretical thought, theoretical intuition “cannot be theoretically isolated” (NC 2: 473, WW 2: 408). We cannot grasp it theoretically in a concept or category. We can only approximate it in a transcendental idea, through which theoretical thought, led by faith, rediscovers itself in cosmic time. Thanks to theoretical intuition, theoretical thought is always embedded in cosmic time, and our selfhood can become “cosmologically conscious of itself in … intuitive reflection [bezinning]” (NC 2: 479, WW 2: 414).¹⁸

1.2 Horizon of Experience

It is precisely this capacity for intuitive, reflective, and cosmological self-consciousness that Dooyeweerd considers crucial for freeing epistemology from the postulate of religious
neutrality. As he states near the end of a lengthy chapter on Kant’s epistemology (NC 2: 490-541, WW 2: 425-73):

In principle, human experience of temporal reality has no specific functional boundaries [zin-grenzen], because human experience, in the root of self-consciousness, transcends time itself. *In principle,* … all the modal aspects [zin-zijden] of temporal reality are immanent to possible experience, immanent to cosmological self-consciousness. [For] in the final instance it is not … abstract functions of consciousness but full self-consciousness [under the boundary of the temporal world-order] that experiences the modal meaning-functions [zin-functies], in cosmic time, as its own. This insight means the final liberation of epistemology from the prejudices of immanence-philosophy (NC 2: 540, WW 2: 472-3).¹⁹

Nevertheless, Dooyeweerd does acknowledge hidden insights in Kant.

More specifically, Dooyeweerd believes there is something right about Kant’s epistemological notion of “the *a priori,*” about its predecessor in Aristotle’s metaphysical notion of “‘the universal’ as the … ‘ground of being’ of individual things,” and about Edmund Husserl and Max Scheler’s phenomenological notion of essential possibilities that eidetic intuition can grasp. What such notions indicate, but misconstrue, is the multilayered “horizon of human experience” (*horizon der menschelijke ervaring*) (NC 2: 542-7, WW 2: 474-8).

To account for this horizon, Dooyeweerd initially distinguishes between a “structural” and a “subjective” a priori complex or, more simply, between “the *structural* and the *subjective a priori*” (NC 2: 548, WW 2: 478). This distinction correlates with his earlier distinction in volumes 1 and 2 between the law side and the subject side of cosmic time and of the modal
aspects, as well as with his subsequent distinction in volume 3 between the structures of individuality and actual entities.

The structural a priori is a multilayered horizon of human experience that “has the character of a law.” Cosmological rather than epistemological, it amounts to “the a priori meaning-structure of our cosmos itself,” in dependence on creation’s religious “root-structure” (wortel-structuur), and in subjection to creation’s divine origin. This supra-individual and lawful horizon “is given in the Divine order of … creation [goddelijke scheppingsorde]” (NC 2: 548, WW 2: 478-9).

The subjective a priori, by contrast, is epistemological rather than cosmological. It is “the subjective a priori insight” into the a priori structural horizon of human experience. Necessarily “enclosed within” this structural horizon and “determined and delimited” by it, such insight, unlike the structural horizon itself, “can be true or false in an epistemological sense.” Contra Kant and Husserl, however, subjective a priori insight “can never be the self-sufficient foundation [grond] of truth” (NC 2: 548, WW 2: 478).

Dooyeweerd has two closely related reasons for relativizing subjective a priori insight. One is that the fall into sin has “obfuscated” (verduisterd) the a priori structural horizon, and only the light of divine revelation can free this horizon “from the prejudices of … obfuscated understanding” (NC 2: 549, WW 2: 479). The second reason is that the structural horizon has a religious depth-dimension on which depend both the other components and a priori insight into them. Hence the truth of such insight depends in part upon the truth of our religious stance.

Accordingly, when Dooyeweerd describes the various components to the horizon of human experience, he begins with the transcendent and necessary religious horizon, and he says this is both a structural and a subjective a priori (NC 2: 552, WW 2: 482). It is structural in the
sense that God’s central law—to love God above all and our neighbor as ourselves—holds for all human experience and makes it possible: “Our selfhood, which experiences, is under the law, is a subject [sujet], limited and determined by the law in its central religious sense.” The religious a priori is subjective in the sense that, being “at bottom religiously determined,” all human experience proceeds in one of two directions: either toward God or away from God and toward some creaturely substitute (NC 2: 552, WW 2: 482). When Dooyeweerd speaks here of “the religious root of human existence,” he has both the structural and the directional character of this “transcendent” horizon in mind.

The other four components to the structure of human experience are the cosmic temporal, modal, synthetic, and plastic horizons. In their ontological scope, they can be depicted as successively smaller concentric circles, all of them encompassed by the transcendent religious horizon. But in their accessibility to ordinary experience, they could be portrayed in reverse sequence as a narrowing funnel, from the largest and plastic horizon, which lies near the surface of ordinary experience, to the religious horizon which “belongs implicitly to human experience” and “is only made explicit in … transce...
spatial figures, individual percepts, and property rights) that occurs within their “law-spheres.”

2. These aspects make it possible for us to experience matters as having such individuality of meaning. 3. The aspects’ stability over time secures a certain continuity in human experience. 4. And the coherence among the aspects allows us to experience the modal aspects themselves, both theoretically and pretheoretically.

The next horizon is specific to “theoretical experience.” It is the intermodal “meaning-synthesis” whose structure governs all theoretical knowledge. Correlated with this structural a priori is theoretical insight into it. Properly acquired only via “transcendental self-reflection,” such insight is “the subjective-fallible apriori of all epistemology,” Dooyeweerd claims. Under the guidance of a “cosmonic Idea” aimed at the temporal and religious horizons, theoretical insight into the intermodal meaning-synthesis encompasses theoretical insight into both modal aspects and modal types of individuality (NC 2: 554, WW 2: 484-5). Although fallible, such insight is also a priori, as an unavoidable precondition of scientific investigations.

Finally there is the a priori “plastic horizon” of human experience. By this Dooyeweerd means the entire latticework of “structural principles” that govern different types of entities, events, and societal relationships. Although they have many variable and distinct realizations, these structural principles themselves “are not changeable in time” (NC 557). So this a priori horizon is “plastic” not because the structural principles change but because they are more “concrete” than modal laws, and the horizon itself includes an “extremely rich and varied” array of structural types and of interlacements among them (NC 2: 557-8, WW 2: 489-90). The plastic horizon is “a priori” in the sense that “it determines the experience of the variable individuality of things and alone makes it possible” (NC 2: 559, WW 2: 490). It is with reference to this
account of structural horizons that Dooyeweerd distinguishes between religious and theoretical truth.

1.3 Religious Truth

Dooyeweerd’s account of structural horizons implies that “religious” or “transcendent” or “absolute” Truth has priority over all other expressions of truth. It has priority, not as one type of truth that has greater importance than other types of truth, but rather as the very fulness of Truth without which no true knowledge of any sort would be possible. Well aware of the potential objection that his approach makes “epistemology end in a Christian sermon or in a dogmatic [assertion],” Dooyeweerd forthrightly embraces the scandal of the cross. We “cannot attain … true self-knowledge [waarachtige zelf-kennis],” or true knowledge of the created world either, he says, “without true knowledge of God, which cannot be gained outside of the divine revelation in Christ” (NC 2: 562, WW 2: 494). Both scripture and John Calvin provide this insight, and both “synthesis philosophy” and “immanence philosophy” have lost sight of it. The inclusion and dependence of all true knowledge, including theoretical truth, vis-à-vis the true knowledge of God “is the only purely Biblical view [of knowledge] and the alpha and omega of any truly Christian epistemology” (NC 2: 561, WW 2: 492).

This means that Dooyeweerd’s own conception of truth relies very heavily on his account of religious Truth and of its relation to theoretical and pretheoretical truth. His initial account (NC 2: 560-5, WW 2: 491-7) goes like this. The religious horizon encompasses all the others and radiates [heen-straalt] through all of human experience. Yet this horizon—the religious root of human existence—is not self-sufficient. Rather, it exists “in the creaturely mode of meaning, which is nothing in itself” because it exists only in relation to its divine origin (NC 2: 560, WW 2: 492).
Contra spiritualism or mysticism, this implies that regenerated human experience of “the religious fulness of meaning remains bound up with [verbonden met] temporal reality” (NC 2: 561, WW 2: 493). Contra religious agnosticism, however, Dooyeweerd insists that Christ’s incarnation and the “temporal garb” in which divine revelation reaches us do not entail a limiting of our experience “to our temporal functions” (NC 2: 561, WW 2: 493). We do experience the religious fulness of meaning. In fact, all of human knowing (kennisactiviteit) is directed either toward “the absolute Truth” or toward “the spirit of falsehood,” thanks to “the transcendent religious subjective a priori of … cosmic self-consciousness.” We know (weten) temporal reality. We know it in its relationship to the structure of human selfhood as a religious community (religieuze verbands-structuur), in which individuals participate (NC 2: 562, WW 2: 494).

Not only is such knowledge structurally possible but also, in knowledge about God (in de kennis omtrent God) from God’s revelation, we worshipfully (aanbiddend) and actually understand “the absolute Truth,” albeit in mortal weakness and limitation. In such knowledge “the religious principle and foundation of all true knowledge” is given (NC 2: 562, WW 2: 494). Moreover, such knowledge is primarily “enstatic” rather than synthetic, pretheoretical rather than theoretical, and thus in a strict sense not theological either. “[T]rue knowledge of God and of ourselves” concerns “the horizon of human experience.” It rests upon a childlike and trusting acceptance, “with our full personality and with all our heart,” of divine revelation in the “indissoluble unity” of both its “transcendent-religious” and its “cosmic-immanent” meaning. In order for such knowledge to occur, the entire person must be turned around (omkeering) in a life-giving (levend-making) restoration of the horizon of our experience. This restoration makes it possible again to understand reality “in the light of Truth” (NC 2: 562-3, WW 2: 494-5).
1.4 Standing in the Truth

Dooyeweerd gives two reasons why a lengthy discussion of religious truth is important for his account for theoretical truth. He provides them at the beginning of the section titled “The [Perspectival] Structure of Truth” (NC 2: 565-82, WW 2: 498-518). On the one hand, his discussion of religious truth helps him address a failure in modern immanence philosophy. Many modern philosophers have attempted to refute relativism and skepticism by pointing out the unavoidable self-contradiction that arises whenever one tries to argue logically against the possibility of true knowledge: one must appeal to the logical criterion of truth in order to mount such an argument. This refutation fails to answer “the question ‘What is to be understood by truth?’” Moreover, as Dooyeweerd says, employing his own ontology, “the logical criterion of truth owes its logical meaning … to the structure of the entire horizon of human experience in all its different levels. And this structure cannot possibly be grasped independently of a cosmonomic Idea” (NC 2: 565, WW 2: 498).

On the other hand, the idea of religious truth enables Dooyeweerd to fill a gap in Christian philosophy, namely, the lack of its own “Christian idea of truth”—i.e., an idea “really … fed by its Christian religious root.” Instead, either Christian philosophers have taken over Greek metaphysical ideas or, in an attempt to accommodate modern philosophy, they have maintained a “deep clefť” between scriptural revelation as the fulness of Truth and a theoretical criterion of truth that scientific inquiry simply borrows from “immanence philosophy” (NC 2: 565-6, WW 2: 498). They thereby sell both sides short.

Dooyeweerd, by contrast, locates the proper relation in an “inner penetration” of Christian philosophy by Christian religion. The same applies, he says, to the relation between “the revealed fulness of Truth and the theoretical idea of truth” (NC 2: 566, WW 2: 499). And
that is why he rejects the ideas of theoretical truth offered by Aquinas, Kant, and Husserl. Rooted in problematic ontologies, and failing to deliver what they promise, their ideas ignore the inner penetration of theoretical truth by the “revealed fulness of Truth.” Instead they hypostatize theoretical truth (NC 2: 566-71, WW 2: 499-503).

Hence, although Dooyeweerd does not abandon their search for “the a priori structure [zin-structuur] of truth,” he accords truth the same horizontal or perspectival character as the horizon of experience. This means that the only proper approach to truth will take its departure not from the “absolutized … theoretical-synthetical horizon” but “from the transcendent horizon made transparent by the religious fulness of meaning [zin-volheid] of Divine Revelation.” For from this transcendent horizon the light of Truth “shines forth through the temporal horizon into human experience and into human theoretical knowledge” (NC 2: 571, WW 2: 503).

Dooyeweerd concludes: “The transcendent, religious fulness of Truth, which alone makes possible all truth within the temporal horizon, does not concern an abstract theoretical function of thought. It [concerns] our full selfhood, … the heart of the whole of human existence, consequently also the [heart] of our theoretical thought” (NC 2: 571, WW 2: 504).

The fulness of Truth is not first of all something to be understood, then, but to stand within. It is to be lived and experienced by “standing in the Truth.” For Dooyeweerd, to stand in the Truth is to participate (deelhebben) “in the fulness of meaning [zin-volheid] of the cosmos in Christ.” To stand in the Truth is to take hold of [aangrijpen] God’s revelation with all of one’s heart, and thereby to break free “from the prejudices of immanence philosophy” concerning the horizon of human experience and no longer to overestimate the roles of theory and science in human life (NC 2: 564, WW 2: 496-7). It also allows us to understand how faith functionally
leads theoretical thought but does not supplant the logical function that typically qualifies “the act of theoretical thinking” (NC 2: 564-5, WW 2: 497).30

The “hearted” character of Truth, if I may call it that, is so crucial to Dooyeweerd’s account that he devotes several more paragraphs to showing how this emphasis both accords with scripture and aims to transform scientific inquiry from top to bottom. The primary link with scripture lies in the notion, already mentioned, of “standing in the Truth.” Derived from biblical interpretation,31 the phrase suggests the dependability, certainty, and trustworthiness that “truth” means in the Bible.32 The selfhood’s standing in the Truth, by whole-heartedly accepting God’s revelation, is the primary prerequisite for thought’s having a “truthful a priori attitude [apriorische ware instelling].” Such acceptance occurs through faith, as a complete confidence or trust (vertrouwen) in the dependability (vastheid) of God’s word. All truth is from God, Dooyeweerd says, and Christ is the complete meaning (zin-volheid) of Truth. Just as, structurally, temporal truth has no meaning (zin), validity (gelding), existence (aanzijn), reliability (vastheid), or certainty (zekerheid) apart from this “transcendent fulness of Truth,” so too, subjectively, adequate “insight into the temporal horizon” is not possible without our “standing in the Truth.” This does not rule out either the noetic effects of sin or the discovery of relatively true insights by non-Christian thinkers. Yet it does suggest that all “relative truths” can be true “only … in the fulness of [Truth], revealed by God in Christ.” They become untrue when “absolutized into a ‘truth in itself’.” The challenge for Christian scholarship is to let this radical and holistic idea of truth “permeate scientific thought from root to crown,” rather than resting content with “an edifying confession of faith” that does not disturb “the immanent course of scientific investigation” (NC 2: 572, WW 2: 504-5).
1.5 Theoretical Truth

Only after insisting on the “hearted” character of Truth, and on our whole-heartedly “standing in the Truth,” does Dooyeweerd present two general ideas of theoretical truth and two more specific criteria. The two ideas correlate, more or less, with the temporal and the synthetic horizons of experience, and the two criteria with the modal and plastic horizons. All of them involve an accordance (overeenstemming) between the subject side and the law side of such horizons. Dooyeweerd labels the two general ideas “transcendental truth” and “transcendental theoretical truth,” and he says that transcendental truth has both “pre-theoretical and theoretical dimensions” (NC 2: 573, WW 2: 506). The more specific criteria pertain to transcendental theoretical truth (NC 2: 579-80, WW 2: 513-15). He further elaborates these criteria when he comments on “so-called experimental truth” (NC 2: 580-2, WW 2: 515-18).

In implied opposition to Aquinas, Dooyeweerd says that transcendental truth cannot be an “adequatio intellectus et rei.” His reason is that thought “in its transcendental a priori function” does not transcend temporal reality. Rather, we should define truth in its “transcendental a priori dimension” as an accordance between “subjective a priori knowledge” and “a priori structural laws of human experience.” This knowledge is “enclosed [omsloten] by the temporal horizon” and is “expressed in a priori judgments.” So too, the laws of experience occur “within this temporal horizon,” in openness (ontoletenheid), on both law side and subject side, to “the light of the transcendent Truth in Christ” (NC 2: 573, WW 2: 506). Hence, to arrive at transcendental truth, our subjective knowing (kennisactiviteit) must be in a “normative relation” with the “a priori structural laws” that obtain for it. Even this relation “is not self-sufficient,” however. It must be open to transcendent Truth, for God, not some Kantian “transcendental subject,” is the origin of all truth. In order to acquire true philosophical insight
into the temporal horizon and into transcendental truth, the philosopher’s heart must be gripped by divine Truth, which discloses (*ontsluiten*) and liberates the transcendental horizon of our experience (NC 2: 573-4, WW 2: 507-8).

Indeed, Dooyeweerd asserts that this “fundamental truth” about transcendental truth must be either accepted or rejected in its entirety: to ask for logically compelling proof of his assertion is to misunderstand both truth and argumentation. He also insists that from now on immanence philosophy will have to consider the dogmatism hiding within its postulate of religious neutrality (NC 2: 574-5, WW 2: 508).

Whereas accordance between a priori knowledge and a priori structural laws defines transcendental truth in general, the accordance peculiar to “transcendental theoretical truth” occurs between “the subjective a priori meaning-synthesis” and “the modal structure [zin-structuur]” of the intended Gegenstand. The subjective synthesis becomes actual (*actueel*) in a priori “theoretical insight” and receives expression in a priori “theoretical judgments.” Moreover, the Gegenstand occurs within a universal (*alzijdig*) and temporal “intermodal coherence” that not only has both foundational and transcendental directions but also depends on Truth’s “transcendent fulness of meaning [zin-volheid]” (NC 2: 575, WW 2: 509). This definition provides the criterion of transcendental theoretical truth that has already been at work in Dooyeweerd’s general modal theory. Rather than supposing that there are different criteria of scientific truth for different academic disciplines, we should recognize that each discipline must strive for an accordance between its meaning-synthesis and the relevant modal structures, within the temporal coherence of our experience, and “in relation to the religious fulness of Truth” (NC 576-7, WW 2: 510-11).
Hence the following failures to seek or reach accordance make for falsity a priori in theoretical judgments: not recognizing the Gegenstand’s modal structure, denying the Gegenstand’s intermodal coherence, absolutizing relative theoretical truths, failing to appreciate the modal/intermodal “process of disclosure [ontsluitingsproces],” and abstracting theoretical thought from “the transcendent fulness of Truth” (NC 2: 577, WW 2: 511). Moreover, transcendental ignorance is no excuse, says Dooyeweerd: every theoretical insight, whether a posteriori or a priori, must justify (rechtvaardigen) its claim to relative truth before “the forum of the Divine world-order”—even though one cannot have true philosophical insight into this order if one does not stand “in the full religious Truth of Divine Word-Revelation” (NC 2: 577, WW 2: 511).

Next Dooyeweerd takes up the possible objection that his account makes “the structure of theoretical truth” dependent on subjective insight into it. He replies that although subjective insight does not determine or govern the structure of theoretical truth, such insight is necessary in order to discover this structure. And he indirectly repeats the suggestion he has made before: that his own account of these matters is not only in accord with the divine order of creation (goddelijke scheppingsorde) but also made possible by his own “religious standing in the Truth” (NC 2: 578, WW 2: 512).

Dooyeweerd then offers two criteria that “a priori theoretical insight” must meet to be in accord with the divine world order.36 The first criterion pertains primarily to the modal horizon. It is the principle of excluding antinomies, to which Dooyeweerd always refers with the Latin phrase principium exclusae antinomiae. Antinomies arise, he says, when theoretical thought violates modal sphere sovereignty and intermodal coherence. The logical principle of
noncontradiction is simply a dependent aspect of this “cosmological criterion” (NC 2: 579, WW 2: 513). To be justified, theories must avoid antinomies.\footnote{37}

The second criterion pertains primarily to the plastic horizon of experience and reality. Dooyeweerd does not give this criterion a title. Perhaps we could call it “the principle of respecting individuality”: theoretical thought should account for, and neither misconstrue nor ignore, the structures of individuality as these are “given in naïve experience” (NC 2: 579, WW 2: 514). This principle is violated, for example, when the legal theorist Hans Kelsen identifies the state’s “internal individuality-structure” with a “functional system of legal norms,” or when Kantians attempt to split temporal reality into phenomenal and noumenal realms. To be justified, theories must avoid such fundamental denials of “the plastic horizon of human experience” and do justice to this horizon instead (NC 2: 579-80, WW 2: 514-15).\footnote{38}

Not even the findings of empirical scientific research are exempt from these two principles or from the general requirements of transcendental theoretical truth. For, as Dooyeweerd argues in a subsection on “so-called experimental truth” (NC 2: 580-2, WW 2: 515-18), transcendental truth encompasses and makes possible factual truths. In a scientific context, factual truths are themselves theoretical; as “relatively true [theoretical] knowledge,” they involve “a theoretical disclosure of temporal reality.” The standard requirement that scientific theories should demonstrate their truth via experimentation does not mean that they must correspond with “some concrete natural reality in itself … as depicted in … sensory impressions” (NC 2: 581, WW 2: 516). Rather, in order for scientific experiments to appeal to the “objective sensory aspect of our experience,” this aspect “must itself first be disclosed by theoretical thought” (NC 2: 582, WW 2: 517). To provide evidence for a scientific hypothesis, the sensory object side of reality must have its modal meaning deepened.\footnote{39} Only under special
experimental conditions and via theoretically informed instrumentation can the sensory object side have something to say to theory. Yet such theoretical disclosure of “naïve experience” does not demolish it. Ultimately, it is only because of the divine world order, which obtains for both theoretical and pretheoretical experience, that science can theoretically disclose (ontsluiten) reality and thereby “discover [onthullen] relative theoretical truths” (NC 2: 582, WW 2: 517-18).

To summarize: Dooyeweerd holds that religious Truth, which can be attained only by personally standing in the Truth, encompasses and makes possible all theoretical truth. So too, theoretical truth, which involves an accordance between subjective knowledge and the structural horizons of experience and reality, encompasses and makes possible all so-called empirical truth in the academic disciplines. The two criteria according to which purported theoretical insights must be justified are the avoiding of antinomies and the respecting of individuality. In other words, religious Truth and its attainment are the sine qua non for theoretical truth. This raises the question whether Dooyeweerd’s account puts authentically Christian scholarship in a privileged position, and whether it devalues the insights of scholarship that is not Christianly faith-oriented. Dooyeweerd readily acknowledges that other philosophers will likely find his account of truth scandalous. Whether the reason for this is the “scandal of the cross” remains to be seen.

2. Critical Retrieval

The question whether Dooyeweerd privileges Christian scholarship arises from the center of his project, namely, to deliver a “decisive blow against the idea of religiously neutral philosophy” (NC 2: 565, WW 2: 498). As we have noted, his entire account of theoretical truth relies very heavily on his account of religious truth. Moreover, Dooyeweerd’s way of connecting religious and theoretical truth elicited many of the objections and reservations he met, not only
from the neoKantians and phenomenologists of his day but also from reformational colleagues and successors.

That is why Dooyeweerd’s conception of truth deserves and requires a critical retrieval. By this I mean the project of either raising or acknowledging valid objections and, in light of such objections, providing a redemptive critique of his contribution. It is not enough, in my view, simply to defend Dooyeweerd against misinterpretations, to reject inadequate criticisms, and to promote the concerns and claims his critics neglect. One must also address legitimate criticisms of Dooyeweerd and suggest viable alternatives.

Accordingly, reformational philosophy today needs to take up such criticisms once again. It should show where these are valid or invalid, and then offer alternatives that, while inspired by the first generation of reformational philosophy, also address its problems. Through such critical retrieval, we can propose new directions for reformational philosophy after Dooyeweerd. This philosophy will be “after” Dooyeweerd in a triple sense: being indebted to his work, it will “come after” him, but only by “going after” his critics. In the current essay, the main differences from this general project of critical retrieval are that I consider myself one of Dooyeweerd’s loyal critics and, for reasons of space, cannot take up in the detail the criticisms raised by others.

To begin a critical retrieval of Dooyeweerd’s conception of truth, let me first identify the claims through which he has made an important contribution to philosophical truth theory. There are at least nine such claims:

1. That truth is “perspectival” or “horizonal” in character.

2. That the distinct horizons of truth are interlinked and point beyond themselves to the “fulness of truth.”
3. That an adequate philosophical account of truth must distinguish and relate a “subject side” and a “law side.”

4. That disclosure and truth, although not identical, are intimately connected.

5. That theoretical truth has an important place in human life but is not decisive in our meeting the requirements of truth.

6. That traditional notions of “adequatio” and modern notions of “correspondence” are inadequate ways to characterize both truth in its fulness and theoretical truth.

7. That propositional truth requires logical “objectivity” or, in my own terms, predicative availability and predicative self-disclosure.

8. That “standing in the truth” is crucial for acquiring insight into the “nature” of truth (although, as I shall argue, it is not a guarantee).

9. That a reformational theory of truth must take seriously scriptural notions of truth, including Jesus’ description of himself as “the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14.6, NRSV).^{40}

My own proposals concerning truth and artistic truth incorporate all of these claims. Yet I think the way in which Dooyeweerd presents them is internally problematic, with the result that he does not offer an adequate and convincing conception of truth.

Dooyeweerd’s conception suffers from two sorts of problems. On the one hand, he exaggerates the role of religious truth and misconceives its relation to theoretical truth. On the other hand, in exaggerating that role, he overlooks central questions of epistemology and truth theory. I shall demonstrate these problems by returning to five topics from my previous exposition—religious truth, the horizon of experience, theoretical intuition, theoretical truth, and standing in the truth—, addressing them in that order.
2.1 Structuralized Religion

Dooyeweerd’s conception of truth stands or falls with his account of religious truth. As section 1.3 showed, his conception treats religion as the transcendent horizon of experience. This treatment does not mesh with Dooyeweerd’s own preferred understanding of religion. Whereas in general the horizons of experience are ontological conditions that make human life possible, religion for Dooyeweerd is the all-pervasive direction in which human life is oriented or the all-pervasive spirit in which it is lived. Although he speaks of religion as a fundamental relationship between human beings and (what they take to be) the origin of creation, this “relationship” differs dramatically from the relationships that make up the temporal, modal, and plastic horizons. In those horizons it makes sense to posit ontological relationships between structures that universally obtain and variable manners of creaturely existence or, to use Dooyeweerd’s vocabulary, between a “law side” and a “subject side.” But the “relationship” that characterizes religion is of a different order. It is one of divine invitation and human acceptance or rejection, of divine instruction and human learning, of divine guidance and human discovery.

Dooyeweerd suggests this when he says divine truth must grip us (NC 2: 574, WW 2: 507), and we, in response, must take hold of God’s revelation with all of our hearts (NC 2: 564, WW 2: 496). At bottom, as Dooyeweerd himself understands, religion is a relation of call and response. In this relation our response becomes a call to the God who calls, and the God who calls responds to our response. In other words, the relationship that characterizes religion is dynamic and dialogical, and it is not of a sort that can be captured in an ontological picture of structure and existence.

Yet this ontological picture is precisely what Dooyeweerd paints when he writes about religion as the transcendent horizon of experience. He describes religion as the root of self-
consciousness in which human experience transcends time (NC 2: 540, WW 2: 472-3), and as a “depth-dimension” on which other structural horizons depend. He talks about religion as a necessary structural and subjective a priori, a relationship in which God’s central law determines, limits, and makes possible all human experience (NC 2: 552, WW 2: 482). He also says that the religious horizon encompasses all the other horizons. In each of these ways Dooyeweerd suggests that religion involves an ontological relationship between structure and existence, just as the other horizons of experience do.

Recognizing, however, that religion is of a different order, he tries to distinguish it from the other horizons by calling it transcendent. So he ends up with a transcendent and supratemporal horizon that nevertheless encompasses and makes possible all the other horizons, which are immanent and temporal through and through. Dooyeweerd never fully explains how what is transcendent and supratemporal can encompass and determine that which is immanent and temporal, an omission noted by several of Dooyeweerd’s reformational colleagues, including Popma and Vollenhoven. This puzzle is the result, I think, of his compressing into a permanent structure the dynamic and dialogical relationship of divine call and human response, a structuralizing of religion that occurs with respect to both its directionality and its genetic unfolding in time. In effect, religion becomes the supratemporal structure that makes all temporal structures possible.44

Dooyeweerd’s structuralizing of religion has two undesirable consequences for his idea of religious truth: ontologically, religious truth must be both transcendent and immanent but cannot really be either; epistemologically, religious truth must be unique and all-pervasive but cannot be both. Combined, these two problems have the further consequence that theoretical
truth loses its distinctive character and can truly be true only as a manifestation of religious truth. Let me explain.

We have seen that Dooyeweerd gives religious truth priority over all other expressions of truth. It is the very fulness of truth without which any true knowledge would be impossible. This is his way to capture philosophically Calvin’s insight that true knowledge of God and true knowledge of ourselves and the world are interdependent. Theoretical truth, too, “is in every respect dependent” on religious truth as “the full super-temporal Truth” (NC 2: 561, WW 2: 492). But what does it mean to say that religious truth makes all other truth possible? Two responses are available within Dooyeweerd’s conception, one of them ontological and the other epistemological.

Ontologically, religious truth, as the most encompassing horizon that radiates through all of human experience, is the condition of truth’s possibility. Without it all the other horizons, and indeed experience itself, could not exist. Now there is a sense in which this is so: if human beings could not hear God’s call and respond, then their lives would lack ultimate direction. Yet that is quite different from describing the structures that make human life possible as dependent for their possibility on religious truth. For on the latter formulation God’s call to love and human responses to this call turn into a permanent superstructure that lacks both processual and dialogical character. Religious truth becomes both absolute—always already trumping all other expressions of truth—and arbitrary—never changing in the context of the human responses it permeates. Yet it cannot really be absolute, since Dooyeweerd says it depends in turn on God as “Origin.” Nor can it really be arbitrary, for then it would not be true. In Dooyeweerd’s conception, religious truth must be both transcendent and immanent but cannot be either.
Epistemologically, Dooyeweerd describes religious truth as the very fulness of meaning that serves as the “principle and foundation of all true knowledge” (NC 2: 562, WW 2: 494). The law side to this fulness of meaning consists of God’s revelation. The subject side consists of our worshipful insight into that revelation and acceptance of it. Because law side and subject side together make up the horizon of religious truth, our ability to experience and understand God’s revelation governs the extent to which the fulness of meaning can determine and enable “all true knowledge.” This may be the deeper reason why Dooyeweerd felt compelled to defend himself against the charge that his account makes the structure of theoretical truth depend on subjective insight into it (NC 2: 577-8, WW 3: 512-13).

My worry in this context is different but not unrelated. Whereas in all other horizons the correlation between law and subject is primarily ontological, in the religious horizon this is not possible. For, as a good Calvinist, Dooyeweerd recognizes how the fall affects all responses to God’s call or, in Dooyeweerd’s vocabulary, all abilities to understand and accept the light of God’s revelation. Moreover he inflects this recognition antithetically, setting up an unbridgeable epistemic divide. The divide occurs between those who, having been turned toward God’s revelation, can again understand reality “in the light of Truth” (NC 2: 563, WW 2: 495), and those who, having turned away from God’s revelation, can at most come up with “relative truths” that are never, on their own, truly true.

This antithetical construal has two implications, both of them contrary to Dooyeweerd’s own stated intentions. First, it puts a select group of people in a privileged position toward all truth, including religious truth, such that they cannot really learn from others. Second, it undermines his own repeated appeals for dialogue from other philosophers: according to his own account, they do not have access to the true religious knowledge that would make them capable
of truly understanding the insights he offers. Both implications become apparent in the passage, quoted earlier, where Dooyeweerd suggests that one cannot have true philosophical insight into the divine world order if one does not stand “in the full religious Truth of Divine Word-Revelation” (NC 2: 577, WW 2: 511).

Unfortunately this suggestion poses a Catch 22 for immanence philosophers, who by definition do not stand in the Truth (see NC 2: 578, WW 2: 512). They seem to be damned if they do seek accordance with the divine world order and damned if they don’t: so long as they are immanence philosophers, they will never stand where they should. Perhaps it is to soften this harsh impression that New Critique adds two sentences, not found in the Dutch version, about “structural states of affairs” that are “founded” in the divine world order, that “urge themselves upon everyone who is seriously confronted with them,” and that are “undeniable” when “laid bare to theoretical insight” (NC 2: 577). But Dooyeweerd does not address the obvious question raised by these inserted sentences: Must one nonetheless “stand in the Truth” in order to be “seriously confronted” and to have the requisite “theoretical insight”?

The upshot is that, although religious truth must pervade all knowledge, it does not reach the vast majority of people, not to mention the philosophers among them. Alternatively, if it were to pervade all knowledge, then religious truth would lose its distinctive character as an accordance between worshipful insight and divine revelation. Contrary to Dooyeweerd’s intention, religious truth on an antithetical construal cannot be both unique and all-pervasive. This, in turn, amplifies weaknesses in his conception of theoretical truth, as I shall demonstrate later.

One way to avoid such ontological and epistemological dilemmas would be to abandon Dooyeweerd’s construal of religion as a transcendent horizon of experience. That would let one
do justice to the categorical difference between the all-pervasive and direction-setting character
of religion and the all-encompassing and condition-establishing character of ontological
horizons. If, as Dooyeweerd says, both religion and ontological horizons are determinative
(bepalend), they are so in dramatically different senses. The religious dynamic of call and
response does not set structural conditions for what is possible in human existence. Rather it sets
us on, and sustains us along, the open pathways of our lives. Moreover, if religious truth is the
“fulness of meaning,” it is not the fulness of creational unity and coherence. Rather it is the
fulness of humanly responding, ever anew, to God’s invitation, instruction, and guidance. This
central insight of the reformational tradition needs fully to inform one’s conception of truth.

2.2 Limited Experience

To this point I have simply accepted Dooyeweerd’s account, summarized in section 1.2
above, concerning the other horizons of experience and their interconnections. Yet this account,
too, is internally problematic, and it reinforces the tensions in his accounts of religious and
theoretical truth. So far as I can tell Dooyeweerd nowhere says in general what he means by
“horizon.” He appears to have adopted it from phenomenology and then wed it to a revised
Kantian notion of the a priori. This notion of the a priori is ill-suited, however, for Dooyeweerd’s
two-pronged effort to anchor human experience in the order of creation and to acknowledge the
fallibility of all human knowledge. On the one hand, he does not really show how the “structural
a priori” in various horizons makes human experience possible. On the other hand, he builds
fallibility into the very character of the subjective a priori within each horizon, raising questions
about exactly what sort of a priori this is.

The first problem stems in part from Dooyeweerd’s sometimes portraying the horizons as
structural conditions that make other horizons possible. This portrayal distorts the subject side
within each horizon, and it makes some horizons subject to other horizons. What he should have said, it seems to me, is that there is one horizon, the temporal horizon, and this horizon makes all human experience possible. The modal and plastic “horizons” are simply different ways in which the temporal horizon obtains. They are not “encompassed” and “determined” by the temporal horizon. Rather they simply are that temporal horizon as it obtains both for how creatures, including human beings, exist and for what distinguishes them from one another in their existence.

Be that as it may, it is problematic to regard as “a priori” the structures that make up the temporal horizon in its modal and individual obtaining. They are not “a priori” in an epistemological sense. They may make existence possible, but that by itself tells us little about how experience and knowledge are possible. One notes in this connection that Dooyeweerd actually says very little about how the structures of the modally and individually inflected temporal horizon make experience and knowledge possible. His account provides no convincing alternative, for example, to Kant’s account of temporal schematism, to Husserl’s account of inner time-consciousness, or to Heidegger’s account of temporalization. While one can affirm Dooyeweerd’s resistance to Kant and Husserl’s epistemic subjectivism, they have discovered important insights into the constitution of experience and knowledge, as did Heidegger in his own critique of epistemic subjectivism. Dooyeweerd neither appreciates these insights nor offers a viable alternative.

Instead, Dooyeweerd, perhaps against his own better judgment, builds a “subjective a priori complex” into the horizons of human experience. And he immediately adds that the subjective a priori is fallible. Epistemologically, however, this move raises new issues. If that which, subjectively, makes human experience possible is fallible, then it would equally, at least
in certain respects, seem to make it impossible. In any case, to establish whether and when a fallible a priori does make experience possible, a transcendental philosopher would need to appeal to a superior a priori that is not fallible.

This, it appears, is the role Dooyeweerd assigns to the religious a priori, but only as it operates among those who have understood and accepted divine revelation. That brings back the problems already noted concerning religious truth, but with even greater impact. For now it emerges that no subjective a priori in any horizon can genuinely make experience possible if the subject of experience does not respond properly to divine revelation. Because Dooyeweerd construes religious responses in an antithetical manner, the absurd consequence follows that only Christians, or perhaps even only authentic Christians, would subjectively be capable of experience. In other words, religion would trump experience rather than direct and sustain it. We would not have an epistemology but rather a denial of epistemology. The “problem of knowledge” would be “solved” by taking it off the table. This solution would be philosophically scandalous, I admit, but hardly the “scandal of the cross.” Nor do I think it is the result that Dooyeweerd actually had in view.

2.3 Self-Referential Incoherence

If, for the reasons already given, one abandons Dooyeweerd’s claim that religious truth makes all other truth possible, one might be tempted to regard his idea of theoretical intuition as an alternative account of what makes theoretical truth possible. For, although he does not highlight the role of theoretical intuition when he defines transcendental theoretical truth, Dooyeweerd clearly regards theoretical intuition as a key to solving the central problem of theoretical knowledge, as we saw in section 1.1 above. Theoretical intuition makes possible the “intermodal synthesis of meaning.” Without such a synthesis, in turn, there could be no
accordance either between theoretical knowledge and structural laws in general or between a subjective “meaning-synthesis” and the modal structure of the Gegenstand in particular. In other words, theoretical intuition makes possible the intermodal synthesis that makes theoretical truth possible.

Despite the initial attractions of such a move, there are two reasons why it will not work. The first is that Dooyeweerd has no way, other than an appeal to religious self-consciousness, to establish the truth of theoretical intuition. In fact he plainly states that theoretical intuition cannot be grasped theoretically. It cannot be turned into a modally delimited Gegenstand, nor does it have the abstractive and disjunctive character of theoretical thought. If the truth of theoretical intuition cannot be established other than by way of an appeal to religious self-consciousness, then it cannot serve as a transcendental condition of theoretical truth. If one did treat it as such a condition, one would land in a vicious circle.

The second reason why this approach will not work is that Dooyeweerd’s idea of theoretical intuition does not actually solve the problem of intermodal synthesis. The problem, we recall, is to explain how it is possible to achieve a synthesis between modal aspects that must stand in opposition when theorizing occurs. According to Dooyeweerd, theoretical intuition keeps our logical and nonlogical functions in continuous temporal contact as our own functions and, in its transcendental direction, propels us toward religious self-consciousness. But the idea of theoretical intuition does not explain how intermodal synthesis can be achieved. At most it explains why intermodal synthesis is not impossible. It indicates that a prior connection across our functions and across modal aspects is always already in effect when the act of theorizing begins. The fact that such a prior connection is in effect does not explain how a reconnection can actually occur once theorists have singled out the relevant Gegenstand.
It is precisely this latter sort of question that Kant’s account of schematism was supposed to address. Despite Dooyeweerd’s criticism of Kant for failing to recognize the actual problem of intermodal synthesis, Dooyeweerd himself does not recognize that his own “solution” to this problem avoids the question Kant wished to answer: Given the abstractive character of theoretical understandings, how, once they are achieved, can they be reconnected with that from which they abstract?

Epistemologically, Dooyeweerd’s “theoretical intuition” provides a source of discovery, not a source of confirmation. We can see this from Dooyeweerd’s own description of the role theoretical intuition plays. Founded in meaning-systasis, theoretical intuition discloses ordinary experience, generates indispensable insight for theoretical thought, and keeps theoretical thought embedded in cosmic time. Moving “to and fro,” it provides a point of epistemic contact (kennis-contact) between theoretical analysis and its Gegenstand (NC 2: 478, WW 2: 413). For example, theoretical intuition can synthetically grasp “certain modal law-conformities [wetmatigheden]” prior to their undergoing an “exhaustive analysis” (NC 2: 483, WW 2: 418-19). In other words, theoretical intuition helps us discover modal structures in their intermodal coherence. But it is hard to see how it could serve to confirm or disconfirm such discoveries once they have been worked out in theory.

In fact, Dooyeweerd’s idea of theoretical intuition names a problem rather than offering a solution. It names a problem in his transcendental critique of theoretical thought. As I have explained elsewhere, the problem is one of self-referential incoherence (Zuidervaart 2004a, 78). Dooyeweerd tries to do what he himself declares impossible. He tries to account theoretically for what he says lies beyond the capacity of theoretical thought to grasp. This is not an incidental problem. Rather, it lies at the heart of his transcendental critique. To account for the structure to
theoretical thought, Dooyeweerd must theorize about that structure. But what is decisive in his account is the unity of modal aspects and the theorizer’s radical dependence on an origin, both of which he says lie beyond any theoretical conceptual grasp. Yet he himself provides a theoretical account of such purportedly supra-theoretical unity and dependence. To circumvent the dilemma of his giving a theoretical account of the supra-theoretical, Dooyeweerd introduces the notion of “critical self-reflection in the concentric direction of theoretical thought to the ego” (NC 1: 59). But this notion does not really help. For now the question arises whether his account of such critical self-reflection is itself theoretical, and thus whether he is still doing what he says cannot be done.

The idea of theoretical intuition lies at the center of this self-referential incoherence. For Dooyeweerd must say something theoretically about theoretical intuition, and one of the things he must say theoretically is that it cannot be grasped in theoretical concepts but can only be approximated in an idea. On what basis does he say this? Whence comes his insight into the nature of theoretical intuition? How can his insight be defended in the forum of philosophical debate? It is hard to see how Dooyeweerd could address these legitimate questions without employing theoretical concepts, and not simply theoretical ideas.

I have claimed that Dooyeweerd “must” say theoretical intuition cannot be grasped in theoretical concepts. He must say this because his idea of theoretical intuition provides a bridge across the systematic gap between his insisting on the fulness of religious truth and his acknowledging the distinctive character of theoretical truth. Unless he can bridge this gap, his radical claim for the religious rootedness of theoretical thought, including philosophy, would turn into a mere assertion. As he puts it so well, his epistemology would “end in a Christian sermon” (NC 2: 562, WW 2: 494). The philosopher in Dooyeweerd does not want this to happen.
But I do not think his idea of theoretical intuition actually prevents this from happening. That has consequences for his account of theoretical truth, to which we turn next.

2.4 Tautologous Truth

Dooyeweerd’s general conception of truth defines it as a relationship between human knowledge and divine laws: between worshipful insight and God’s revelation (religious truth), between human knowledge and the divine world order (transcendental truth), and between a subjective meaning-synthesis and the Gegenstand’s modal structure within intermodal coherence (transcendental theoretical truth). Although one might think at first that he has proposed a correspondence theory of truth, Dooyeweerd obviously does not locate the truth-defining relationship between intellect and thing (Aquinas). Nor does it occur between propositional truth bearers and factual states of affairs (modern correspondence theories). Rather the relationship occurs between multidimensional knowledge and God’s laws for reality and human life. Moreover, this relationship is not a correspondence but an accordance (overeenstemming). To be true, human knowledge must be in accord with God’s laws—with the religious central law, with the structure of theoretical thought, with modal structures, and with structures of individuality. If anything, Dooyeweerd’s conception is a type of coherence theory, for he emphasizes the truth-making coherence of all claims and insights within the religious fulness of truth.45

The strengths of Dooyeweerd’s conception, compared with many alternatives, lie in its holistic and normative character and in its radical refusal to divorce questions of direction from questions of structure. For Dooyeweerd truth is not a neutral topic of technical philosophy. It is a matter of life and death, and philosophy must do justice to this when offering a theoretical definition. Yet these strengths accompany notable weaknesses in the account of theoretical truth presented in section 1.5 above. Let me mention three.
In the first place, Dooyeweerd nowhere elaborates on “accordance.” This notion points to an alignment or a concurrence or a concordance of the subject side with the law side. In what does such an alignment or concurrence or concordance consist? In one sense the accordance cannot but be in effect, since the law side makes the subject side possible. If God’s revelation and the various temporal structures did not obtain, then neither religious insight nor theoretical judgments would be possible. But accordance cannot simply mean the subject side’s existing in alignment, concurrence, or concordance with the law side. Rather it must mean something like “having proper insight into” the law side. What does having proper insight come to? It seems equivalent to having true insight. What distinguishes true insight from false? Dooyeweerd’s answer seems to be that true insight is marked by its accordance with the law side. Unfortunately that brings us no closer to understanding the character of accordance, for it leaves us with an unhelpful tautology: accordance is accordance.

Dooyeweerd’s two specific criteria aim to provide more content for the notion of theoretical accordance, characterizing it by the avoidance of antinomies and by respect for individuality. The principle of avoiding antinomies does not really provide new content, however, since a negative principle leaves open many positive possibilities. And the positive principle of respecting individuality is so broad that any number of conflicting theories could legitimately claim to be doing just that. They could claim this by appealing to ordinary experience, which of course must already be theoretically interpreted in order to serve as a test for theoretical truth. Yet Dooyeweerd would not want to say that all of these conflicting theories are true.

Second, in construing truth as an accordance between subject side and law side, Dooyeweerd ignores entirely the question of objectivity. This omission is striking, given both his
valuable account of “logical objectivity,” mentioned in section 1.1 above, and the prominent worries about objectivity in modern truth theories. Let me get at this issue by calling upon Vollenhoven’s lecture notes on epistemology. In “Human Knowing,” Vollenhoven introduces a tripartite distinction among the activity or process of coming to know (het leren kennen), that which can be known or “the knowable” (het kenbare), and the content of the knowledge that results (het resultaat). All three occur in connection “with the entire cosmos” and “under the law of God” (IP 110). To know is to have knowledge, and we can have knowledge only if we come to know what is knowable and arrive at some content. With respect to the “cognitive interrelation” in the “analytic [i.e., logical] law-sphere” (IP 111), this implies that we come to know by distinguishing and relating what is knowable and by arriving at concepts and judgments. Although Vollenhoven does not take up the topic of truth in this context, it is apparent that he regards the law of noncontradiction as decisive for logical truth, and that he sees knowledge, because it is multidimensional, as more than a matter of logical truth. In addition, nonscientific knowing should have priority over scientific knowing, he says, both in life and in epistemology.

Clearly much of Vollenhoven’s epistemology is compatible with Dooyeweerd’s. Yet Vollenhoven’s tripartite distinction is either absent or deeply submerged in Dooyeweerd’s account of theoretical truth. Whereas Dooyeweerd defines such truth as an accordance between subject side and law side, Vollenhoven points to a crucial relationship on the subject side, namely, the interconnections among knowing, the knowable, and the known. Only when the knowable is God or God’s law for the cosmos does the prospect of Dooyeweerd’s “accordance” arise. Yet even here Vollenhoven would distinguish among our coming to know God’s law, God’s law as something we can know, and the results of our efforts, such as logical concepts and
judgments. Truth in this complex could not simply be an accordance, say, between our activity of knowing and God’s law, nor between our concepts or judgments and God’s law. It would involve an interconnection among our knowing, God’s knowable law, and our concepts and judgments—all “under the law of God” and in relationship “with the entire cosmos.” This means, following Vollenhoven, that theoretical truth cannot simply be an accordance between human knowledge and divine laws. It must also involve a unique relationship within human knowledge among the epistemic subject’s activity, the object toward which this activity is directed, and the results of such activity. Truth pertains not only to our knowing but also to what is knowable and what is known.

A third weakness in Dooyeweerd’s account of theoretical truth concerns the character of human knowing. Although in general he recognizes the importance of subject/subject relations and also mentions the societal embeddedness of human knowledge, he does not account for the intersubjective character of theoretical knowing and of all human knowing. This is not to say that he is unaware of the issue. Criticizing Max Scheler’s personalism, Dooyeweerd rightly insists that an individual’s knowing is sustained “by an immensely more comprehensive and specialized subjective [societal] knowledge [verbandskennis]” whose content has been acquired by humanity’s “successive generations.” Against Scheler’s notion of direct eidetic intuition, Dooyeweerd also rightly calls attention to the intrinsically linguistic and societal character of human experience. The “inter-individual societal experience [verbandservaring]” of humankind is markedly dynamic, he says (NC 2: 594-5, WW 2: 529-31). Yet none of these insights gets at the intersubjective character of human knowing. They point instead to the cumulative and collective character of that which is known by humankind.
In keeping with Dooyeweerd’s inattention to epistemic intersubjectivity, he does not emphasize the importance of learning from others in the pursuit of theoretical truth. That, in turn, affects his general conception of truth, which lacks any notion of intersubjective validity. For Dooyeweerd, the validity of our insights and judgments is conferred by divine laws’ being in effect and by the epistemic subject’s having a proper stance toward these laws. It seems to make no difference how, experientially, one has come to have these insights and judgments, nor does it seem to matter whether others recognize, accept, or reject them. Indeed, theoretical insights, he says, must be justified before “the forum of the Divine world-order” (NC 2: 577, WW 2: 511)—not, strikingly enough, in response to other theorists and with respect to their concerns.

This idiosyncratic notion of justification—as justification in the court of divine law—simply ignores the intersubjective character of human knowing. It also reinforces a dogmatic potential in Dooyeweerd’s account of religious truth. Because this point is controversial, let me be clear that I do not think Dooyeweerd wanted his account to be dogmatic. I strongly doubt that he did, for as a person and scholar he was admirably open to other people’s perspectives. Nor would dogmatism be consistent with his self-understanding of transcendental critique as “a critical inquiry (respecting no single so-called theoretical axiom) into the universally valid conditions which alone make theoretical thought possible, and which are required by the immanent structure of this thought itself” (NC 1: 37). Yet the way in which he construes religious truth, theoretical truth, and their interrelation lends support to a dogmatic potential.

2.5 Privileged Access

In response to all of my concerns, Dooyeweerd might well reply that what is finally decisive for a conception of truth is whether the one proposing it “stands in the Truth,” a formulation elaborated in section 1.4 above. At one level I can agree with this reply. For if truth
is as comprehensive and crucial as he and I both think it to be, then no theorist can step outside it, and how one lives within it matters a great deal for the conception of truth one proposes. Yet I think Dooyeweerd vitiates his own conception of truth by restricting how and by whom such standing takes place.

With respect to “how,” I note that the image of “standing” is partial at best, and inadequate on its own. It suggests that one has arrived and, having arrived, can stay in a fixed position. Yet the biblical passages to which Dooyeweerd seems to appeal speak not only of standing in the truth but also of walking in the truth, of abiding in Christ’s teaching, and of having the truth abide in us. For example, one direct citation of scripture in Dooyeweerd’s treatment of truth refers to the gospel of John, from which Dooyeweerd quotes the sentence “The truth shall make you free” (NC 2: 571—the equivalent passage on WW 2: 504 does not give a scriptural reference). In this passage Jesus tells his disciples: “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (John 8.31-2, NRSV).

Three observations are in order here. First, in this text Jesus does not speak of standing in the truth, but rather of continuing along the path of his teaching. Second, this specific continuing or abiding is not the same as knowing the truth. Rather, it is a condition for such knowledge. Third, although Dooyeweerd’s preferred phrase is “standing in” the truth, the phrases “abiding in” and “staying faithfully within” are actually closer to this specific scriptural text. This can be seen elsewhere as well, for example, in the very short Second Letter of John, which speaks first of knowing the truth (v. 1), then of “walking in the truth” (v. 4), and finally of abiding “in the teaching of Christ” (v. 9). It also speaks of “the truth that abides in us” (v. 1) (NRSV). So it would seem from scripture itself that truth is not such that one can simply grasp it once and for

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all. It is to be lived and enacted. To live and enact truth, one needs to learn from and with others, ever anew, what truth requires. This is one implication, I think, when Jesus says to his disciples that he is “the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14.6, NRSV).

Who are the others from whom one must learn? Are they only those with whom one lives in confessional community—fellow Christians, for example, or fellow humanists? I do not think that sort of restriction is in keeping with truth. For Jesus’ teachings address everyone, not only his disciples, and many have lived out these teachings in ways that put self-identified Christians to shame. Further, if the “light of truth” shines from God’s revelation for humankind, then there is no corner or community that does not live in this light. Or, to use the metaphor I prefer, if God’s invitation, instruction, and guidance address all of humanity—if wisdom calls out “to all that live” (Proverbs 8.4, NRSV)—then everyone will respond, in better and worse ways, to this divine call. To consider one’s own response, or that of one’s community, to be intrinsically superior to other responses, without question, is to try to restrict the reach of God’s call. It is to say, a priori, that God’s truth abides in us but not in them, and to presume that we and not others abide in the truth.

Problematic restrictions on both “how” and “who” plague Dooyeweerd’s conception of truth. Yet his insistence on the “hearted” character of truth contains a genial insight. He understands that truth is to be lived, not simply claimed, and that living the truth involves all of what human beings are and do. This need not mean, however, that living the truth requires a “transcendent” insight into God’s revelation. All of our living and learning occurs within the “temporal horizon.” There is no way for finite and fallible mortals to hoist themselves beyond that horizon to gaze directly upon God’s face as if upon Plato’s “Good” or Aristotle’s unmoved
mover. Yet we can respond in time to God’s call, respond in all that we are and do, and God will respond in time to our response.

Nevertheless, our response is not itself “the truth.” Rather, at its best, it is a living out of the truth. In such living truth is authenticated. In other words, our “walking” and “abiding” in the truth, when they occur, serve to bear witness to what truth requires. Rather than suggest, as Dooyeweerd does, that such a “stance”—better, such a way of living—gives someone privileged access to the truth, we should acknowledge that it gives testimony, in partial and flawed ways, to God’s invitation, instruction, and guidance. Intrinsic to this way of living, it seems to me, is to welcome the testimony of others. In the theoretical arena this means, among other things, that one tries to learn from others, whatever their religious convictions, and to justify one’s claims before the forum of fellow theorists. This is not to say that theorizing is religiously neutral. Rather, theorizing is so religiously freighted that complacency towards one’s own religious convictions cannot be tolerated. When religiously laden theorizing is also oriented by a faith tradition, then, along with that tradition, it should offer its insights in a self-critical fashion. For what is needed today, as Ron Kuipers (2002) has argued, is not simply faith, but a critical faith.

I have suggested that Dooyeweerd’s conception of truth exaggerates the role of religious truth by turning religion into a permanent transcendent structure, such that religious truth becomes the ontological condition of truth’s possibility and the epistemological guarantee of all true knowledge. When combined with an antithetical construal of religious insight, his account of religious truth makes moot any dialogue with others. More dramatically still, when combined with the notion of a fallible subjective a priori, his account renders most humans incapable of experience. His notion of theoretical intuition cannot rectify this absurd consequence because, far from solving the problem of intermodal synthesis, it reinforces the self-referential incoherence in

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his transcendental critique of theoretical thought. So too, by ignoring questions of objectivity and
intersubjectivity, Dooyeweerd’s general conception of truth as an accordance between
knowledge and law ends up being tautologous. Nor is this conception rescued by his insistence
on “standing in the Truth,” even when he uses the phrase “abiding in the Truth” (e.g., NC 2: 564,
WW 2: 496). Dooyeweerd’s description of this stance displays the same structuralizing tendency
and dogmatic potential that beset his account of religious truth. It also displays the same lack of
objectivity and intersubjectivity that weaken his account of theoretical truth.

Hence a serious challenge faces reformational philosophers who would critically retrieve
Dooyeweerd’s conception of truth. We need to find ways to think about truth that retain the
holism, normativity, and radicalness of his conception, but wrest these free from incoherence,
structuralism, and potential dogmatism. We need to affirm Dooyeweerd’s genuine insights,
which I summarized at the beginning of this section, but rearticulate them in critical dialogue
with contemporary philosophers. I begin to take up this challenge in the next section.

3. Truth and Authentication

Before presenting an alternative reformational conception of truth, let me state in broad
strokes some revisions to Dooyeweerd’s ontology that I have appropriated from other
reformational thinkers. With respect to his modal theory, I make at least three assumptions. First,
I work with Calvin Seerveld’s characterization and relative placement of the aesthetic dimension.
It occurs “earlier” than Dooyeweerd suggested, and “beautiful harmony” is not its “nuclear
moment.” Second, I follow Hendrik Hart in thinking that the “symbolic” dimension is pre-
analytic or pre-logical, but I agree with Seerveld that the aesthetic and the lingual are distinct
dimensions and cannot be captured, as Hart suggests, in a single symbolic mode. Third, I accept
from Seerveld, Hart, and Thomas McIntire the claim that history is not modally delimited and
that historiography is not a modal discipline (McIntire 1985). The dimension that Dooyeweerd calls “historical” is better described as “technical” or “techno-formative” (Seerveld). “History” pertains to all dimensions as human beings live within them over time.

I also make three assumptions of a more general ontological sort. First, I think Vollenhoven was right to describe the human heart as prefunctional but neither supratemporal nor transcendent. Second, I share the worries expressed by Hart and Danie Strauss concerning the viability of Dooyeweerd’s account of the “Gegenstand relation,” although like Henk Geertsema I am not inclined to abandon this account altogether (Geertsema 2000). Finally, I agree with Hart that nomic conditions (Dooyeweerd’s “law side”) hold “universally for the subjectivities for which they do hold,” and that subjectivities “meet conditions uniquely, even when it is the same condition they meet.” (Hart 1984, 73) This approach promises to clear up confusions in Dooyeweerd’s account of structures of individuality, which various authors have pointed out (Chaplin 1995; Zuidervaart 1995).

It would take me too far afield to argue for each revision here. Besides, the authors just cited have already provided arguments. I mention these revisions in the interests of transparency, hoping thereby to allay potential puzzlements about how my alternative conception of truth relates to Dooyeweerd’s contribution.

Now let me present my conception of truth, in five stages. First, in response to questions concerning the project of transcendental critique, I comment on how the type of criticism I employ differs from other reformational models of critique. Then I summarize my account of artistic truth and indicate its origins in reformational ontology. Next I sketch my general conception of truth and show how it responds to issues in Dooyeweerd’s conception. Then I take up the topics of objectivity and propositional truth. Finally I introduce the notion of
“authentication” and show how my account of this appropriates insights from Dooyeweerd’s emphasis on “standing in the Truth.”

3.1 Critical Hermeneutics

Let me first discuss how I am working out my conception of truth in critical dialogue with other contemporary philosophers. This is important to do because some reformational thinkers may not regard my manner of engagement as reformational. They may wonder about how I interact with the insights of other thinkers and display the religious orientation to this interaction. Like Dooyeweerd, I aim to address a contemporary philosophical audience. Yet the audience today differs significantly from his. In North America, and increasingly in Europe, the philosophical world divides into primarily analytic and primarily continental thinkers. This “continental divide,” as I call it, poses a challenge to communicating with one’s peers. My response is deliberately to cross philosophical divides: divides between analytic and continental philosophy, and, within continental philosophy, between Heideggerian thinking and Critical Theory. A primary question when I write is how to address this internally divided audience in terms they will understand.

That means, among other things, keeping unexplained jargon and religiously fraught language to a minimum. Yet any reader who is attentive should be able to figure out where I am coming from. The Preface and Introduction to Artistic Truth, for example, clearly signal my religious affiliations (AT ix-xii, 1-14); I dedicate the book to three philosophers in the Reformed tradition; and I name reformational sources at strategic points in the argument. I hope readers will pay attention to the religious orientation of my work. If they find what I write genuinely worth their while, perhaps they will want to find out more about its orientation. In any case, if readers experience what Artistic Truth offers as a “glass of cool redemptive theoretical water,” as
Calvin Seerveld put it in a symposium on this book, then it will have accomplished what it set out to do.

The desire to offer something substantial to an internally divided audience helps explain my manner of engaging the work of other philosophers. I employ two methodological assumptions: first, that one should understand such work from the inside out, and, second, that one should call upon a philosopher’s best opponents to help develop one’s position with regard to the issues at stake. These assumptions are motivated by a desire to develop my own position in critical dialogue with others. What sort of approach is this? Is it a version of immanent critique? Transcendental critique? Perhaps even thetical or transcendent critique? I would say it is all of these and none of them at once. My own label for it is “critical hermeneutics.”

Perhaps I can explain this approach using language from the Introduction to an earlier book on Theodor W. Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory*. There, after describing the models of transcendent, transcendental, and immanent critique, I call my approach to Adorno’s text an *immanent critique with metacritical intent* (Zuidervaart 1991, xx). Such an approach takes seriously Adorno’s own issues, expectations, and criteria, but it moves beyond these when his text fails to meet its own criteria. As the book moves beyond Adorno’s position, however, it continues to depend openly on his position, so that the movement beyond takes on the character of self-criticism. Only at the very end does the book indicate a strong motivation for this precarious movement: “Adorno’s philosophy makes evident the perplexing position of philosophy itself. Philosophy takes place within a damaged life, whose reparation is a mutual task, and in a misdirected society, whose redirection is a shared responsibility. As Adorno has demonstrated, philosophy must remain radically open to the other without giving up the attempt to make true claims about truth and falsity and without reducing truth and falsity to mere
matter[s] of discursive rationality” (Zuidervaart 1991, 305-6). The more recent book on *Artistic Truth* tries to make good on this implicit promise. Methodologically, it simply adds one feature to “immanent criticism with metacritical intent,” namely, to call upon already existing oppositions within philosophy to sharpen one’s understanding of the alternatives and to formulate one’s own position.

In other words, I do not follow the thetical approach of Vollenhoven’s systematic philosophy, nor do I simply take the route of immanent criticism emphasized in his historiography of philosophy (Vollenhoven 1961). Neither do I follow the path of either transcendental critique à la Dooyeweerd or transformational critique à la Jacob Klapwijk (1986, 1987). Although I do not have space here to lay out my reasons, I have found each of these approaches by itself to be inadequate. What I attempt instead is a critical hermeneutics. I seek the contributions and limitations of a philosopher’s position by trying to understand it from within his or her writings. And I assume that considering another philosopher’s opposing position, and constructing a dialectical dialogue between the two positions, will yield greater nuance in one’s understanding of both positions and stronger articulation for one’s own position.

Behind this approach lies a posture of epistemic openness, a readiness to learn from others, regardless of their religious or philosophical convictions. But there also lies a recognition that various positions are better and worse in different respects, and that the task of a reformational philosopher is to sort these matters out—critically, to be sure, but with help from others. I believe this posture is in line with what truth requires in a pluralistic and public setting. Unfortunately, Dooyeweerd’s conception of truth, and his mode of carrying out a transcendental critique, do not encourage such a posture. That is an important reason why Dooyeweerd’s epistemology requires a critical retrieval.
3.2 Artistic Truth

Implicitly the book *Artistic Truth* has already launched this project of critical retrieval. Although it does not examine the work of reformational philosophers, it begins with two intuitions shared by Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven and explicitly stated by my mentors Calvin Seerveld (1971) and Hendrik Hart (1984), namely, that human knowledge is multidimensional, and that the arts are ways in which human beings acquire and revise their knowledge. The intuition that art is a form of knowledge is not peculiar to reformational philosophy, however. One can find it in Aristotle’s *Poetics*, in Hegel’s *Aesthetics*, and in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Ernst Cassirer, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Theodor W. Adorno.

If art is a form of knowledge, and if knowledge seeks truth, then questions arise about whether and in which respects the arts are capable of truth. It seems to me that the available answers, whether reformational or not, are not satisfactory, and that many contemporary philosophers, both analytic and continental, have abandoned these questions altogether. This at a time when the issues traditionally addressed under the label of “artistic truth” have become more intense. I especially have in mind questions about the role of artists in society and about validity in cultural interpretations.

One reason for the shared inarticulacy of contemporary philosophers on “artist truth” is that we lack a general conception of truth on which the notion of artistic truth could make sense. Propositionally inflected correspondence theories of truth are perhaps the least plausible in this regard, and they have dominated Anglo-American aesthetics. The challenge, then, is to explain how artistic truth can be neither propositional nor governed by a correspondence with “reality” or “facts” or “states of affairs,” yet still be true.
3.2.1 Imagination

My response to this challenge has two stages. First, I try to characterize what reformational philosophers regard as the “qualifying function” of the arts. My underlying hunch is that we can effectively uncover the most relevant features of aesthetic intersubjectivity and objectivity by attending to polarities that have driven aesthetic discourse since the eighteenth-century institutionalized an aesthetic dimension, including aesthetics as a field of scholarship. In Dooyeweerdian terms, I surmise that the most important aesthetic “moments” show up in prominent debates about the meaning of “the aesthetic.” With Kant as my primary discussion partner, I have identified “imagination” as the “nuclear moment” of the aesthetic dimension. I spell out some of the meaning to this dimension by calling attention to three “moments” that are especially germane to understanding artistic truth: a techno-formative “retrocipation,” and linguistic and logical “anticipations.” The techno-formative retrocipation has special significance because, like Dooyeweerd and Seerveld, I regard the arts as having a technical founding function (“historical,” in Dooyeweerd’s terms). The linguistic and logical anticipations are crucial because most debates about artistic truth pertain to the relation of the arts to language and logic. Because I do not regard these debates as completely misguided, I seek to establish within art’s qualifying function the internal links that provide their social-ontological basis.

To encompass both intersubjectivity and objectivity, I portray these moments as processes rather than as acts or human capacities. I consider the process of “exploration” to be a retrocipation within the aesthetic dimension to “techno-formative” processes. The polarity in Kant’s aesthetics between “work versus play” points in that direction, since it raises the question of aesthetic “purposiveness.” Similarly, “creative interpretation” suggests an aesthetic anticipation of linguistic processes. The polarity of “entertainment versus instruction” indicates a
struggle over just how to conceive the connection between imagination and the signifying function of ordinary language. So too, I regard “presentation” (Kant’s *Darstellung*) as an aesthetic anticipation of logical processes. The polarity of “expression versus communication” points up a connection between imagination, on the one hand, and reference and predication, on the other. In my view, exploration, presentation, and creative interpretation are central to what has become differentiated and institutionalized as an aesthetic dimension. Albeit only partial, this dialectical phenomenology of the aesthetic dimension is crucial for getting clear about the qualifying function of the arts.

My general term for these three processes, and for the aesthetic dimension as a whole, is “imagination.” This is not a mental capacity or activity. Rather it is a complex of intersubjective processes tied to a wide and changing array of institutions and practices. Certain entities and certain features of entities are more suited than others to enter such processes. They enter as aesthetic signs. This is not to say that the “objects” of imagination *are* aesthetic signs. Rather, various entities can function as aesthetic signs when they enter certain intersubjective processes of exploration, presentation, and creative interpretation. The term “aesthetic signs” refers to “creatures, events, and products” in their capacities to “sustain discovery,” to “acquire nuances of meaning,” and to “call forth reflective readings,” all of this occurring “in intersubjective contexts” (AT 61-2).

Debates about artistic truth also concern the sort of validity one can ascribe to aesthetic and artistic experience. Insofar as truth is a form of validity, artistic truth must also involve questions of validity. Given the pivotal role of the aesthetic dimension in the constitution of the arts as art, what sort of validity pertains to this dimension? In Dooyeweerd’s terms, I locate the “law side” to the aesthetic modal aspect in a principle of aesthetic validity.
I try to approximate this principle with the notion of imaginative cogency. Imaginative cogency is a horizon of expectations, a historically emergent horizon, concerning what makes aesthetic matters more or less worthwhile. Within this horizon of aesthetic validity the intersubjective processes of imagination unfold. The horizon also encompasses the “objects” of imagination in their function as aesthetic signs. When we evaluate the relative aesthetic merits of jokes or metaphors or public celebrations, for example, implicitly we employ standards of complexity, depth, and intensity. The horizon of such standards is a principle of aesthetic validity that can be called imaginative cogency. Hence the “sphere sovereignty” of the aesthetic dimension in modern Western societies has the two anchors suggested by Dooyeweerd’s modal theory: not only the distinctiveness of imagination as a ubiquitous complex of intersubjective processes but also the inescapability of imaginative cogency as the normative horizon within which these processes occur.

3.2.2 Imaginative disclosure

The second stage in my response employs this characterization of the aesthetic dimension to propose a nonpropositional and noncorrespondence conception of artistic truth. I have arrived at this proposal by triangulating Heidegger, Adorno, and Jürgen Habermas. I have sought a conception that is sufficiently broad to accommodate more than works of art, to which both Heidegger and Adorno tend to limit artistic truth, but at the same time, contra Habermas, not to restrict the relevant relations of intersubjectivity to those which are linguistic and postlinguistic. The result is a trilateral conception of artistic truth—as authenticity, significance, and integrity—that gives as much weight to mediated intersubjective relations among artists and their publics as to the relational import internal to a work of art.
The relations that make up artistic truth belong to a process that I call “imaginative disclosure.” Whether high art or low, whether mass-mediated or folk art, art products and events are expected to offer and elicit imaginative insight, to disclose matters of vital importance that are hard to pin down. They do so via intersubjective exploration, creative interpretation, and presentation, employing suitable media and techniques (“media of imagination,” in my terminology). Such disclosure occurs with respect to the experience from which the art emerges, a public’s need for worthwhile cultural presentations, and an artwork’s internal demands. Accordingly, I distinguish three relations, and I argue that artistic truth has as much to do with contexts of production and use as it does with the internal configuration of artworks.

To distinguish and connect these relations of artistic truth, I introduce three terms: authenticity, significance, and integrity. By “authenticity” I mean the expectation that art products and events should “be true with respect to … the experience or vision from which competent art making allows them to arise.” By “significance” I mean the expectation that art products and events should “be true with respect to a public’s need for cultural presentations that are worthy of their engagement.” By “integrity” I mean the expectation that art products and events that have been institutionally constituted as artworks should be true with respect to their own internal demands, one of which is that they live up to more than their internal demands. In each case to be “true with respect to” means to be “imaginatively disclosive of” (AT 127-30). This trilateral conception allows one to show how prominent figures in Anglo-American aesthetics, who either assume or reject propositionally inflected correspondence theories, ignore or misconstrue one or another of these relations. And it provides a systematic basis for understanding what I call “art in public.”
Let me refrain from going into more detail concerning each of these relations. Suffice it to say that *Artistic Truth* shows how all three occur within the horizon of imaginative cogency, although with the heightened accents made possible by the practices and institutional settings of art (AT 130-2). It also considers how they support pursuits of cultural orientation by inflecting relations to personal, social, and postsubjective worlds (AT 132-4). And it indicates how the validity claims that arise in conversations and discourse about art relate to the aesthetic validity that is peculiar to artistic authenticity, significance, and integrity (AT 134-9). I mention these elaborations here in order to point toward larger ontological issues at stake in my conception of artistic truth.

3.2.3 Reformational ontology

Dooyeweerd’s ontology provides a sturdy scaffold for constructing this conception. The fundamental distinction between “aesthetic” and “artistic” goes back to his distinction between modal and individual horizons. My characterization of the aesthetic dimension relies on a modal theory and refuses to collapse the “law side” into the “subject side.” My account of the three relations of artistic truth employs a distinction inherent to Dooyeweerd’s ontology, although not fully worked out there, among subject/object, subject/subject, and subject/product relations. I link these three relations with the aesthetic mode’s techno-formative, lingual, and logical analogies as well as with the x/y pattern to structures of individuality (Hart 1984, 146-7): authenticity pertains to an imaginative artifact’s mediated expression, significance pertains to the interpretable presentation it makes as an imaginative object of use, and integrity pertains to its configured import when it achieves relative independence as an artwork. Although these formulations were not discovered with a chart of the modal scale and typical realms in hand, so
to speak, I have repeatedly returned to Dooyeweerd’s ontology for clues about how to sort out the relevant subject matter and debates.

Yet my approach differs from Dooyeweerd’s in several important respects. First, I consider the law side to be historical when it pertains to human affairs. That is a stronger claim than Dooyeweerd’s insistence that the law side is temporal. Accordingly, I describe principles of validity, such as the aesthetic principle of imaginative cogency, as *historical* horizons, and not simply as belonging to the temporal horizon. Second, I do not think of these principles as “creational ordinances” or “divine laws.” Rather I characterize them as “societal principles” (a term I shall explain later) through which God’s call to love can be heard. Imaginative cogency is a societal principle, and so is the principle of logical validity. Third, I am wary about construing ontological structures as fully transcultural and transhistorical. It is part of epistemic openness, I think, to acknowledge that one uncovers ontological structures within the societal formation one inhabits, and that one does not have the exhaustive knowledge needed to justify the claim that they occur in precisely this way within other societal formations. In that respect, my ontology is societal rather than cosmological. Fourth, rather than speak of subjects and objects first, I speak of processes in which subjects and objects participate. I do this partly to recover the intersubjectivity that goes underground in Dooyeweerd, despite his recognition of subject/subject relations, and partly to break with subject-centered tendencies of modern philosophy that recur in Dooyeweerd, despite his astute criticisms of epistemic subjectivism. Fifth, I introduce notions of “worlds” and “world relations” that have no precise location in Dooyeweerd’s ontology, although, with enough ingenuity, one might be able extrapolate them from his anthropological distinctions. Finally, I am much closer to Seerveld than to Dooyeweerd in my account of the
aesthetic dimension, its intermodal location, and its manifestation in the arts as a distinct realm of human endeavor.

The proposed account of artistic truth has implications for truth theory in general. First, it allows one to forge significant links between imaginative disclosure and propositional truth, rather than hold them in either opposition or isolation, as many philosophers do. Second, my account suggests that truth in general is multidimensional, as Dooyeweerd understood. Indeed, reducing truth to propositional truth bearers and to a correspondence between propositions and facts leads to impoverished theories and practical dead ends. In both of these respects, the account points toward a theory of truth in general that would not be propositionally inflected and would not be a correspondence theory, but would nonetheless address the concerns and objections of propositionally inflected correspondence theories. At the same time, of course, the proposed account of artistic truth draws upon an emerging general conception of truth, my primary research project in the years ahead. I turn to that general conception next.

### 3.3 Fidelity and Disclosure

Someone might object to my account of artistic truth that it equates truth with disclosure, but the two are not the same. Although I do not think my account does this, I would agree with the objector that truth and disclosure are not the same. Yet they do have an intimate connection, as Heidegger argues and Dooyeweerd sometimes suggests. The connection becomes apparent in my general conception of truth. I propose to think of truth in its most comprehensive sense as a dynamic correlation between (1) human fidelity to societal principles and (2) a life-giving disclosure of society. Before I explicate each axis in this correlation, let me make two general comparisons with Dooyeweerd’s conception.
First, by “truth in its most comprehensive sense” I mean something like Dooyeweerd’s “fulness of truth.” To propose a conception of it, one must employ “transcendental ideas” (Dooyeweerd) or “totality concepts” (Hart) or “speculative propositions” (Hegel). This is so of any attempt to offer a general conception of truth, even one that tries to avoid “metaphysics” or dismisses it as “idle speculation.” Dooyeweerd understands this. That is why he can correctly point out how modern refutations of relativism and skepticism usually fall short: they cannot fully account for the nature of truth. Yet his own account of religious truth, combined with an inadequate theory of theoretical truth, forces him to treat the comprehensive idea of truth like a Kantian regulative idea that goes beyond the boundaries of theoretical concepts. This lands Dooyeweerd in self-referential incoherence, as I have tried to show.

Although it would be premature to put forward a full-blown theory of truth, let me nonetheless state my assumption that people can use theoretical concepts to understand whatever they use nontheoretical concepts to understand. Further, as Vollenhoven rightly suggests, ordinary concepts, or rather human knowing that results in ordinary concepts, can understand everything there is to understand: God, creation, and God’s laws for creation (IP 123). To put the point bluntly in my own terms: whatever can be discussed can be conceived. Hence, to propose a comprehensive conception of truth or, in Dooyeweerd’s terms, to conceptualize the fulness of truth, is part of what theorists can do. I would simply add that this effort belongs to the proper tasks of philosophy. While understandable, contemporary “postmetaphysical” efforts to avoid this task, in both continental and analytic philosophy, are misguided.56

Nevertheless a special challenge confronts the attempt to propose a comprehensive conception of truth, for one must both presuppose and appeal to what one is conceiving. So the project has an unavoidable circularity. Because the circularity is unavoidable, however, the key
is not to step outside the circle, by pointing with Dooyeweerd to “transcendent truth,” for example. Rather, as Heidegger says in a different context, the key is to enter the circle in the right way (Heidegger 1979, 152-3, 314-6).57

Second, in characterizing truth as a “dynamic correlation,” I mean to distinguish it from any static structure. As Hegel recognized, truth is a historical process that unfolds in time. Consequently I depart rather markedly from Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions of truth. I do not regard comprehensive truth to be either an unchanging form or a fixed property. Dooyeweerd’s conception embarks on a similar departure, for his “Truth” comes down to a proper relationship that is religious in character. Yet he structuralizes this relationship and construes it as supratemporal, thereby eliminating any possibility that it could be a temporal process, not to mention a historical one. While acknowledging continuities with Dooyeweerd’s approach, then, I must candidly state that to regard truth as a historical process marks a departure from his conception as well. Now let me fill in the two axes to truth as a dynamic correlation.

3.3.1 Societal principles

On each axis one finds a relation between “law side” and “subject side.” The relation is more explicit on the first axis, where I speak of human fidelity (subject side) to societal principles (law side). Although I distinguish human responses from the “nomic conditions” (Hart) that make them possible, I do not keep these separate. Societal principles, which are always already in effect, take some of their shape from the ways in which we are faithful to them, and our efforts to enact what these principles require are always already informed by the shape they have taken in the societal formation we inhabit. This is why I describe societal principles both as “that which people hold in common” and as that which “holds them in common” or, more succinctly, as the “commonly holding/held” (AT 97). People hold these
principles, and are held by them, within historically developed cultural practices and social institutions. Here I have in mind what Dooyeweerd calls the “law side” of modal aspects—resourcefulness,\textsuperscript{58} justice, and solidarity, for example—the “law side,” respectively, of the economic, juridical, and ethical aspects. But I do not \textit{separate} the law side from the subject side in the way Dooyeweerd does. Instead I revise his ontology of principles, characterizing societal principles as historical horizons that people learn, achieve, contest, reformulate, and ignore in the midst of social struggle.

An “ontology of principles” is an account of the status and meaning of the conditions that obtain for normative practices and institutions. “Normative practices and institutions” are ones that can be better or worse for human flourishing and can be experienced as better or worse for human flourishing. Reformational philosophers have given various accounts of such conditions. Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd tie them to “functional laws” and the “law side” to logical and post-logical modes of human existence. Henk Hart in 1984 regards them as “nomic conditions” that hold for the entire functional range of human existence and to which human beings are called to respond. Many reformational philosophers, like Dooyeweerd, wish to anchor such conditions in God’s creational ordinances.

By contrast, I describe such conditions as “societal principles” and call attention to their historical embeddedness, their eschatological openness, and their vocational character. I thereby revise the cosmonomic notion of “norm” in three respects. First, I claim that societal principles such as solidarity and justice are not in effect prior to their formation by human beings within cultural practices and social institutions. Second, societal principles were not simply given or fixed when human beings were created, but they emerge during the course of human history and could change in the future. Justice, for example, is continually contested and historically
unfolded as a way to work out the flourishing to which human beings are called within their cultural practices and social institutions. Third, societal principles manifest God’s instruction and invitation and guidance, God’s call to love, addressed to societally constituted human beings and continually calling for their response. So I regard societal principles as historical horizons that cannot be anchored in creational ordinances outside human history, and I also regard them as “future-oriented callings in which the voice of God can be heard and traces of a new earth can appear” (Zuidervaart 2003, 8).

In describing societal principles as “historical horizons,” I am making three claims. First, their validity spans different historical times and places, as horizons span the times and places within them. Second, this spanning is itself historical and unfolds by way of conflicting responses to what the principles require. Third, what keeps the conflict of responses from having the final word, such that might would become right, is that within the conflict and across the horizon God’s transhistorical call to love can be heard, even if always only in a historical fashion.

Accordingly, human fidelity to societal principles is ongoing and never finished, and part of such fidelity is to continue giving shape to societal principles. The ways in which people hold principles in common are significant for how societal principles hold people in common. What people actually hold in common at a particular time might not be in line with such principles. Yet they cannot hold something in common without appealing or gesturing toward societal principles, no matter how self-serving the appeal or how ideologically distorted the gesture. Conversely, in order for a principle to hold people in common, they must hold something in common. From this angle, then, truth always involves people struggling over principles for
human existence. At stake in the struggle is whether the commonly holding/held sustains and promotes life.

From Dooyeweerd’s perspective, my account of societal principles calls up the specter of historicism. He would worry that a principle such as justice will come to be regarded as valid only for a historically limited time and place. And he would think that his anchoring justice in a creational ordinance counteracts such a limitation, since presumably creational ordinances hold for all times and places. But if one locates creational ordinances outside human history, then one still needs to explain how they become effective within human history, raising the threat of an infinite regress. Still, Dooyeweerd could wonder whether my talk of societal principles as historical horizons makes their content arbitrary. He might suggest that, given the “antithesis,” it is wrongly utopian to think that societal principles will come to be commonly held. And he might insist that we have regard the ontic grounding for human endeavor as real if we would avoid historicism, which he described in postwar Europe as the “fatal illness of our ‘dynamic’ times” (Dooyeweerd 2003, 63).

Although adequately answering these worries would require a lengthy response, I can at least indicate how the answer would go. First, the historical-horizontal character of societal principles such as justice and solidarity, or of imaginative cogency, for that matter, does not make their content arbitrary. It does mean that their content is never fixed once and for all, but ever emerges as history unfolds. As their content emerges, God’s transhistorical call to love meets human responses, to which God responds in turn. Second, I do not say that societal principles will come to be commonly held. I say they are held in common, even as they do hold people in common. Further, if they were not commonly held, they would also not commonly hold. I follow Hegel in refusing to lift such principles out of the historical process to be either
unchanging absolutes or merely regulative ideas. Consequently my position is not wrongly utopian, if by that is meant a naive hope that somehow, someday, we human beings can, in the words of Rodney King, “all just get along.” Finally, I have no problem calling societal principles “real,” if we do not mean by “real” that they “exist” in the manner that concrete entities, communities, and institutions exist. Societal principles are real because they are always already in effect, and their being always already in effect is part of what it means to call them historical. Through them God calls human endeavor to account, even as human endeavor gives them shape. I take this conception to be in tune with scriptural teaching about God’s ongoing and dialogical direction for human affairs. It is also not that far removed from Dooyeweerd’s own insistence on the temporal character of the “law side” to creation.

3.3.2 Life-giving disclosure

The relation between “law side” and “subject side” is less explicit on the second axis. I characterize this axis as the “life-giving disclosure of society.” By “disclosure” I mean a historical process of opening up society. This process is “life-giving” when human beings and other creatures come to flourish in their interconnections. Here the “subject side” has to do with the contributions human beings make, within and through their cultural practices and social institutions, to opening society in a life-giving fashion. The “law side” has to do with what Dooyeweerd calls the “central religious law”: the call to love God and neighbor, suitably expanded to include the call to take care of creation—the so-called “cultural mandate.” To foster the flourishing of all creatures is to hear and live out this call.

At first glance the notion of life-giving disclosure may seem foreign to Dooyeweerd’s conception of truth. Yet it reworks his idea of the “opening process” (ontsluitingsproces) in order to forge a link with truth at which he hints in a few places. Dooyeweerd’s account of the opening
process is primarily structural rather than genetic. Modally, it has to do with modal aspects’ disclosing their meaning in an anticipatory fashion within the transcendental direction of time (NC 2: 181-365, WW 2: 126-300). Societally, it has to do with how, on the basis of opened historical foundations, societal formations and the cultural practices and social institutions within them acquire enriched normative and structural meaning.\(^{60}\) He does not emphasize what I take to be the telos of disclosure, namely, the flourishing of all creatures in their interconnections.\(^{61}\)

Four scattered hints toward my own idea of disclosure occur in Dooyeweerd’s conception of truth. In the first place, he claims that truth in its fulness can be approximated only in the transcendental direction of time. That direction is precisely where he locates the modal and intermodal “opening process” (ontsluitingsproces). Second, when Dooyeweerd discusses logical synthesis, he says that logical subjects must disclose (ontsluiten) logical object functions (NC 2: 389-90, WW 2: 321-2). Presumably, without logical synthesis there could be neither propositional truth nor theoretical truth. Moreover, with respect to the object functions of “historical facts,” Dooyeweerd says the disclosure of logical object functions must itself occur “in the anticipatory direction” (NC 2: 391),\(^{62}\) i.e., in the transcendental direction with which he associates all modal disclosure. Third, Dooyeweerd describes theoretical insight as “the disclosure” (ontsluiting) of what ordinary experience already contains (NC 2: 475, WW 2: 410). So too theoretical intuition is free to disclose the meaning of ordinary experience and to point in a transcendental direction. Moreover, in the fourth place, the fulness of truth opens (ontsluiten) the transcendental temporal horizon of human existence (NC 2: 573-4, WW 2: 507-8). Although neither Dooyeweerd nor I would wish to equate truth with disclosure, we share the intuition that they have an intimate link.
I take this intuition a step farther, however, by introducing the notion of interconnected flourishing. This step serves to de-structuralize Dooyeweerd’s account of the opening process, rendering it both historical and eschatological. Once one transforms the crucial temporal horizon into something historical and postulates interconnected flourishing as the telos of history, the notion of disclosure turns away from a “transcendent horizon” toward an eschatological future—*Van boven naar voren* (“From above to ahead”), to borrow the title of Henk Geertsema’s 1980 dissertation on Jürgen Moltmann. This helps one avoid problems that beset Dooyeweerd’s account, such as his odd notion of sinful disharmony on the law side (NC 2: 334-7, WW 2: 265-68), his tendency to install Western societal differentiation as a “structural hypernorm” for historical development (Zuidervaart 2003, 8; Zuidervaart 2005), his under appreciation of the relative goodness within so-called “primitive” cultures (Griffioen 1986; Seerveld 1996), and his conflicted stance toward so-called “apostate” cultures, where false faith nevertheless leads to genuine achievements. Today, in a world that is simultaneously globalizing and breaking apart along political and confessional fault lines, it is crucial to rethink his account, especially in the fields of social ethics and international law.

3.3.3 Dynamic correlation

Truth in its most comprehensive sense is not the same as disclosure. Nor is it identical with human fidelity. Rather it is a dynamic correlation between two “law/subject” axes, between human fidelity to societal principles, on the one hand, and a life-giving disclosure of society, on the other. In Dooyeweerd’s terms, although significantly modified, this means that truth involves an “accordance” between human responses to “modal laws” and the direction that the results of these responses take—the direction they take both with respect to the “central religious law” and
with respect to the God who calls creation into existence and who meets human beings from an inexpressible future.

Like Dooyeweerd’s conception of the fulness of truth, the conception of a dynamic correlation gives “truth” a speculative reach that much of contemporary philosophy rejects or neglects. This speculative reach is eschatological, however, not transcendent. My conception of truth brings together a normative critique of societal evil with historically informed hope for God’s inexpressible future. Truth, we could say, is a gathering of hopeful critique. Yet one should not restrict truth to its speculative dimension. Reformational philosophers today need to deal modestly and attentively with the complex interplay between normativity and eschatology.

Because of truth’s eschatological dimension, history cannot be the “final horizon” or “ultimate horizon,” nor can human beings have such a horizon “in view.” Rather, all the views we have occur within the historical horizons of societal principles that, being dynamic and comprehensive, always already inform whatever notions we have of “life” and “societal disclosure.” As a dynamic correlation between human fidelity to societal principles and a life-giving disclosure of society, truth calls for our faithfulness to societal principles such as solidarity and justice. It also calls forth the flourishing of all creatures in their interconnections. This dynamic correlation is open to a future we have difficulty imagining or conceiving. History is not the “ultimate horizon,” but all our horizons are historical, including any vision of a new heaven and new earth. Strictly speaking, and contrary to Dooyeweerd’s problematic notion of a “transcendent horizon,” there is no ultimate horizon.63

It might seem from such descriptions that my conception of truth is completely circular. I seem to define societal principles in terms of creaturely flourishing, and to define creaturely flourishing in terms of societal principles. Although I do not think my definitions of the two axes

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and their correlation are circular, I do regard fidelity to societal principles and life-giving disclosure to be indissoluble correlates. The point of such fidelity is to promote a process in which human beings and other creatures come to flourish. Correlatively, life-giving disclosure depends upon the degree to which cultural practices, social institutions, and entire societal formations align with principles such as solidarity and justice. Life-giving disclosure occurs in part by way of people being true—pursuing fidelity—in the various dimensions of their social existence. But only in part, for disclosure also occurs both beyond and despite our principles and alignment. As Dooyeweerd also acknowledges, there is always more to truth than our “being in the truth,” whether theoretically, politically, or in any other way. Consequently one must appeal to the notion of creaturely flourishing to motivate such fidelity, and one must employ societal principles to evaluate the extent and quality of creaturely flourishing. Again, the hermeneutical key is not to avoid this circle but to enter it in the right way.

Central to my conception, then, is that truth is a dynamic process, not a fixed pattern, and that no practices, institutions, or communities either stand outside this process or have exclusive access to it. Closely connected with this central point is that the effectivity of, say, the call to be just depends on human fidelity to the societal principle of justice, yet human fidelity is never enough to bring about justice. Hence it becomes impossible to talk about truth in its most comprehensive sense as either structural or directional. As Dooyeweerd recognizes in his own way, truth is both structural and directional. One’s conception of truth needs to acknowledge the dynamic this intersection opens up. Part of acknowledging the dynamic in one’s philosophy is not to be overly prescriptive at first about the content of societal principles or the meaning of creaturely flourishing. There is always more to say about such content and meaning, and one needs other voices in order to say this. One should not present a comprehensive conception of

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truth as the absolute truth about absolute truth, but rather as an invitation to discussion. As Dooyeweerd puts it in a different context, “theoretical thought never finishes its task” (NC 2: 556, WW 2: 487; my translation).

3.4 Propositional Truth

Earlier I criticized Dooyeweerd’s account of theoretical truth for ignoring the question of objectivity. It might appear from the account so far that my own conceptions of artistic truth and of truth in general fall into the same trap. That appearance could arise because I have left out my emphasis on the “aboutness” or referential character of artistic import (see AT 129-39, 157-61, 177-81, 191-6). It could also arise because I have said nothing specific about propositional truth or, as I prefer to call it, “assertoric correctness.” Although it would be premature to attempt a full-blown theory of propositional truth and objectivity, let me begin to fill the gap.

3.4.1 Heidegger’s contribution

My account of assertoric correctness derives from a critical dialogue with the hermeneutical conception of truth in Heidegger’s Sein und Zeit. To make sense of his conception, it helps to regard it as a deepening and transformation of correspondence theories. The mainstream of Western philosophy since Plato and Aristotle has been dominated by propositionally inflected correspondence theories of truth. Correspondence theories of truth hold “that there are truth bearers and that a truth bearer is true if and only if it corresponds to a state of affairs that obtains. They differ concerning the class of truth bearers (e.g., beliefs, propositions, sentences, or statements), the nature of states of affairs (whether they are facts, and whether they are mind-independent, as realists hold), and the type of correspondence required [congruence (e.g., Bertrand Russell) or correlation (e.g., J. L. Austin)]. In addition, most correspondence theories are propositionally inflected…. ‘Propositionally inflected’ theories ... regard
propositions as the sole or the primary bearers of truth” (AT 6). On a correspondence theory, then, to say of the proposition “The cat is on the mat” that this is true is to say that it corresponds to what is the case—i.e., that kitty really is on the mat. When combined with logical empiricism, such a theory tends to treat propositions as “self-sufficient,” facts as “uninterpreted,” and the relation between them as timeless.65

Heidegger transforms propositionally inflected correspondence theories via three theses. First, he says that assertions or propositions, the supposed bearers of truth, derive from more fundamental processes and practices of interpretation and acquire their truth via interpretation. Second, he claims that the “states of affairs” to which a true assertion or proposition must “correspond” are themselves embedded in contexts of relevance, and their “truth-making” capacities stem from such embeddedness. Third, he regards the so-called “correspondence” between, say, propositions and facts, not as a fixed congruence or correlation but rather as deriving from the dynamic ontological condition he calls the “disclosedness of Dasein.” So the “propositions” are not self-sufficient, the “facts” are not uninterpreted, and the relationship between them is not a timeless “correspondence.”

When Heidegger (1979, 153-60) calls assertions a derivative mode of interpretation—his first thesis—, I take him to be saying three things. First, that making assertions is one of the many ways in which we make sense of what we can do and be. Second, that the practice of making assertions tends, in a universalizing and decontextualizing way, to draw our attention away from other practical involvements. And, third, because of this tendency, assertions and propositions come to seem as if they were totally context-transcending claims about isolated objects and their “universal” properties. In Heidegger’s own vocabulary, the making of assertions involves a transition from “handiness” to “objective presence.” By insisting that
assertions are a derivative mode of interpretation, Heidegger reminds us that they could be neither “true” nor “false” if they lacked meaning within the relationships we have with ourselves, with other human beings, and with other creatures. Although he overstates the supposed tendency of assertions to cover up these relationships and to be cut off from other human involvements with the world, he is surely right to regard assertions as ways in which we make sense of what we can do and be. I also think it is correct to say that they play a universalizing and decontextualizing role in human understanding.

Heidegger’s second thesis is that the truth-making capacity of the entities about which an assertion can be made stems from their being embedded in contexts of relevance (1979, 214-19). Heidegger’s term for this truth-making capacity is “discoveredness” (Entdecktheit). He says the discoveredness of entities depends on the more comprehensive “disclosedness” (Erschlossenheit) of the world to which they belong. Similarly, an assertion’s capacity to discover an entity—an assertion’s “discovering-ness” (Entdeckend-sein)—depends on the more comprehensive “disclosedness” of the being that makes assertions—it depends on Dasein’s disclosedness.

Hence the truth of an assertion, and the truth of the asserted entity, are not fixed properties of isolated things that somehow “correspond.” Rather, they are dynamic tendencies embedded in larger contexts of relevance without which neither the assertion nor the asserted entity would make sense. This implies that the truth-making capacity of asserted entities stems from their embeddedness in contexts of relevance. Not only must asserted entities show themselves to us in the right way, but also they can do this only in connection with other of their aspects and together with other entities with which they are connected. Heidegger’s point, in my own terminology, is that the correctness of our assertions depends to a significant extent on how “an entity, in its predicative availability, offers or manifests itself in relevant accord with
nonpredicative aspects of its availability” (AT 92). From now on I shall use the term “correctness” to indicate the truth of assertions and propositions.

Heidegger’s third thesis is that the so-called correspondence between assertions and asserted entities, or between propositions and facts, derives from a more “primordial” ontological condition, namely, the “disclosedness of Dasein” (1979, 219-26). “Dasein” is his term for what we might call “human existence.” Its “disclosedness” refers to the fact that human existence is fundamentally open to other creatures and oriented toward its own future possibilities. My version of this thesis is that assertoric correctness (i.e., propositional truth) is one mode of a more comprehensive truth.

3.4.2 Predicative availability

Suitably modified in a reformational fashion, Heidegger’s three theses bear directly on the question of objectivity. This question has two parts. One concerns logical objectivity as such, which I term “predicative availability.” The other concerns the relation between logical objectivity and nonlogical objectivity, which I shall take up later under the heading “predicative self-disclosure.”

Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven agree that in general objectivity has to do with functions that certain creatures fulfill in relation to other creatures. A bird’s nest, for example, functions as a biotic object in relation to the bird as a biotic subject. It functions as a psychic object in relation to animals or human beings that can sense it and have feelings toward it. So too, any creature that can be known in a logical fashion functions as a logical object in relation to human logical subjects. These object functions are not simply created or assigned by the biotic or psychic or logical subject. In some sense they are inherent to the creature that functions as an object in a specific subject/object relation.
Yet the founders of reformational philosophy have significantly different accounts of objectivity, in two respects. First, whereas Dooyeweerd regards object functions as primarily involving retrocipatory objectifications on the part of modal subjects, Vollenhoven describes an object function as the “the repetition of the substrate in the superstrate” (IP 45). For example, Dooyeweerd says that a point where two lines intersect is “an arithmetical analogy [i.e., retrocision] in the spatial modus.” It is “founded in numerical relations [in den subjectieven getalszin]” and it is “an intensive objectification of number in space” (NC 2: 383, WW 2: 313-14). Vollenhoven, by contrast, says points are a repetition of “the discontinuity of number … within space,” and “this repetition is rooted in the fact that space retrocipates the arithmetic” (IP 46). In other words, Dooyeweerd has a primarily retrocipatory and Vollenhoven a primarily anticipatory account of this particular object function, and of object functions in general.

The second significant difference concerns the relation between concepts and logical objects. Dooyeweerd regards concepts as having an “intentional logical content.” Logical subjects must employ this content in order to disclose logical object functions that would otherwise remain hidden in temporal meaning-coherence. Moreover, logical objectivity requires our achieving a conceptual synthesis that accords with the logical “objective connectedness” in reality’s “systatic meaning-coherence.” Because he gives a primarily retrocipatory account of objectivity in general, Dooyeweerd postulates that logical objectivity occurs first of all in pre-logical aspects “whose objective analogies” occur “in the logical object-side of reality” (NC 2: 389-90, WW 2: 321-2).

Vollenhoven, by contrast, makes no mention of the “intentional content” of concepts. In fact he regards the logical subject function not as “conception” but as “perception,” along with the “interrelations” of “recollection” and “expectation” (IP 111-20). Concepts, for Vollenhoven,
are not the intentional means of logical knowing. Instead they are its achieved results. Hence his primary consideration regarding logical objectivity is that the “[logical] subject has to direct itself in the first place to the [logical] perception of the [logical] object” (IP 122, with “analytic” replaced by “logical”). The concepts we form through such activity can be about either conceptual or nonconceptual “states of affairs.” And these concepts, like the judgments (oordelen) they enter, are “determined” not only by the logical norm of noncontradiction but also by the knowable and by the activity of knowing (IP 124-5).68

Without attempting to adjudicate this implicit dispute over logical objectivity, let me say that I account for similar matters with the notions of predicative availability and predicative self-disclosure. Unlike Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven, I do not consider the logical dimension to be directly post-psychic. It presupposes the technical, aesthetic, and lingual dimensions as well. Accordingly my point of entry to the logical dimension is neither intentional concepts (Dooyeweerd) nor perception (Vollenhoven) but assertion as a speech act in which predication plays a more prominent role than it does in other speech acts such as promising, requesting, or confessing. Like Heidegger, I distinguish between “assertion” and “the asserted.” Thanks to Vollenhoven, I also distinguish more carefully than Heidegger does between the practice of asserting and the assertion that results.

One of Heidegger’s insights is that the relation between asserting and the asserted is direct: it does not need the intermediary of a mental representation. He derives this insight from Edmund Husserl’s notion of “self-givenness,” and Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven in their distinctive ways would agree.69 The relation between accomplished assertions and the asserted is not direct, however. As Vollenhoven puts this in his own terms, “between what is knowable and the related result, there is always the analysis of the person thinking, who analyzes what is
knowable correctly or not and, in turn, comes to knowledge concerning what is knowable” (IP 124).

In order for either the direct asserting/asserted relation or the indirect assertion/asserted relation to be in effect, Heidegger says, the asserted must show itself in an appropriate fashion. In order for the asserting and the assertion to be true (i.e., correct), the asserted entity must show itself to be just as it was asserted to be: “That an assertion is true means that it discovers an entity [as it is] in itself. The [true] assertion asserts, points out, ‘lets be seen’ (apophansis) the entity in its discoveredness [Entdecktheit]” (Heidegger 1979, 218, my translation). Although there are some problems with this formulation, Heidegger argues correctly that the accomplished assertion is about an entity (or a range of entities) in a certain mode of its givenness. This “aboutness” indicates a mutual mediation between the practice of asserting and the “object” of this practice. As Heidegger rightly suggests, the object—i.e., the entity asserted—not only allows itself to be asserted but also calls forth the assertion.

To get at an asserted entity’s “givenness,” or, in Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven’s terms, a logical or analytic object function, let me introduce the term “predicative availability.” As both Heidegger and the founders of reformational philosophy recognize, entities are available (Heidegger: at hand) for human practices in many ways. One way is for entities to let us make assertions about them. An entity’s offering itself for our asserting is its predicative availability.

This is only one of the many ways in which entities can engage us. We do not impose predicative availability upon them, nor does our asserting create their identity, even though it can help shape their identity, for better or worse.
3.4.3 Predicative self-disclosure

By itself such “logical objectivity” does not account for assertoric correctness, however. For that, one must explain how an “object’s” predicative availability relates to other ways in which it is available. Dooyeweerd might have this in view when he speaks of a systatic “objective connectedness.” But he muddies the waters by describing this as a *logical* objectivity grasped via conceptual synthesis. The requisite objective connectedness cannot be simply *logical* objectivity. Predicative availability does not suffice to make assertoric correctness possible.

To be correct, an accomplished assertion must discover the asserted entity not only in its predicative availability but also in a manner that accords with other relevant ways in which the asserted entity is available. When, for example, a carpenter correctly asserts to her helper “That hammer is too heavy,” she discovers its relative heaviness in a way that accords with the hammer’s (un)suitability for the task at hand.

I call the capacity of asserted entities to let our assertions be correct “predicative self-disclosure”: “The predicative self-disclosure of an asserted entity lies in its offering itself for predicative practice reliably and in accordance with other ways in which the entity is available. … When the hammer discloses itself as something about which one can accurately claim ‘The hammer is too heavy,’ it offers itself just as that hammer is available for a particular task of carpentry, say, for setting nails” (AT 93).

To be of use to a theory of truth, then, one’s account of logical objectivity must consider how logical object functions relate to nonlogical object functions. This, I submit, Dooyeweerd does not provide, and its absence may help explain his inattention to questions of objectivity when he discusses theoretical truth, for which intermodal synthesis is crucial.
Obviously more needs to be said on the topic of assertoric correctness or propositional truth. Other important factors, in addition to the asserted entity’s predicative availability and self-disclosure, contribute to such correctness, and there are other ways in which our asserting can be off the mark: misspeaking, for example, or giving inappropriate responses to questions, or deliberately lying. Moreover, a speech community can be so mired in ideology and miscommunication that incorrect assertions are not exceptions but the rule. Yet I hope to have sketched in enough to show how to repair the lack of objectivity in Dooyeweerd’s conception of theoretical truth.

3.5 Authentication

Dooyeweerd’s inattention to objectivity occurs in tandem with his not addressing questions of intersubjective validity when he accounts for theoretical truth. The closest he comes to such questions is when he says theoretical insights must be justified before “the forum of the Divine world-order” (NC 2: 577, WW 2: 511). But this is a very peculiar notion of justification, and it begs the question of by whom, to whom, and in which respects justifications are to be offered. Moreover, Dooyeweerd does not distinguish between truth and justification, a topic that has become increasingly important in philosophical truth theory. If he had taken up this topic, he might have recognized the need to account for epistemic intersubjectivity when one proposes a general conception of truth. He might also have noticed that a theory of theoretical truth should account for two different forms of intersubjective validity: intersubjective validity as it pertains to theoretical truth, and intersubjective validity as it pertains to the justification of theoretical truth claims. Because, arguably, an assertion can be justified but incorrect, and it can be correct but not justified, one needs to account for intersubjective validity in both regards.
This Dooyeweerd does not do. Instead he substitutes for such questions an appeal to what I call “authentication.” Dooyeweerd’s phrase for authentication is “standing in the Truth.” By making this substitution, he winds up in the same problems that afflict Heidegger and Adorno (SP 77-106), neither of whom stands where Dooyeweerd stands with respect to the fulness of truth. Yet all three of them also share a crucial insight that has gone missing in much of contemporary truth theory. All three understand that authentication is more comprehensive than a discursive justification of assertions and the like, just as truth is more comprehensive than assertoric correctness or propositional truth. Their challenge, which none successfully addresses, is to account for authentication in such a way that it neither replaces nor ignores discursive justification.

My own conception of truth responds to this challenge in three ways. First, I argue that assertoric correctness is an important mode of truth but not the decisive one. Second, I portray the justification of assertions, on which most contemporary truth theorists focus, as a mode of authentication, but again not the decisive one. Third, I give an account of the connection between truth and authentication—and, by implication, between assertoric correctness and discursive justification—that neither collapses the one into the other nor lets authentication trump truth.

3.5.1 Bearing witness

By “authentication” I mean all of the ways in which people bear witness to truth. By “truth,” in its comprehensive sense, I mean the dynamic correlation already discussed. Given this correlation’s historical character, one can easily imagine its occurring without anyone bearing witness to it. As Karl Marx suggests about history, it can occur behind our backs. Still, it is behind our back that truth then occurs, and we cannot but have a stake in it, whether or not we acknowledge this. If we acknowledge our stake in truth’s unfolding, then we can also bear
witness to it. Our bearing witness becomes an avenue along which truth itself unfolds. In this respect, one could even say that authentication is an extension of truth. Yet our bearing witness to truth is not necessarily true. It is possible, indeed likely, that we sometimes bear false witness, even those who, on Dooyeweerd’s account, claim to be “standing in the Truth.” So authentication is not automatically an extension of truth. Intrinsic to authentication, however, also when it takes the form of discursive justification, is that it claims to be true. In other words, truth and authentication are distinct, even though they have an intimate connection.

What does it mean to “bear witness to truth”? In its fullest sense, to bear witness, to authenticate truth, is to offer testimony concerning specific correlations between societal disclosure and our fidelity to societal principles. We do so as we engage in cultural practices and as we participate in social institutions, and we do so to the extent that these practices and institutions enable us to attest to such correlations. This means, in turn, that authentication is intrinsically intersubjective. It occurs in the company of others and within the societal formation we inhabit. Further, bearing witness to truth is not simply a matter of raising and defending validity claims in a discursive manner, although it does include our engaging in discursive practices. It is practical and multidimensional, and it has an invitational quality.

To bear witness to specific correlations between fidelity and disclosure is to take part in them and, by participating, to invite others to do the same. Social Philosophy after Adorno gives the following example: “If … the correlation of contemporary justice and human flourishing requires the elimination of systemic racism, one bears witness to this correlation by doing what one can, with others, to transform the racist practices and institutions to which one belongs, whether through gestures, policies, or public protests. To bear witness to the truth means to do what truth requires in a social context and with respect to others who co-inhabit that context.
Bearing witness involves the full range of human activities, not only linguistic and discursive but also aesthetic, ethical, political, economic, and the like” (SP 103).

This example suggests that no confessional community, including Christian organizations and the Church universal, automatically “stands in the Truth,” in Dooyeweerd’s terms or, as I prefer, walks and abides in truth and has truth abide in it. Conversely, no confessional community automatically stands outside the truth or, as I prefer, fails to walk and abide in truth or does not have truth abide in it. The struggle to eliminate slavery in Western countries gives ample evidence in both regards: the complicity of Christians in systemic racism, the courageous struggle against it by devout believers such as William Wilberforce and Sojourner Truth, and both complicity and resistance on the part of nonChristians. As Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven recognize, the antitheses between truth and falsehood and between good and evil do not line up neatly with existing confessional, political, economic, or cultural divisions in society. They run through every community and through each of our hearts: “The antithesis runs right through Christian life itself” (Dooyeweerd 2003, 3).

3.5.2 Discursive justification

My account of authentication sheds new light, I believe, on practices of discursive justification. For they, too, are ways in which we bear witness to truth. That means they are ways in which people enact specific correlations between fidelity and disclosure, invitationally, and in specific contexts. Although that fact by itself does not explain how discursive justifications can be intersubjectively valid, it does indicate that justificatory validity is important for more than simply logical or academic reasons. Such importance stems from the unique structure of justification. A discursive justification tries to bear out the purported universality of the validity claims raised in other linguistic practices by appealing to its own purported validity. The validity
of discursive justifications is not a matter of other societal principles such as solidarity and justice. Rather it is matter of logic and rhetoric.

Such an account does not remove justification from the field of authentication, nor does it detach assertoric correctness from comprehensive truth, as if the latter in each case has nothing to do with the former. Instead the role of discursive practices within a multidimensional process of authentication both gives them impetus and makes them important: “Part of invitationally enacting correlations of fidelity and disclosure is to test the reach of the principles at stake and to establish the extent of the circumstances in which correlations are enacted. It makes a difference for the enactment itself whether justice is only for “just us” or also for “others,” whether the flourishing of some comes at the expense of others. It also matters that we have discursive practices and discursively attuned institutions within which deliberation about such differences can occur. For this neither prelinguistic intuitions nor postdiscursive decisions suffice” (SP 104). Occurring within a more comprehensive authentication, discursive practices receive their context from other modes of authentication and make their own unique and important contributions. Like assertions, discursive justifications never have the final word, nor do they transcend truth and authentication.75

3.5.3 Correctness and truth

So too truth, although it does occur as assertoric correctness and also as theoretical truth, is not simply a theoretical concern. As Dooyeweerd recognizes, it is a matter of life and death, and it must be borne out in our lives. Unlike philosophers who consider propositions and assertions to be the “locus” of truth, I, like Heidegger and Dooyeweerd, regard them as only one way in which truth can occur. Making and discussing and debating assertions are only one way in which the correlation between human fidelity and life-giving disclosure is carried out. Yet the
assertoric path is ubiquitous in the practices and institutions of contemporary society. It is not restricted to the arena of science or academic work. Whether in politics or faith, in art or education, we regularly engage in assertoric practices.

Assertoric practices are linked to comprehensive truth in three ways: by virtue of their internal structure, their societal role, and their dependence on other modes of truth. In the first place, assertoric practices involve a definite correlation between fidelity and disclosure, namely, fidelity to the principle of propositional validity, and predicative self-disclosure of that about which we make assertions. The second link lies in the role assertoric correctness plays in the pursuit of other societal principles. If we were unable to make correct assertions about what justice requires, and if we did not care about the principle of propositional validity, we would have difficulty recognizing the extent of injustice and the possibilities for removing it in a complex society. The third link consists in the context and support that other modes of truth provide for the pursuit of assertoric correctness. Assertoric practices primarily occur in nonassertoric contexts, and they presuppose that we are living the truth in nonassertoric ways. To pursue assertoric correctness while continually violating the principle of justice, for example, would eventually undermine the point of making correct assertions. So truth is to be lived, and not simply claimed. Yet making assertions and testing them are vital to the pursuit of truth.

The links I have just sketched are crucial for understanding the character and importance of theoretical truth. Of all the differentiated institutions in modern society, science and, more broadly, the academic enterprise are the institutionalized setting in which questions of assertoric correctness play a leading role. We could call them dedicated sites for the pursuit of propositional validity. Here too fidelity to societal principles must correlate dynamically with a life-giving disclosure of society. If the sciences are dedicated sites for pursuing propositional
validity where truth as a dynamic correlation is to unfold, then that has implications for the nature of science, its vocation in society, and its relationships with other practices and institutions.

With those hints of the larger research project on which I have embarked, I come to the close of my discussion. One question remains. Does my own theoretical stance toward the idea of truth bear witness to truth? More pointedly, given the concerns of reformational philosophy to be attuned to the witness scripture bears to the truth, is my stance toward this idea biblically directed? Like Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven, I hope to bear witness to truth in my thinking about it. Indeed, I hope, as they did, to give testimony to what scripture tells us about truth. Offering my proposals in such hope, I would invite others to judge whether my stance toward the idea of truth is biblically directed. Accordingly I cannot simply declare it to be biblically directed. Yet I do propose that it is not unbiblical to regard other philosophers, for whom the Hebrew and Christian scriptures are not authoritative, as being in the truth philosophically. God’s grace is not confined to self-identified Christians, and the antithesis between truth and falsehood does not stop outside the walls of Zion. To pursue both of these biblical insights simultaneously and without compromise is, I think, the genius of reformational philosophy.
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Steen, Peter (1983), The Structure of Herman Dooyeweerd’s Thought, Wedge, Toronto.


Truth in Reformational Philosophy


Endnotes


2 See especially Hart (1979), which addresses both ontological and epistemological issues pertaining to “truth.”


4 Because *New Critique* is both a translation and a revision of *Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee*, commentators face tricky questions when they interpret Dooyeweerd’s magnum opus. This is especially so of English passages that seem prima facie to translate the Dutch version. Sometimes there are significant differences in meaning between equivalent passages in the two works. One does not always know whether this is due to the quality of the translation or due to a change in Dooyeweerd’s conception. Although I shall note a number of these differences, to give them a complete interpretation would take me too far afield. Where the English version translates an equivalent passage in the Dutch version, I occasionally use square brackets to indicate nuances in Dutch not caught in the English version. I also silently modify translated passages in other ways, usually to render them in more idiomatic English. What Dooyeweerd scholars really need is a thorough, critical edition of NC, one that sorts out the differences between WW and NC.
and makes informed judgments about the nature and source of those differences. In the meantime, a careful reader of Dooyeweerd should use both WW and NC, and not assume that everything in NC is a faithful rendering of his own conception.

5 My summary follows Dooyeweerd’s use of the term “truth,” capitalizing it when it refers to what he calls “absolute” or “transcendent” Truth, and not capitalizing in other uses, even when the text of NC does not consistently follow this pattern. Later, however, when I present my own account of truth, I mark the difference in other ways and do not capitalize “truth” in any of my own usages.

6 Exceptions in my summary of Dooyeweerd’s account occur when “perspectival” is required either to avoid redundancy or to remain faithful to his own formulations.

7 Strangely, the English edition gives the same title to both Volume 2 and Part I of that volume—The General Theory of the Modal Spheres. The original Dutch edition reserves this title for Part I and, more accurately and informatively, titles all of Volume 2 The Functional Meaning-Structure of Temporal Reality and the Problem of Knowledge (De functioneele zin-structuur der tijdelijke werkelijkheid en het probleem der kennis, WW 2: ii).

8 Dooyeweerd’s primary concern here, as in the Prolegomena to Volume 1, is not to explain knowledge in general but rather theoretical knowledge. In this sense his approach differs markedly from Vollenhoven’s discussion of knowledge in the Appendix to his Isagôgê Philosophiae (2005, 107-143). The English version of Dooyeweerd’s text is misleading, however. It renders “kennisprobleem” as “epistemological problem” rather than “the problem of knowledge.” Yet, like most modern philosophers, Dooyeweerd himself continues to distinguish between that which is “epistemic” (of or relating to knowledge) and that which is “epistemological” (having to do with the study or theory of knowledge).
9 NC often hyphenates the terms “inter-modal” and “transcendental-theoretical,” but not always. To be consistent and to conform to contemporary usage, I have dropped the hyphens, also in quoted passages where the hyphens actually occur. Dooyeweerd’s hyphens in “law-side,” “subject-side,” “object-side,” “pre-theoretical” and “world-order” are retained when NC is quoted directly. Otherwise these terms appear without hyphens.

10 I use “logical” as a synonym for Dooyeweerd’s term “analytical,” in order to avoid potential confusions generated by the distinction between “analytical” and “synthetic” judgments that pervades post-Kantian philosophy, despite Willard Quine’s famous attack on this distinction. Dooyeweerd’s original formulation, in my translation, reads as follows: “[L]ogical synthesis… is embedded [ingevoegd] in the cosmic meaning-systasis … as [the] connecting [verbinding] of a logical multiplicity into logical unity. To this subjective analytical synthesis is assigned [toegeordend aan] the objective analytical systasis, in keeping with the logical object-side of reality” (WW 2: 365). A parallel but significantly modified passage occurs on NC 2: 434. The modified passage does not mention the connecting of logical multiplicity into logical unity, and it says the subjective analytical synthesis is “related” (rather than “assigned”) to “the objective systasis of logical characteristics implied in the logical object-side of empirical reality.”

11 In a footnote omitted from NC, Dooyeweerd adds that here he uses the word “disclosure” (ontsluiting) not in his earlier sense of “deepening” (verdieping) but to mean “un-veiling” (ont-hulling). Later I shall suggest that the two senses have a closer connection in Dooyeweerd’s conception than he acknowledges.

12 I leave aside Dooyeweerd’s parallel discussion of “pre-theoretical intuition” and “cosmic self-consciousness.”
Unlike the English version, the Dutch version says the selfhood gains this religious self-awareness “under the transcendental leading of faith [geloof]” (WW 2: 408).

The English version does not capture the animated epistemic character of such experience. Dooyeweerd’s phrase in Dutch—“een enstatisch wetend beleven of in-leven” (WW 2: 410)—is rendered in English as “an enstatic conscious ‘Erleben’” (NC 2: 474).

The English version renders “het wezenlijk zelf-gegevene” with the phrase “the true datum.” I have reverted to “the essentially self-given,” a formulation that reflects the phenomenological influence against which Dooyeweerd later warns (see NC 487-90, WW 2: 422-4). It could be, however, that NC uses the Latin “datum,” sometimes in italics and sometimes not, in order to take distance from an empiricist notion of the mind as a tabula rasa. This is suggested indirectly by a footnote that criticizes Johannes Volkelt for asserting that pure empirical self-certainty is a completely unthought given or datum (een volstrekt denkvrij gegeven). See NC 2: 431-2n1, WW 2: 361-2n1.

Dooyeweerd does not elaborate his notion of the freedom of theoretical intuition, but he mentions it at several strategic places. See NC 2: 474, 478, 483n1; WW 2: 409-10, 413, 418n1.

More generally, as Dooyeweerd states in a passage not found in NC, “all actual knowledge [kennis] … is a knowing [weten] and all knowing … is determined by lived experience [door beleving bepaald]” (WW 2: 411).

Here again discrepancies occur between the Dutch and English version, including the omission of “led by faith” in the English version.

I have modified the translation to conform to contemporary English usage and to incorporate omitted phrases from the Dutch edition. It is noteworthy that Martin Heidegger is the only interpreter of Kant to receive serious attention in this chapter. This probably indicates that
Dooyeweerd recognized significant affinities between Heidegger’s critique of Kant and his own. Dooyeweerd makes several uncharacteristically generous gestures toward Heidegger, at one point describing Heidegger’s *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (1929) as an “extremely valuable” attempt to think through the problems of Kant’s epistemology (NC 2: 525, WW 2: 457). Also, Dooyeweerd’s criticisms of Heidegger often seem forced and contrived, as if he had to insert distance where in fact there is considerable continuity and perhaps even indebtedness.

Although Dooyeweerd does not provide the religious law’s content in this context, it is apparent from other passages that the call to love is what he has in mind. See especially NC 2: 140-63. The parallel passage in WW 2: 94-104 does not give prominence to this emphasis, however. While preparing NC, Dooyeweerd appears to have expanded his treatment of “love” in order to take account of more recent writings in ethics and to make more transparent his disagreements with existential ethics.

Insofar as the religious horizon encompasses all others, the distinction between structure and direction is not so clear in Dooyeweerd as subsequent reformational thinkers, perhaps influenced by H. Evan Runner’s reading of Vollenhoven, sometimes suggest. See, for example, Wolters (2005).

See NC 2: 560, WW 2: 491-2, where Dooyeweerd says each prior horizon—religious, cosmic, temporal, modal, and plastic—encompasses those which follow. Each also determines those which follow, although here he does not explicitly say this about the religious horizon.

This sentence, added in NC and absent in WW, makes religious experience rather rarified. I am not sure whether this was Dooyeweerd’s intent, but the need to fend off potential objections of a Husserlian sort may have pushed him in that direction. The newly added passage and footnote on
the preceding pages (NC 2: 548-9, again not found in WW), which take distance from Husserl’s “transcendental idealism,” give support to such an interpretation.

24 Here Dooyeweerd insists that the modal aspects “cannot be transitory in time,” but the stability of the modal horizon “is not identical with rigidity” (NC 2: 554, WW 2: 484). He does not really bring out the point I have highlighted, namely, that the modal aspects secure a type of experiential continuity.

25 NC adds this phrase here, along with a number of other clarifications and qualifications—cf. WW 2: 488—in keeping with revisions to volume 3 that aim to resist historicism and evolutionism.

26 The remark that concludes Dooyeweerd’s discussion of horizons indicates that he intends his account as an alternative to the debate between metaphysical realists and nominalists in medieval philosophy. Oddly, the English version drops the sentence in which he takes distance from nominalism. See NC 2: 559, WW 2: 491.

27 In this passage Dooyeweerd uses the term “cosmic” rather than “cosmological” self-consciousness because his topic is all of knowledge and truth, not simply theoretical knowledge and truth. I should note that whereas WW puts weten in italics, NC flattens his meaning with the unitalicized phrase “are aware of.”

28 The formulation of this passage in WW undergoes several significant revisions in NC. Perhaps the most striking change is that the phrase “horizon of our experience” (horizon onzer ervaring) becomes “subjective perspective of our experience,” a phrase that makes little sense, so far as I can tell, and that turns a structural transformation into a personal reorientation. Perhaps Dooyeweerd wished to suggest both of these processes occurring simultaneously and could not find an appropriate way to express this. Alternatively, the discrepancy might point back to the
near conflation of “structural” and “subjective” a priori in his account of “the religious root of human existence.” The shift in terminology is consistent in this particular paragraph: toward the end, where WW says the God-given horizon of human experience has been obfuscated (verduisterd) by sin, NC says this has occurred to the “subjective perspective.” Just two paragraphs later, however, NC follows WW in calling the “rebellious thought” of autonomy the primary lie that obfuscates “the horizon of human experience” (NC 2: 563, WW 2: 495).

29 Here I follow the formulation in WW, which is more straightforward. In NC Dooyeweerd speaks of the cleft between “the ‘super-natural truth’ … and the theoretical criterion of ‘natural’ truth” (NC 2: 565-6), indicating by the use of scare quotes that he does not accept the notions of “super-natural” and “natural.”

30 In two paragraphs omitted from NC, Dooyeweerd suggests that his understanding of the relation between faith and reason avoids two mistaken construals of Christian scholarship: either (1) to pass off confessional truth (geloofswaarheid) as theoretical knowledge and thereby to degrade faith to a “stop gap” for scientific inquiry, or (2) to revert to pre-Kantian and rationalistic metaphysics. See WW 2: 497.

31 NC 2: 571-2 drops Dooyeweerd’s acknowledgement at WW 2: 504 that he borrows this terminology from the scriptural phrase “in de Waarheid staande blijven” (“abiding in the truth”). I shall have more to say about this phrase later.

32 The terms in WW 2: 504 are “vastheid, zekerheid, betrouwbaarheid,” translated in NC 2: 571 as “steadfastness, certainty, reliability.” Only the first two of these terms play a role in the subsequent paragraphs, and their role is obscured in the English version. My summary tries to remove some of the obscurity. Dooyeweerd says he has learned these scriptural meanings for truth from Vollenhoven (NC 2: 571, WW 2: 504).
NC renders “overeenstemming” either as “accordance” or as “correspondence.” But Dooyeweerd is not talking about the sort of relation between proposition and fact that correspondence theories of truth emphasize. Rather he has in view an alignment or concurrence or concordance between subject side and law side. Hence I shall always use “accordance” and not “correspondence” where WW uses the term “overeenstemming.”

The entire definition of transcendental truth occurs in italics in Dooyeweerd’s text.

Again, the entire definition of transcendental theoretical truth occurs in italics in Dooyeweerd’s text.

Strictly speaking, and contrary to Dooyeweerd’s own formulation, these are not criteria of transcendental theoretical truth. They are criteria of transcendental theoretical justification. I take up the topic of justification later.

For a lengthier discussion of this principle, see NC 2: 36-49, WW 2: 34-47.

For an elaboration of this principle, see Chapter 1, “The Misinterpretation of Naïve Experience by Immanence-Philosophy,” in NC 3: 3-52, WW 3: 1-32.

Unlike WW, here NC inserts “empirical” before “reality.” I should also note that Dooyeweerd’s metaphor for providing experimental evidence is that of giving testimony in a court of law.

Unlike van Woudenberg (2007, 66-7), I do not think that Jesus’ saying “I am the truth” is an inappropriate point of departure when we address questions of truth theory.

Here I discuss in greater detail the reasons for a previously published judgment that “Dooyeweerd leaves us with a perplexing, internally conflicted notion of religion that nevertheless serves as the pivot to his transcendental critique” (Zuidervaart 2004a, 81).
This formulation follows Vollenhoven’s Trinitarian distinction among three relationships that God sustains with creation: (1) creating and structuring, (2) speaking and word-revealing, and (3) leading or guiding. See his essay “The Unity of Life” (1955) in Vollenhoven (1998).

For insightful comments on the metaphor of hearing and responding as an alternative to the emphasis on seeing in Western epistemology, see Geertsema (1992). For a characterization of religion and all of human existence in terms of call and response, see two essays by James H. Olthuis (1993; 1997).

For a thorough discussion of the issues surrounding Dooyeweerd’s conceptions of religion and transcendence, see Steen (1969); subsequently published as a book (1983). Although Steen (1969) describes Dooyeweerd’s conception as a type of what Vollenhoven calls “cosmogono-cosmological monism, with the theme of priority” (43), he says one could also plausibly regard it as involving a double dualism along the lines of Monarchian cosmological thought (258-9). The former would align Dooyeweerd more closely with Kant in his critical phase; the latter, with an influential phase of Aristotle’s thought. Like James Olthuis, I see striking similarities with the Aristotelian tradition in Dooyeweerd’s conceptions of religion and transcendence. Such historiographic detective work gives one a sense of the problems inherent to a philosopher’s conception. But it does not automatically say why they are problems, nor does it suffice for sorting out valid from invalid claims and insights.

Here I disagree with René van Woudenberg, who claims that Dooyeweerd’s theory of truth “should definitely be counted a form of correspondence theory” (van Woudenberg 2005, 117). Perhaps one reason why van Woudenberg says that he does not know quite what to make of Dooyeweerd’s epistemology is that he tries to measure it according to the standards of a certain version of correspondence theory, which van Woudenberg calls the “standard analysis.” Other
reasons, of course, have to do with the unclarity and gaps in Dooyeweerd’s conception, to which van Woudenberg rightly calls attention.

46 Part I of the Appendix to Vollenhoven (2005, 108-138); hereafter cited as IP, followed by the pagination, not the numbered paragraphs.

47 Dooyeweerd makes his point about linguistic character by saying that human experience would be impossible if it lacked a “symbolical aspect” upon which the social and post-social aspects rest and toward which the pre-symbolical aspects open up. See NC 2: 595, WW 2: 530.

48 Dooyeweerd’s phrase “standing in the Truth” probably comes from the same passage, but a little later. There Jesus responds to the traditionalists who want to claim Abraham as their father and cannot understand how or why the truth can make them free. Jesus says their father is the devil, “a murderer from the beginning” who “does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him” (John 8.44, NRSV). The relevant phrase in the two Dutch translations Dooyeweerd probably used are “is in de waarheid niet staande gebleven” (Statenvertaling) and “staat niet in de waarheid” (Nieuwe Vertaling). Henk Hart, who provided these Dutch references, has reminded me that the Dutch verb “staan” can connote dynamic processes and not simply static positions. Yet Dooyeweerd’s use of “standing in the Truth” definitely misses the more processual connotations of “abiding” and “walking.” Also, it would seem from this passage that standing in the truth depends upon our having the truth abide in us.

49 See, for example, the excerpt from Vollenhoven’s Calvinism and the Reformation of Philosophy (1933), in Vollenhoven (1998, 21-65).

50 I comment on the thetical and transcendental approaches in Zuidervaart (2006).

51 This is a reworking of Seerveld’s modal aesthetic theory. See especially Seerveld (1987). I should add, for those know about technical debates in reformational modal theory, that I do not
distinguish a “nuclear moment” as a moment “alongside” or “in addition to” “retrocipations and anticipations.” A nuclear moment is simply the pervasive meaning of a dimension in all its moments.

52 Although I specify the meaning of these terms so that they pertain to the arts as a realm of aesthetically qualified practices, products, and events, I do not deny that the terms have either analogues in other realms or other meanings in ordinary usage. Moreover, although authenticity, significance, and integrity have a specific meaning when it comes to the arts, they are also relevant for understanding truth in general. I wish to thank James Olthuis for emphasizing the latter point when we discussed a draft of this paper.

53 I have in mind two sets of distinctions, the first among imagination, will, and knowledge, and the second among three self-constituting relations (to experience and existence, to fellow human beings, and to the Origin). On the first distinction, see Dooyeweerd (1942). On the second distinction, see Dooyeweerd (1999, 123-7).

54 I distinguish “non” from “anti” when characterizing general theories of truth. Adorno, for example, has a nonpropositional and a noncorrespondence theory. He allows for there to be nonpropositional truth and for something other than correspondence to be decisive for truth, but he does not reject the role that propositions and correspondence play in the pursuit of truth. An antipropositional theory (e.g., the later Heidegger) would reject this role for propositional truth bearers, and an anticorrespondence theory (e.g., Nelson Goodman) would reject it for correspondence. Like Dooyeweerd’s conception, my general conception of truth is nonpropositional. Arguably it also resembles Dooyeweerd’s conception in being a noncorrespondence conception.
I use the term “conception” rather than “theory” because it will take more detailed investigation and argument over many years to turn my emerging account into an actual theory.


In critical dialogue with Heidegger, Artistic Truth tries to find this entrance by tracing the connections between propositional truth—which few philosophers would deny—and truth in a more comprehensive sense. Instead of repeating that effort here, I take up the topic of propositional truth in the next sections.

“Resourcefulness” is my term for what Bob Goudzwaard calls “stewardship.” For a more detailed account of these three societal principles and their interconnection, see the chapter on globalization in SP 107-131. There “resourcefulness” is glossed as “the principle of carefully stewarding human and nonhuman potentials for the sake of interconnected flourishing” (SP 129).

In Dooyeweerd’s terms, the first two revisions imply that, insofar as modal laws pertain to human life in society, they are always already positivized. Unlike Dooyeweerd, however, I do not distinguish the law from its positivization; in fact I no longer employ the notion of positivization.

Here I gloss the account in Dooyeweerd (2003, 63-110), where the term translated as “opening process” in NC is rendered as “disclosure” (76), when Dooyeweerd mentions a norm for the “disclosure of culture” (cultuurontsluiting).

The notion of flourishing as a telos has affinities with the idea of “shalom” in Wolterstorff (1983), with the proviso that we regard it as already underway and not endlessly deferred.
Wolterstorff criticizes the “Amsterdam School” for neglecting this idea and for making societal structures seem more important than the creatures that fashion and inhabit them.

62 The equivalent passage on WW 2: 323 makes this point with respect to “post-logical” aspects but does not discuss historical facts.

63 Jürgen Moltmann provides an important theological reason why philosophers should not posit an ultimate horizon. As he indicates, a biblical eschatology will distinguish between the future as futurum and as adventus. Futurum is the future we can foresee from within our present history. But adventus is an unforeseeable future. As James Olthuis (2007, 6-8) puts it, adventus is “a future present a coming, we know not when.” It will “come like a thief in the night, discontinuous, surprising.” So the future as adventus is “imminent” but not “immanent.” God promises to make all things new. This means that redemption is “not only a restoration of the original blessing of creation, but also the opening of history to its eschatological fulfillment.” To maintain an openness toward adventus, philosophers do well not to posit an ultimate horizon.

64 See especially Chapters 4 and 5 in Artistic Truth. What follows is a drastic abbreviation of Chapter 4 (“Truth as Disclosure”), AT 77-100.

65 I think it is primarily logical empiricist versions of correspondence theory that Dreyfus (1991, 272) captures in his description of “the traditional theory that understands truth as the correspondence between self-sufficient propositions and uninterpreted facts.”

66 In line with Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven, I distinguish questions of objectivity from questions of intersubjective validity. I take up the first of these here.

67 I believe this is why Dooyeweerd’s account of historical facts seems forced and, implausibly, seems to restrict their conceptualization to “theoretical analysis” (NC 2: 391).
The translation of Vollenhoven’s *Introduction to Philosophy* renders “oordelen” as “statements.” I think “judgments” is preferable, for both historiographic and systematic reasons.

Vollenhoven is very clear about this—see IP 124. Dooyeweerd’s notion of the concept’s intentional content may compromise his critique of what Rorty (1979) calls representationalism.

Noting the absence of an object in Dooyeweerd’s account of theoretical truth, Henk Geertsema (2005, 97-8) claims that the subjective concept “is not directed to the *Gegenstand* as such but to its logical objectification,” which Dooyeweerd leaves out, “as the intermediary through which theoretical thought is able to grasp logically the *Gegenstand*.” One could strengthen Dooyeweerd’s account, Geertsema suggests, by recognizing that “the logical object is intermodal,” so that “the nonlogical *Gegenstand*’ can be “logically objectified and … intended by logical concepts.” Although Geertsema’s proposal contains promising clues, I do not think the logical object is intermodal in the manner required by Dooyeweerd’s “intermodal synthesis”—the central problem he wished to address.

See, for example, Habermas (2003) and van Woudenberg (2007).

One can insist on the distinction between truth and justification without subscribing to what Rene van Woudenberg (2005, 106) calls the “standard analysis” of knowledge (as justified true belief) and of truth, according to which “a proposition is true, if what it says to be the case actually is the case.” Incidentally, van Woudenberg does not mention that a large portion of analytic and postanalytic philosophers reject the so-called standard view, including very prominent ones such as Donald Davidson, Hilary Putnam, and Richard Rorty. For an excellent collection of essays by mostly analytic truth theorists, see Lynch, ed. (2001). Its continental counterpart is Medina and Woods, eds. (2005).
“[Human beings] make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please” (Marx 2000, 329).

Vollenhoven’s ontology is illuminating in this regard. He distinguishes the antithesis between good and evil as a “third determinant” in addition to modality and individuality. See IP 56-62.

Here I am in agreement with, and indebted to, Mekkes (1971, 318), who asks us to remember “not only that thought is only one of the (always menial) functions, but most of all that our act of theoretical thinking, which is among many acts, is carried on just as much as any other in a living way.”

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