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Dooyeweerd's Legacy for Aesthetics: Modal Law Theory

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Aesthetics as a Special Science

Dooyeweerd's legacy for aesthetic theory can be pinpointed by a footnote he added in 1953 to a passage written in 1935. First the passage:

Logic, ethics, and aesthetics are generally considered as being parts of philosophy.* In addition, the concession is made that there must be room for a philosophy of the special sciences and for a general epistemology. But according to the generally held opinion, philosophy and science must remain separate, in order to insure the "objectivity" of the latter. When special sciences operate within their own sphere and employ their own scientific methods, they are to be considered as being independent of philosophy.

Then the footnote:

*I can not agree with this opinion. Only the special *philosophy* of logic, ethics, and aesthetics does have this character. But, here too, philosophy permeates special scientific thought. (NC 1:545-46)

What Dooyeweerd has in mind here is his theory of modal law-structures which, along with his theories of religion and faith, is another chief feature of his thought. Dooyeweerd contests an old-fashioned humanist thesis that a science like mathematics or physics does best on its own, free from philosophical interference. It is not true, says Dooyeweerd: every definite science has taken a philosophical stance on the limits of its field and how its conceptual results relate to other universes of discourse and knowledge. Mathematics is not merely mathematics any more than business is just business. Modern biological science has armed camps of mechanists

and vitalists and holists, and they do philosophical war with one another (NC 1:564-65)—why would they fight if biology is purely biology? Current positivists pretend the science of jurisprudence only deals with facts, but the positivist betrays a covert philosophical view of reality when he introduces jural facts as “theoretical fictions” to be adjudicated, as if only psycho-physical realities are “facts” (NC 1:551-52).

Many thinkers do consider logic and ethics and aesthetics to be branches of philosophy—this is the opening quote from Dooyeweerd above—and presumably subject to philosophical whimsy. But here I disagree, says Dooyeweerd in the footnote. Logic, ethics, and aesthetics as specific disciplines will certainly have philosophical presuppositions; but what is important to realize is that logic and ethics and aesthetics are special sciences, each with its own irreducible terrain to map out, each science with acts and things and structural laws peculiar to its delimitable field. Aesthetics is a special science like economics, linguistics, physics, psychology, or whatever body of analysis that can cohere as a systematic investigation of reality brought into focus by some prime structuring feature (NC 1:565). Aesthetics is not a minor topic in philosophy proper, according to Dooyeweerd, even though that is the way aesthetics has been normally treated in North America. Aesthetics is meant to be a basic science with its own kind of integrity because there is an irreducible order of reality which demands special treatment as aesthetic reality, interwoven with all the other features of the universe.

To be sure, Dooyeweerd did not particularly have in mind the need to give aesthetics its own stamping ground. In volume one of his *New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, he argued that philosophy necessarily has presuppositions born out of one’s religious faith-commitment and, further, that all immanentistic philosophy struggles with the basic antinomy of pitting part of creation as law *dialectically* against another part of creation as subject to the law (cf. also *Twi*, 30-51). Dooyeweerd’s concern in volume two was to develop a theory of functional modal law-structures which would explicate a nondialectical, seamless conception of the cosmic temporal order for creaturely subjects, an idea which he believed the biblical truth of God’s creation generates. Dooyeweerd was intent upon finding a systematic way to achieve a true encompassing understanding of the interrelations of the proliferating special sciences. Within this setting of modal law theory, Dooyeweerd’s thesis—practically no more than a casual assumption—that aesthetics is one of those special sciences was truly insightful.¹

There had been fits and starts historically to identify a special terrain of investigation as "aesthetic." In 1735 Alexander Baumgarten initiated a discipline he called "aesthetics" by translating the age-old idea of Beauty into a concept of "perfection" which, when modifying sensate knowledge, produced poetry, as he saw it. "Aesthetics" then was conceived as a subordinate theory of perfect sensate knowing.² Although Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) began identifying "aesthetic" with sensation too, Kant's later attempt to mark off "aesthetic" as a distinct kind of human activity—"taste judgement"—located its character in the nondescript play of human cognitive faculties which brims with thoughts not able to be captured in words.³ Kant settled on a kind of uniting, favorable feeling of vague purposivity as the peculiar nature of "aesthetic" judgment.⁴ G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) brought the long tradition of reflection on Beauty to a self-consciously sharp focus on art and, in effect, defined aesthetics as "philosophy of [fine] art."⁵ Unfortunately, Hegel set the parameters for most aesthetic theory that followed his contribution.⁶ Aesthetics remained a general theory, whether speculative or aggregative, about matters artistic.

Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) was among the first after Baumgarten and Kant who tried to give both a particular specificity and a scientific rigor to aesthetics as a science next to the other sciences of logic, economics, and ethics, each with its own defined terrain for attention. His formative volume, *Estetica come scienza dell'espressione e linguistica generale* (Aesthetics as science of expression and general linguistics) (1902), remained stuck, however, in an idealism that also elided art phenomena into an identification with (poetic) language.⁷ Max Dessoir (1867-1947) tried to distinguish aesthetics carefully from art theory and to unite the relevant splinter of problems treated by psychology and cultural history and technical theory into a field organized properly by aesthetic categories.⁸ But the *Zeitschrift für Aesthetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* (Journal for aesthetics and general theory of art), which Dessoir initiated and edited (1906-39), remained a conglomeration of specialized studies in *Einfühlung* (empathy), epistemology, Japanese lacquers, the beauty of tragedy, and the like. Thomas Munro, founder of the American Society of Aesthetics (in 1942), wanted "Scientific Method in Aesthetics" (1928) too.⁹ But Munro's positivistic, empiricist bent left the "science" of aesthetics in the department of descriptive data, collections of art facts and experimentally controlled responses to art facts. The encyclopedic *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen* (Philosophy of symbolic forms) (1923-29) by Ernst Cassirer, whose studies

Dooyeweerd often cites,¹⁰ did not treat aesthetics as a separate discipline; but Cassirer does give a perspective in cultural philosophy which seems to be congenial to a roster of varied sciences that do not need to be cut exactly on the "natural science" model.¹¹

Now it was in the time of this ferment about whether aesthetics is a science and a professional discipline of its own or not—of which Dooyeweerd as a nonspecialist in art theory or literary criticism was probably largely unaware—that Dooyeweerd challenged the religion-neutral autonomy of special sciences *and* proposed—*en passant*!—that aesthetics has the philosophical birthright to be granted the status of a special science. Dooyeweerd's legacy for aesthetics is this genial proposal, arising from his modal law theory, that aesthetics has a principle of integration that gives it bona fide limits and an irreducible field within the body of the sciences. Aesthetics is not to be just a subdivision of psychology, of semantics, or of societal theory; aesthetics is not the hobby of straight philosophers who like to use art for examples in their thinking. Aesthetics has its own rightful place and task to perform in the academy of systematic research, interpretation, and theoretical presentation of meaning. One could say, if one had an ounce of humor, that it is fruit of Dooyeweerd's whole philosophical vision that led him kindly to provide the orphan of aesthetics with a genuine home in the encyclopedia of the sciences (cf. James 1:27).¹²

Is the idea of "a special science," with its own kind of filtering analysis of things at large in the universe, a sound idea? Does it make any important difference in knowledge or curriculum whether economic science and political science are kept distinct? Is one's understanding of literature or sculpture harmed if the analytic concern of aesthetics is not differentiated from the analytic concern of linguistics? And what does "encyclopedia of the sciences" have to do with Christian scholarship? A reflective answer to such questions will disclose more deeply the genial insight of Dooyeweerd's legacy for aesthetics. The notion of "special science" can be examined from three vantage points: (1) a history of the problem of encyclopedia; (2) the multisided richness of ordinary human experience; and (3) the biblical perspective and Calvinian-Kuyperian vision directing Dooyeweerd's idea of special science.

Encyclopedia of the Sciences

Dooyeweerd begins his *Encyclopaedie der rechtswetenschap* (Encyclopedia of jurisprudence)¹³ exactly as Kuyper began his *Encyclopaedie der heilige godgeleerdheid* (Encyclopedia of sacred theology)¹⁴—with a review of the concept of "encyclopedia."

Enkuklios paideia (encyclopedia) meant in Athens (400 B.C.) "the normal round of instruction" a freeborn Greek in the polis would undergo. Roman thinkers Vitruvius and Quintilian probably over-read the term to mean *orbis doctrinae*, "the circle of disciplines" (making up the universe of knowledge), because of what Aristotle did. He, without using the term "encyclopedia," had ordered almost all systematic knowledge (*epistēmē*) into physics (including kinetics, biology, psychology, mathematics), the "other" science (on first principles), practical science (including politicology, ethics, economics), and poietics (including rhetoric), with analytics as the propaedeutic, organizing instrument (*organon*). Patristic reflection considered the whole gamut of pagan scientific knowledge to be pieces of *philosophia* on which the new Christian *gnōsis* (knowledge) rested—*theologia*; so *philosophia* became *ancilla theologiae*. Boethius (ca. A.D. 480-524), Casiodorus (ca. A.D. 490-ca. 585), and Isidore of Seville (ca. A.D. 560-636) gave a formulation for the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, musical theory, astronomy) and *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric, logic) which remained in force for centuries as the canon of liberal arts which any educated person would have studied. That pattern was altered slightly only when universities began to form in cities like Bologna, Paris, and Oxford in the 1100s and organized themselves into the four faculties of arts, medicine, law, and theology.

Dooyeweerd's point is that ever since Aristotle's ordering of the sciences, those in the West who busied themselves with general studies loosely followed Aristotle's compendium of knowledge without particularly questioning its teleological rationale. This fact holds true for the great scholastic philosophical theologians writing their *summae* too. Renaissance humanists, however, tried to unshackle particular studies from the Aristotelianized format topped by theology, and the emancipation of scientific studies which Galileo, Harvey, and others actually achieved against the constrictive authority of "the philosopher" was a happy fact by itself, says Dooyeweerd; but the eclectic, polyhistorical philology of literate humanists and the emerging, unrelated bodies of knowledge in astrophysics, calculus, and physiology boded ill for an integrated corpus of the arts and sciences. Francis Bacon's magnum opus, *Instauratio magna* (The great instauration) of which two full parts appeared—*De dignitate et augmentis scientiarum* (On the dignity and advancement of scientific knowledge) (1605, 1623) and *Novum organum scientiarum* (A new instrument of theoretical thought) (1620)—and Reformed thinker Johann Alsted's enormous *Cursus philosophici encyclopedia* (Encyclopedia of the philosophical course of studies) (1620) still tried to

incorporate all knowledge under a refurbished, Aristotelian schema; but the old center no longer held. Denis Diderot and Jean d'Alembert's edited *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une société de gens de lettres* (Encyclopedia, or a reasoned dictionary of the sciences, arts and trades, for men and women of letters) (1751-72) capitulated and honestly arranged the collected knowledge about everything under the sun in an alphabetical, not systematic, order.¹⁵

This matter of "encyclopedia" is a genuinely philosophical problem also afflicting us in our times, says Dooyeweerd. A university seems to cohere today only by virtue of administrative glue. Despite Johann Gottlieb Fichte's *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaften* (Foundations of the entire corpus of sciences) (1794), "a science of science" (or "a theory of theory"), and despite Hegel's *Enzyklopadie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (A compendium of the encyclopedia of the philosophical sciences) (1817) which sought a unified, systematic principle to relate studies in "natural science" and "cultural science," "logic" and "sociology," the acceptance of any overarching, interrelational structure for ordering human knowledge is taken to be uncritically dogmatic. Auguste Comte's *Cours de philosophie positive* (A treatise on positive philosophy) (1830-42) was instrumental in forming the positivist mind that "method" (understood as the accumulation of sociological, positive facts) is to be the up-front concern of a secular thinker who wants to insure unprejudiced meaning in scientific analysis. But, runs the thrust of Dooyeweerd's reflection, because the method of a given science and the method of scientific or philosophical theory as a whole are loaded with cosmological, anthropological, and ontological presuppositions, the problems of defining the method of a science, interrelating the sciences, ascertaining any grounding precedence among the sciences, and identifying principles of taxonomy and origination of newly formed sciences remain unavoidable if one believes knowable reality hangs together somehow and intends to analyze precisely this state of affairs. Dooyeweerd concludes that "encyclopedia" properly means the intrinsically systematic and interrelational coherence of sciences with different, definite identities.

Cigars in God's World of Human Experience

Lest anyone reproach the judgment, says Dooyeweerd, that a basic task of philosophy is the institution of an encyclopedia of the special sciences and a demonstration of how their meaning rests together on a focusing, religious Archimedean point and *Archē* going



beyond the realm of temporal creatureliness (NC 1:545)—lest anyone reproach this judgment as speculatively a priori, says Dooyeweerd, let us simply take a look at ordinary experience.

I walk into a store to buy a box of cigars.¹⁶ If a jurist were watching, as a jurist, he would notice the rights and duties of buyer and seller. An aesthetician will pay attention rather to the style of the activity, the gestures of the figures, perhaps the cut of their clothes and the interior design of the store. An economist will be interested primarily in the price and value of the cigars. A sociologist is concerned especially with the mores of those in the shop, the customs of greetings and politesse, the neighborhood. A linguist might focus on the talk, its slang, correct speech forms, or inflection of dialect. An off-duty psychologist happening in would detect the emotions involved, the buyer's desire for a good smoke and the wish of the seller to please his customer. Although a physicist and mathematician do not usually examine the sale of cigars in their laboratory, such professionals could study the quantitative side of this business transaction, matters of inertia, velocity, size and number; after all, Dooyeweerd's buying cigars also falls into the realm of statistics.

The fact that the simple, concrete act of buying cigars really has such a rainbow of distinct sides to it, of possible interest to quite diverse professionals, is a remarkable given of our creaturely existence, says Dooyeweerd. Such a colorful range of facets holds true

somehow for every act, event, and thing in our lives. But what is even more fascinating is the built-in connection of these various aspects of an act. Suppose the invisible jurist noticed that the price paid by the buyer for this box of choice Havana cigars was a mere fifty cents. The jurist might wonder whether this exchange of goods and money was on the up-and-up, or the distribution of contraband to avoid governmental tax, or a payoff for illegal services. Immediately, every feature of the act is of jural concern to the jurist or lawyer: since the price was commercially not right, was the box of cigars a gift? reward? "protection money"? Was this neighborhood shop a storefront for a fence of smuggled luxury items? Was the wink of the buyer and shopkeeper's tug at his tie a covert sign of criminal agreement? Was the familiar brogue of the buyer and the elaborate style with which the box was wrapped and handed over an act to ward off suspicion that something illegal was happening? The jurist is not concerned with the emotions as such, but with whether and how the feelings of greed or fear or whatever complicate or mitigate the deed of these two persons which is controverting statute no. 1375 of the *Burgerlijk wetboek* (Code of civil law)—was there coercion or collusion? The jurist is interested in the movement of the box from the shopkeeper's shelf to the other person's briefcase not as an example of $F = ma$, but as evidence (secretly photographed by a CIA camera hidden in the ceiling over the counter) of a crime that will stand up in court as Exhibit A.

One could go on and on, about how buying and smoking cigars, whether illicit or legal, also has an aspect of passing interest to a professor of ethics—does the persistent nicotine stain on one's lungs received from smoking cigars constitute a willful (minor) mutilation of one's body and health and is, therefore, unethically destructive to a person? A jurist might want to tie into such reflection by possibly enacting a law forbidding sale of cigars to minors; for the common good, citizens should be old enough to know better before they engage in self-pollution. There is even a side to buying cigars that has affected the history of churches. The fact that Reformed Dutch piety set by Voetius (1588-1676) never banned cigars and *borreltjes* (gin cocktails) along with dancing and cardplaying has led many evangelical communions in North America, who regard all such practices as taboo, to judge the annual gatherings of the *Vereniging voor Calvinistische Wijsbegeerte* (Society for Calvinist Philosophy), for example, where cigar smoke rises so many feet thick above the heads of the members, as a witness to slack faith, maybe even a denial of 1 Corinthians 3:16-17.

The philosophical point Dooyeweerd is making is this: cigars in human life have myriad properties, qualities, and functional aspects (or modes), and all these rich strands of structuring reality are interwoven and hardly noticed by most of us in daily life. This actual richness of acts, events, and things is a creation *a priori*, however, holding for human consciousness, and can be disclosed, in Dooyeweerd's judgment, when specialized interests enter the scene and somebody in the office of jurist or psychologist, statistician, or researcher in linguistics—a theoretical scientist of some sort—looks for matters that particularly fit his or her focus for examination (NC 1:33-34). It is Dooyeweerd's thesis that this complex but unified fabric which structures ordinary experience needs to be recognized as ontically given, needs to be accounted for by philosophical endeavor, and may be accepted with thanks as an enduring hermeneutic for helping one understand happenings in history.

Abraham Kuyper's Principle of Sphere Sovereignty

Dooyeweerd's entrée to this megaproject of theory—encyclopedia of the sciences, investigating the incredible, cohering richness of creatural existence—relates historically to a principle taught by Abraham Kuyper. In founding a university free from the state and free from the church—a Free University!—Kuyper enunciated in 1880 the biblically Christian confession of *souvereiniteit in eigen kring* (literally: A sovereignty for its own sphere, or sphere sovereignty). By this he meant that every circle of formative power in society has an authority proper to its own domain which is to be rightfully exercised by its leaders in direct responsibility to God.¹⁷ Kuyper proclaimed:

Get it? Not one bit of our thought-world is to be separated and hermetically sealed off from the other pieces of our conceptual universe. In fact, there is not to be a fingerprint speck of territory in our whole human life about which the Christ, who is sovereign over everything, is not calling out, "That belongs to me!"¹⁸

Kuyper's dynamic vision of sphere sovereignty under Christ was deeply formative upon Dooyeweerd. There is an extensive letter (15 May 1922) which Dooyeweerd wrote to the Dutch Minister of War, J. J. C. van Dijk, when he applied for the position as director of the Kuyper Institute in The Hague. In it Dooyeweerd, who was working in the Dutch government Department of Labor at the time, analyzed the status quo of Calvinian societal research and then recapitulated two major Kuyperian themes when he announced what his priorities would be if he should get the job:

Up to now we really have only piecemeal studies in the field of a Calvinian view of law and society. This is why the first task should be, it seems to me, to determine the method which will orient all our subsequent investigations. This method cannot be religion-neutral, but should be led by the principles set out so genially in Dr. Kuyper's developed theory of knowledge. . . . Once the method is set, then the primary work will be to subject the problem of "sovereignty"—the *foundational problem* of the whole Calvinian view of law and society—to a deep-going investigation. . . . I also see it as a definite advantage that the practical work in the Kuyper Institute will remain in close contact with theory. One-sided theoretical work can petrify into dried out abstraction if it misses contact with the pulse of life.¹⁹

Dooyeweerd's first article (1923) in the Kuyper Institute's popular journal dealt with the Calvinian principle of "a sovereignty for its own sphere" as the basic principle for statecraft.²⁰ This leading thought on the limited, responsible authority integral to a community in society—academic community, business community, family, church, state, or whatever—and the nonhierarchical interrelation proper to all kinds of communities within the whole of society was becoming a heuristic, methodological norm for Dooyeweerd's probing investigations.

If one picks up a problem in a faulty way—if you faultily overreach from one universe of discourse and focus [*gezichtsveld*] into treating a different one with a view foreign to it, you are going to get confusion, or often worse, a kind of special pleading for one's own hobbyhorse [*beginselfruiterij*].²¹

It was this germinal, Kuyperian idea of "a sovereignty for its own sphere," with its Calvinian ancestry,²² that lay behind Dooyeweerd's imaginative formulation of a modal law theory.

Dooyeweerd very self-critically and gratefully acknowledges his debt to Kuyper, especially since Dooyeweerd was accused of threatening to bury the Reformational tradition with the first edition of his *De wijsbegeerte der wetsidee* (literally: A philosophy of the idea of law) published in 1935.²³ Kuyper in his Stone Lectures of 1898 at Princeton University, wrote Dooyeweerd in 1939, leaves behind the traditional scholastic dichotomies that sometimes hinder his theoretical work and presents a powerfully biblical, Calvinian witness to God the Creator's sovereignty and God's varied ordinances for creation. Kuyper had written:

Everything that has been created was, in its creation, furnished by God with an unchangeable law of its existence. And because God has fully ordained such laws and ordinances for all of life,

therefore the Calvinist demands that all life be consecrated to His service, in strict obedience. . . . Wherever man may stand, whatever he may do, to whatever he may apply his hand, in agriculture, in commerce, and in industry, or his mind, in the world of art, and science, he is, in whatsoever it may be, constantly standing before the face of his God, he is employed in the service of his God, he has strictly to obey his God, and above all, he has to aim at the glory of his God.²⁴

Anybody, says Dooyeweerd,

who has no more than even a half-baked acquaintance with the theory of modal law-spheres in the *Wijsbegeerte der wetsidee* will have to admit that the modal law-sphere theory is nothing but an inside, philosophically thinking-through and working-out of Kuyper's deeply religious and fully biblical conception of law-ordinance—the *Wijsbegeerte der wetsidee* explicates Kuyper's vision into a modal law-sphere theory as it makes its scientific-theoretical investigation into the structure of reality.²⁵

All you need to do, writes Dooyeweerd, is read Kuyper's chapter on "Calvinism and Art" from his *Lectures on Calvinism* (1898):

Our intellectual, ethical, religious, and aesthetic life each commands a sphere of its own. These spheres run parallel and do not allow the derivation of one from the other. It is the central emotion, the central impulse, and the central animation, in the mystical root of our being, which seeks to reveal itself to the outer world in this fourfold ramification. . . . If, however, it be asked how there can arise a unity of conception embracing these four domains, it constantly appears that in the finite this unity is only found at that point where it springs from the fountain of the Infinite. There is no unity in your thinking save by a well-ordered philosophical system, and there is no system of philosophy which does not ascend to the issues of the Infinite. . . . No unity in the revelation of art is conceivable, except by the art-inspiration of an Eternal Beautiful, which flows from the fountain of the Infinite. Hence no characteristic all-embracing art-style can arise except as a consequence of the peculiar impulse from the Infinite that operates in our inmost being. And since this is the very privilege of Religion, over intellect, morality and art, that she alone effects the communion with the Infinite, in our self-consciousness, the call for a secular, all-embracing art-style, independent of any religious principle, is simply absurd.²⁶

What immediately strikes a person reading this, says Dooyeweerd,

is the pregnant thesis about the religious unity of the God-given law in its Source and central fulness of meaning. The idea of law-ordinance [*wetsidee*] runs quite parallel here with the conception

of the human heart as the religious concentration point of all the temporal functions of its existence. So what follows from this [unity-in-diversity] is the mutual "sovereignty for its own sphere," the mutual, modal irreducibility of the diverse law-spheres expressly designated by name here in Kuyper.²⁷

In this fertile conception of a Creator-ordained, providential world-order with temporally interwoven, mutually irreducible spheres of activity, Kuyper already had essentially the makings of a modal law-sphere theory. It was unfortunately a dichotomistic anthropology (of substantialized spirit and come-along body) and remnants of Logos-speculation, says Dooyeweerd, which hampered Kuyper from deepening the idea of "a sovereignty for its own sphere" into an encyclopedic theory of modal law-spheres. The Society for Calvinist Philosophy is trying to build, reformingly, on Kuyper's foundational vision.²⁸

The Nature of Christian Theoretical Activity

Dooyeweerd's connection with Kuyper and also with Calvin is made all the more clear when one realizes that the originating spark for these three figures was the fact that they had a common ear for the biblical revelation concerning the *kinds* of creatures God made, subject to God's will for their natures. The witness of Genesis 1 that the Lord made creatures after their kind, the eminent truth of Psalms 19, 119, 147, 148, and many more that God decreed laws for things, "an ordinance which the creatures do not overstep" (Ps. 148:6; my translation), and the New Testament truth that Christ's body is to be a unity of quite diverse tasks in life following the Lord's rule (Rom. 12, 1 Cor. 12): all this cumulative, biblically revealed truth moves one steeped in the Reformational, Calvinian tradition to respond with the confession and to catch the leading idea of God's protective, gracious, providing order for everything under the sun.

Occasionally, Dooyeweerd will explicitly cite the Scripture running behind the thoughts that direct his theoretical analysis, such as the truth of Psalm 139 lying behind the idea of "providential worldplan, which has its integral origin in the Sovereign Will of the Creator" (NC 1:174). But normally Dooyeweerd is not explicit: the basic scriptural *truth* dimension is present implicitly within the Christian philosophical *idea* that is shaping the conceptual *theory* which he is gradually assembling by way of the empirical analysis of the states of affairs he finds. It is my own judgment that this threefold distinction—truth, idea, theory—is a crucial one for rightly understanding the nature of the Christian scholarship that Dooyeweerd is at-

tempting, and for grasping the tentative yet deadly serious spirit infusing his *theory* of modal law-spheres.²⁹ Dooyeweerd writes:

To get one's thinking set by the true *a priori*, the first condition of all is to have the selfhooded one who is thinking *stand in* the Truth by a *hearted* acceptance of God's revelation. God's revelation enters our horizon of temporal existence only by way of our faith-functioning, which trusts fully in the *reliability* of God's Word. God is the Origin and Source of all Truth. Christ, as the complete revelation of God, is the full meaning of Truth. . . . So "standing in the Truth" directs also our subjective insight into the temporal horizon of our existence. (WdW 2:504; my translation)³⁰

Dooyeweerd says this as he debates with the metaphysics of Thomas Aquinas (NC 1:179-85) because it lacks, in his judgment, a radically biblical rootage and integrality. What he means is: I believe the truth of Holy Scripture—that the Lord's creation cursed by sin is being redeemed through Jesus Christ along with those men, women, and children brought into the communion of his body by the Holy Spirit; I believe this truth is a real, convicting dynamic ("central ground-motive") which will bring "inner reformation of the theoretical vision of temporal reality" (NC 1:173, 176). In Dooyeweerd's words:

The whole of my book is meant to give support to my fundamental thesis: it is precisely the perspectival structure of truth that grants surety that the Christian truth-idea *can* and *should* permeate scientific-theoretical thinking, root and branch. This idea of a genuinely *Christian* exercise of science and theory is utterly different from presenting an edifying faith-testimony that leaves the intrinsic practice of scientific-theoretical investigation really untouched. (WdW 2:505; my translation)³¹

The theory of modal law-spheres is not Bible, Dooyeweerd is saying, but it is *Christian* theory, not just the theory of a Christian. The theory of modal law-spheres is meant to be conceptual *theory* (fallibly human, amendable, secondary reflection on experiential givens) which is infused by a holy sense of the central *truth* revealed by God in Jesus Christ and published in Scripture, and thereby led by *ideas* which are faith-formed translations of the truth and which as such bode wisdom for our theoretical, approximating knowledge of creaturely reality. For example,

whoever denies "a sovereignty for its own sphere" of the societal communal relationships existing outside the church institution will—unless he or she accepts the organized hierarchical authority of the Roman catholic church communion—necessarily fall into a sectarianism that knows no bounds.³²

Or, if some thinker attempts to reduce one mode of meaning to another modal law-sphere,

it must be distinctly understood that the abundance of meaning of creation is diminished by this subjective reduction. And perhaps without realizing what this procedure implies, one puts some temporal aspect of reality in the place of the religious fulness of meaning in Christ. (*NC* 2:36)

And Dooyeweerd could have added, quoting Kuyper, one might miss understanding

that art is no fringe that is attached to the garment, and no amusement that is added to life, but a most serious power in our present existence³³

This position on intrinsically Christian scholarship has been the core offense of Dooyeweerd to secular thinkers, but especially to many Christians who have been uncritical of the embedded categorial framework which schools their own analysis and judgments. Often such Christians have defensively attacked Dooyeweerd for not being biblically purebred in his philosophy. Dooyeweerd counters with a moving confession of the need to repudiate self-satisfaction on the part of Christians who confront secular thought (*NC* 1:viii). Sin obfuscates insight again and again, and non-Christians have uncovered all kinds of things in God's world (*NC* 2:572); my critique of uncritical philosophical reflection and especially of synthetic Christian thinking, which compromises the wisdom which students and God's people need, says Dooyeweerd, is sharp because I am pleading with myself (*NC* 1:viii).

But Dooyeweerd's scandalous thesis remains, and it is a mark of his genius: we can be blessed to work at and break through to "an inner reformation of philosophy" (*NC* 1:ix), even a Christian logic theory—why not?—God willing, if we think faithfully, reformingly together, over generations (*NC* 2:464-65).³⁴ It can become sheer vanity to reduce angels to an academic problem; but it is a redemptive ministry to think through real problems which face everybody and to construct theories which may orient human consciousness in the way of shalom. The theory of modal law-spheres is a candidate Dooyeweerd puts forward as an analysis breaking the bread of life for thought. The theory of modal law-spheres is not presented as manna dropping straight out of heaven. But it is wholesome bread despite its impurities, and all interested Christian philosophers need to improve on its ingredients so that the Holy Spirit can multiply it to feed thousands of thinking students.

Modal Law-Sphere Theory

It is not easy to make a simple statement of Dooyeweerd's modal law-sphere theory because he conceives systematic philosophy to be a web of mutually inseparably cohering themes. For example, simultaneously with the theory of the functional modes of existence as law-spheres, Dooyeweerd treats the theory of typical individuality structures and communal bonds holding for things. And these he explores with an awareness that one's transcendental categorial framework is determined by religious commitment, which is accompanied by an anthropological understanding that there is a central point of selfhood showing up in men and women who are irrevocably seeking ontic anchorage (NC 1:541-42). The intent of this essay, however, is not to repeat in outline all these theories, including the theory of modal law-spheres that has been introduced many times before,³⁵ but to focus on how Dooyeweerd's theory of irreducible modal law-spheres presents a correction, challenge, and promise of blessing to the history of reflection on aesthetic realities.

For the sake of making a genuine legacy live for us, we do well to consider briefly: (1) a relevant historical tie-in with Nicolai Hartmann, (2) the particular, reformational philosophical features central to Dooyeweerd's position, and (3) a methodological problem in the modal law-sphere theory which can either unsettle or happily instigate ongoing reformation of this Christian theory in our generation.

Nicolai Hartmann's Theory of Strata of Being

There is abundant evidence in the literature that this Christian theory of modal law-spheres is indeed a reformation of historical scholarship. One only need take a central dialogue of Plato, for example, the *Politeia* (Republic), to notice a developed theory on the different parts of the human soul. According to this Platonic dialogue, the *logistikon* (purely rational) and the *epithumētikon* (driving-desiring) parts are structurally separate from each other as well as from a third, intermediate part known as the *thumoeides* (gutsy spirited). Each sector of soul activity has its respective *aretē* (excellence or perfected power, virtue)—wisdom, courage, temperance—and each has its corresponding, ranking counterpart level of status in society—philosophic guardians, polis fighters (read “army”), the workers and tradespeople. In Plato's vision of human soul and society, the upper crust and the underdog portions of society,

mirroring the microcosm of every soul, are simply the different, more or less coordinated ways things are set up, depending on *dikē* (justice).³⁶

Aristotle's position on different facets of soul intersects with a commitment to an entelechaic bonding of matter (*hylē*) with superimposing form (*morphē*). The result, at least in *De Anima* (About the soul),³⁷ is a graduated, interlocked partitioning of the *threptikē kai phytikē* (growing-feeding) plant-soul formation of (*apsychon*) body, which plant-soul in turn can be formed by *aisthētikē kai orektikē* (sensing-longing) animal-soul formation, which may in turn be incorporated and activated by *nous pathētikos* (a mental capacity) which can provide human composition to divine, contemplative theorizing.³⁸ Late Aristotle's strata of the physical, the vital, the sensitive, and the noetic present the strictly delineated and structurally differentiated ways of being certain things are, and, unlike Plato, Aristotle's conception views the hierarchy of ontic levels as purposefully interconnected. The higher layer depends upon the lower layer of being for its ability to be active, but the higher stratum of being is in principle independent for its character from the lower, more elemental kind of being.³⁹

Such aporetic relations of diverse, autonomous substances and meshed connection, comparable to the schemata of Plato and Aristotle, carry on in various formats throughout the history of philosophy. Whether it be the several-in-one kingdom (*hypostases*) of Plotinus (A.D. 205-70) arranged in a circuit of processing (*proodos*) and recurring (*epistrophē*),⁴⁰ or the logically speculative four divisions of *physis* (natural order) by John the Scot of Ireland (ca. A.D. 810-88) in *De divisione naturae* (On the division of nature),⁴¹ theo-ontological cosmologies were formulated by thinkers who believed systematic completion was a requirement for a mature philosophy. When the cosmological problematics assumed a more epistemological focus, similar theories on how reality is structured continued. The monadological *harmonie préétablie* (preestablished harmony) of G. W. Leibniz (1646-1716) conceived a plenum of infinitesimally discernible force-centers which ranged by differential calculus from mechanical energy through grades of organic force, *l'appétit* (desire), *le sentiment* (feeling), memory, on to *l'esprit* (apperception) which harbors an abstracting think-ability operating by the laws of noncontradiction and sufficient reason.⁴² Immanuel Kant's (1724-1804) *speculum mentis* (map of the mind) discerned *Empfindung* (sensation), *Rührung* (desire), *Lust* (pleasure), *Anschauungsform* (viewing-form), *Einbildungskraft* (imaging ability), *Verstand* (conceptual

understanding), *Urteilkraft* (judgment-ability), and *Vernunft* (moral reasoning)—a veritable encyclopedia of ways human consciousness is busy, even though the principle of their teleological unity is one of uncertain locus and character.⁴³ But philosophical analysis seems by nature to be compelled to relate synthetically whatever it isolates for identification.

All these old-fashioned cosmological ontologies suffer, however, says Nicolai Hartmann (1882-1950), from the methodological mistake of the thinkers' supposedly intuiting the final substantial essence of things and then from this universal a priori deducing the metaphysical structures of the universe.⁴⁴ Even Kant's transcendental, housecleaning critique of a priori speculation presumed to get the basic ontological categories from an examination of the principles of our subjective, reasoning consciousness. But that's a mistake, says Hartmann, because knowledge goes beyond human consciousness; knowledge banks on the object which is other than consciousness, and it is the sure detection of such real objects by a scientifically schooled consciousness (not a phenomenologically naive one) that will provide critical, nonspeculative ontological categories.⁴⁵ Earlier philosophers also touched on what one may call the strata of being (*Seins-schichten*) which actual objects disclose, but those thinkers hardly ever dealt with the strata with a critical, conscious sense of the discrete, statutory, determining character (*Gesetzlichkeit*) of the strata.⁴⁶ And the "old" philosophers tended to err either with materialist (upward) or a teleologist, monistic (downward) oversimplification. What we need, says Hartmann, is a "New Critique" and "new ways of ontology" that will be objectively valid.⁴⁷

Since, as the first essay in this volume pointed out, Hartmann's new ontology on the stratified structure of the world and Dooyeweerd's theory of modal law-spheres show certain similarities, it is instructive to note key features of Hartmann's conception and to compare them with Dooyeweerd's.⁴⁸

In forging a new concept of reality, says Hartmann, we need to reconceive the pure mode of being of the world structures and processes in terms of contextual *Realwirklichkeit* (actual reality) and circumstantial *Realmöglichkeit* (real possibility); that is, we need to let go of concepts of "entelechy" and "essential possibility" in order to face the being of becoming, to realize that becoming is a real form of being. Our philosophical task is to ascertain the kind of different forms becoming takes "according to the rungs or strata of the real" occurrence. We also do well to realize that time and individuality are more fundamental categories of true reality than "space" and "matter."⁴⁹

The real world has a ladder of being, says Hartmann, whose four major rungs are the inorganic, the organic, the animal-psychic, and the supraindividual cultural (*Geistigen*)—with perhaps a few others, like the historical, which are substantially different—and each as a stratum with boundaries has a categorial homogeneity. There is also a hierarchy of particular, actual structures like inanimate things, organisms, animals, and humans, which the strata cut across. Only the human, society, and the historical process, however, embrace all four strata of being, which are ordered in such a way that the under layers of tiered reality are always included in the upper strata, but not the reverse.⁵⁰ There is also a whole raft of paired categories, such as unity and multiplicity, concord and discord, form and material, inner and outer, identity and difference, generality and individuality, and many more, which pervade all strata but take on different character according to the stratum. Reality is such that categories found in a substratum may recur in an upper stratum, but not the reverse. Categories novel to upper strata depend upon categories from lower strata, and the more elemental categories are stronger because they are not dependent upon the upper ones. However, the autonomous novelty a category from an upper stratum enjoys guarantees its complete freedom: “freedom in dependence—there is no contradiction”; “freedom . . . in superiority over something else.”⁵¹

Whether it be Nicolai Hartmann, whom Dooyeweerd was reading in the 1920s, along with Husserl, Heidegger, Max Scheler, Rickert, and others, or whether it be the whole history of Western philosophy, the point is that every thinker with systematic grit has tried to account for kinds of order that asked for human attention in our one given reality. Nicolai Hartmann faults others for “monistic” conflations and is prepared himself to “not scruple simply to accept the Cartesian dichotomy of the world into *cogitatio* [cognition] and *extensio* [extension] . . . a categorial difference of regions.”⁵² Every philosopher finally makes his or her peace with some theory at odds with others, even though most thinkers would affirm with Hartmann:

Phenomena do not let themselves be altered. A theory can only stand up if it accords with the phenomena. If the theory is in opposition to phenomena, then it is wrong.⁵³

Or, as Dooyeweerd puts it, probing more deeply:

Structural states of affairs, as soon as they are discovered, force themselves upon everybody, and it does not make sense to deny them. It is the common task of all philosophic schools and trends to account for them in a philosophic way, that is to say in the light of a transcendental ground-Idea. They must learn from one

another, even from fundamental mistakes made in the theoretical interpretations of the laws and the structural states of affairs founded in the temporal order of our cosmos. (NC 1:116-17)

Nobody has a corner on infallibility.

Reformational Features of Dooyeweerd's Theory

But, then, how does Dooyeweerd's theory compare with the involved strata ontology of Nicolai Hartmann? Let us note certain features of Dooyeweerd's theory that indicate his reforming direction.

First, in Dooyeweerd's book, creaturely being is veritably meaning (NC 1:97 and 2:31). So the different ontic ways things are, the modes of meaning, present the different ordered-durational ways of existing which encompass whatever concretely exists. These modal aspects of existent things are their creaturely defining moments of cosmic temporality. God's timing for creaturely things provides the warp and woof of both modal law (= time-order) and modal functioning durance (= factual time-duration) which indissolubly circumsfuse everything (NC 1:24 and 2:3-4, 8).

Second, as far as the actual, enduring and changing, subjective functioning of things goes and the ongoing alteration of things, when something is taken as an object of certain specified activity by another creature, Dooyeweerd posits that these modes of meaning show both a mutual irreducibility and a veritably isotopic interpenetration of each other. Just as sunlight refracted by a prism shows up in a spectrum of brightly diverse colors, which are irreducible to each other yet glow through one another and really cohere as white light, so the different prime modes of meaning which constitute the functioning of things are a seamless mesh of enduring becoming and begoing (NC 1:101-2). "Color me rainbow," says every sweet pea flower, chip of quartz, family of turtles, and middle-aged man, not to speak of cigars. And the nucleus, so to speak, of every modal aspect of the factual temporal continuance making up things is iridescent with all the other ways of meaning. Sometimes the other analogical functional moments well up supportively ("retroicipatory") within its coloring fabric, other times they glint and reach for a mutational enrichment ("anticipatory") (NC 2:75-76; *Twi*, 7-11).⁵⁴ But no matter whether the mesh of ways a thing endures existentially gives evidence of a richly reinforced or a fairly impoverished functional matrix of meaning, all the various modes of meaning which creaturely things are will show an interwoven whole.

Third, and most important, from Dooyeweerd's position, is the thesis about the law side to these colorful modes of meaning which

constitute and hold for things. The modal laws have authority and give good, single, multisplendored direction for every creaturely thing because modal laws are prismatic variations of God's covenanting Word which says, "Love me above all, respect and build up your neighbor as yourself, and take care of all the creatures I have entrusted you people with until I come back to perfect my rule of shalom" (see *Twi*, 8, 122-23). The multiple zones of meaning which creaturely things are, are all together the gift of God's timing (= "cosmic time"). God's gracious, good, ongoing temporal structuring of things for them is God's holy, creative will in operation. So every creature, indelibly stamped by the rainbow of God's will for its very temporal existence, is called upon to respond, after its kind, to its multifaceted, yet single-spoken, cosmonomic (= providential, ordinance-related, enduring) reality (*NC* 1:16, 101-2 and 2:74).

Fourth, God's Word for creatures—"praise! love! care! forever and ever"—became fully revealed in Jesus Christ, continues Dooyeweerd, referring to Ephesians 1:3-10 and Hebrews 1:1-4 (*NC* 2:563). So, as a matter of concrete fact—and here we necessarily step towards matters beyond but linked to the theory of modal law-spheres—both human experience and the meaning of every non-human creaturely thing entrusted to human ministry is brought together and reaches historically its God-intended meaning in Christ (*NC* 2:30). Just as human selfhood focuses referentially all one's diverse, concrete acts as diaconal obedience to the Lord or as exercises in vanity, so Christ's body relates and roots men and women, individual members of humankind, in the way of God-service and gives even those who spurn communion of the saints their grounds for meaning anything at all (*NC* 1:10-12, 97 and 2:418, 473-74; *Twi*, 120-21, 123-25).⁵⁵

These four features of Dooyeweerd's theory are enough to demonstrate how a Christian reformation sets Dooyeweerd's theory of modal law-spheres off from Nicolai Hartmann and the received tradition of Western cosmology and metaphysics. The centuries-old philosophical witness to "chain of Being" is unequivocally rejected (*NC* 1:123 and 3:74), and the meaning of creaturehood—existing only by the living Word of God, the *ru'ah* (breath, spirit) of God's mouth (Ps. 33:6-9)⁵⁶—is captured conceptually and thought through with the almost Heideggerian formula, "Things must not be, but mean." Also, the constant jostle in philosophical theories which pit the undeniable varieties of ways things are against one another, nominating transcendent features (like moral rationality) or picking scapegoats for our earthly troubles (like physical desire), is basically

undone and overcome by the insightful recognition that *all* creaturely ways are good and are set to be a concert of integrally relative functions. Dooyeweerd's prism-refracted colors is a telling image in contrast to Nicolai Hartmann's "rungs of a ladder." Theoretical puzzles about the complexity of our creaturely glory remain, but Dooyeweerd's theory undercuts both a blindness to important differences and the imposition of a competitive hierarchy of priorities (NC 2:49-51, 76).⁵⁷

An altogether singular idea, in my judgment, which marks the theory of modal law-spheres in its Christian wisdom drawn from a Reformed tradition is the pivotal thought that the distinguishable, cosmic goings-on at large are to be understood as the gentle law of the Lord God (cf. NC 1:515-25). Both the "natural law" of perennial philosophy and the secularized philosophical assumption that "what is given, is just given—make heads and tails out of it" miss the radicality of God's gift in how anything structurally is. Dooyeweerd's theory relates the doings of us humans, including all our knowing, directly to the Lord's presence in our mundane existence. Once we discern that the law of noncontradiction (to be formulated, unlike Aristotle's canon, to admit of change)⁵⁸ is God's blessing for our acts of analysis, and once we discover that the law of syntactical clarity is God's blessing for our discourse, that is, once we realize that the creational laws we may uncover hold the Lord's direction for our creaturely well-being, then we will have made a philosophical start in outwitting the traditions of disbelief and hubris which entangle so many concepts of "human transcendence," "bare facts," and a host of skeptical *-isms*. There is redeeming humility and liberating knowledge in the proposition that human experience, including knowing God and one's self inhabiting the world, is "restricted and relativized *by* (but not at all *to*) our temporal cosmic existence" (NC 2:561). That's why, concludes Dooyeweerd:

Christ, as the fulness of God's Revelation, *came into the flesh*; and for this reason also the Divine Word-revelation came to us in the temporal garb of human language [= the Scriptures]. (NC 2:561)

It is because of this confession of the compelling lordship of Jesus Christ and the necessity of scripturally directed learning which surrounds and undergirds the theory of modal law-spheres that I am led to think that Dooyeweerd and his English translators failed when they rendered "*Wijsbegeerte der wetsidee*" as "Philosophy of the cosmonomic *Idea*" (NC 1:93-96; italics mine). If there is any one matter central to this whole Christian philosophical endeavor, it is the rejection of Kantian and neo-Kantian rationalistic idealism which

allows a person to rest his or her conceptual burden in theoretical ideas (NC 1:96-99 and 2:187-88). Cosmological theory, epistemology, conception of the sciences, and much more, are indeed expressive of the core constellation of ideas which serve as a thinker's philosophically committed categorial framework. But the scandal of Dooyeweerd's philosophy—its dangerous, confrontational, and exciting thesis—is that this philosophical theory witnesses within theorizing to the truth of Jesus Christ as the alpha and omega of thinking and the only guarantee for the very meaning of things at large, and appeals in its theory of modal law-spheres to the truth of the Word of God visible in creation to which the Scriptures leads one whose heart has been opened. A more revealing English name for *De wijsbegeerte der wetsidee* (literally: A philosophy of the idea of law) might be "A philosophy of cosmonomic structure as the Lord God's Word" or, for short, "A philosophy of God's structuring Word."⁵⁹

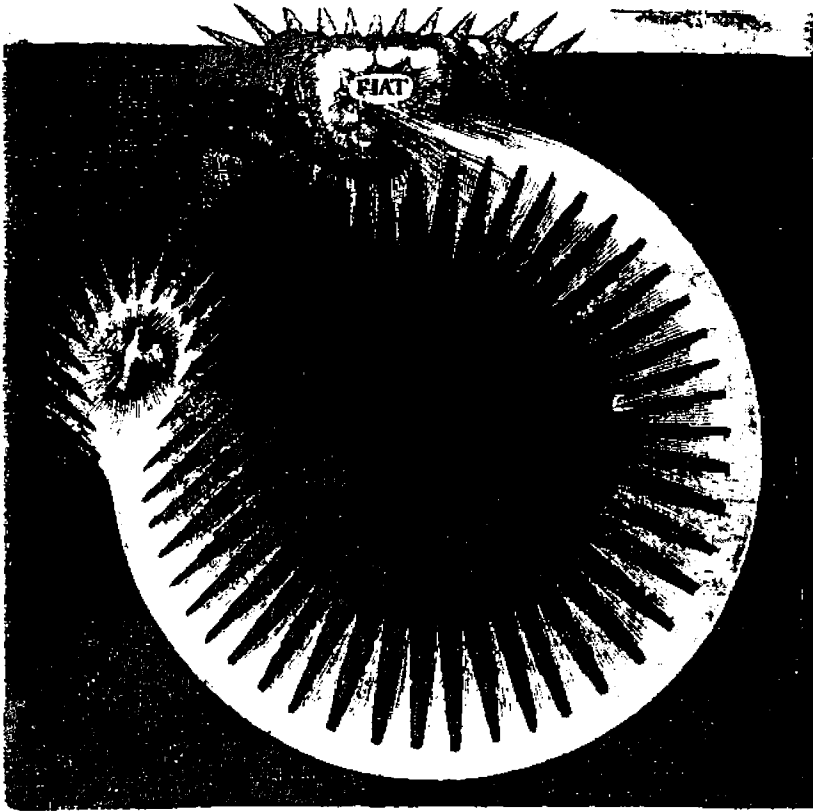
A Methodological Problem

Let there be no mistake: Dooyeweerd clearly affirms that his theory of modal law-spheres is a historically unfinished theory that is not infallible. Dooyeweerd writes:

In fact the system of the law-spheres designed by us can never lay claim to material completion. A more penetrating examination may at any time bring new modal aspects of reality to the light not yet perceived before. And the discovery of new law-spheres will always require a revision and further development of our modal analyses. (NC 2:556)⁶⁰

At the same time, Dooyeweerd maintains that when a philosophic thinker stands in the truth of God revealed in Jesus Christ, that thinker's analyses, first, will continue to witness to the horizon of modal law-spheres which has "a constant determining character" for all the changing concrete facts extant and, second, will be freed from absolutizing prejudices which hinder the necessary a priori insight into the modal horizon enabling one to identify the limits of the special sciences (NC 2:556, 563, 572, 574). So there is a methodological problem: how does one fallibly discern what are truly the (modal) ways things are in God's created world?

Dooyeweerd develops his method for discerning the specific structure of a given modal law-aspect of a thing in polemic with Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) on *epochē* (bracketing) (NC 2:485-90) and with Max Scheler (1874-1928) on truth (NC 2:583-98). He probably wants to dissociate his own method of "insight" from their positions because he is aware that he does take his cue from phenomenology



*This is not how the theory of modal law-spheres came into being
[Robert Fludd, Microcosmi Historia, 1619]*

(NC 1:v).⁶¹ Dooyeweerd proposes to begin empirically with a scrupulously accurate, “unbiased” analysis, bracketing or suspending “all specific philosophical interpretation,” of a modal nucleus of meaning, pointing out the nonoriginal character of analogical moments within that particular mode of meaning (NC 2:72, 74, 77). Such an attempt seems curiously like Husserl’s demand to suspend all subjective activity except one’s pure, cognitive act of *Wesensschau* (intuiting essence) to describe the *eidos* (structure) of phenomena. Not so, says Dooyeweerd. Husserl intends to black out ordinary experience and let a transcendental Kantian ego dictate absolutely what is essentially and permanently there (NC 2:489, 584). By contrast, Dooyeweerd’s approach is to open himself up fully to the complex

reality able to be experienced, investigate any precise moment of meaning in its most reduced, restricted state, and then tentatively formulate what "can be grasped only in an immediate intuition and never apart from its structural context of analogies" (NC 2:117, 129).

It may be granted that Dooyeweerd's intention is different from that of Husserl (NC 2:73-74, 468 n. 1) in that Dooyeweerd is intent upon acclaiming the relativity and enmeshment of any prime aspect of reality and its independence from human consciousness; but Dooyeweerd's final court of appeal for discernment of a modal meaning-nucleus is *my insight* provided by "theoretical intuition" (NC 2:478-79), a very close analytic relative of Husserl's *Wesensschau* (NC 2:480, 483-84). Dooyeweerd provides elaborate criteria for double-checking and refining one's "grasp" or "limiting concept" of a given modal aspect (NC 1:69 and 2:486).⁶² But since a person's scientifically deepened insight is Dooyeweerd's ultimate criterion, there is not much room for dispute on the findings.

This methodological problem of ascertaining the various irreducible ways creatures exist is unavoidable I think. The difficulty is similar to the bind people experience when they waver between prescriptive definitions and makeshift empiricist approximations when trying to determine the nature of something; how does one fix and support what is fundamentally a basic choice about a nonanalytic affair? Besides, Dooyeweerd as a Christian thinker is consciously both thetical and self-critical; so he tends to be both certain and tentative (cf. NC 2:598 n. 1). Again, in my judgment such a state of affairs is normal and needs to be recognized as inescapable whenever foundational philosophical matters are up for human decision. The fact that massive conceptual implications follow from such "intuited" decisions points up the responsibility of philosophical leadership.⁶³

Theory of Aesthetics

It is Dooyeweerd's considered judgment that "*harmony* in its original sense" is the nucleus of the aesthetic aspect of reality and the typifying, object-functional qualification of artworks (NC 2:128 and 3:117). Dooyeweerd uses the traditional term of "beauty," in the same breath, to describe the aesthetic object-function of "nature" (NC 2:139 and 3:114, 140). So it is very understandable that Hans Rookmaaker, learning from Dooyeweerd, popularized the idea that "beautiful harmony" (*de schone harmonie*) is the core concept for the nucleus of aesthetic order in the world.⁶⁴ Dooyeweerd's exposition of "harmony" as the aesthetic mode of meaning is tied most tightly to features of "unity in multiplicity" and "nothing to excess" which are,

in his thought, the mathematical and economic analogies within the aesthetic structure of meaning (NC 2:128, 347).

In fact, I think it would be fair to say that Dooyeweerd's idea of "harmony" is exegeted almost entirely in terms of frugality, sobriety, and simplicity, which he says the classicist aesthetics of Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux (1636-1711) rediscovered and posited but rigidified because it was guided by the humanistic ideal of science (NC 2:346-48).⁶⁵ Dooyeweerd's correct polemic against a romantic idealist belief in artistic genius which admits of no laws for individual aesthetic subjectivity (NC 2:128) is balanced by his critique of the classicist doctrine which finds the limits of art in linguistic and logical economy (NC 2:348). But Dooyeweerd's selection of Praxiteles' sculpture of Hermes for analysis of the nature and production of an artwork (NC 3:109-28) hints at the preference toward which his theory of "harmony" leans. Dooyeweerd's "harmony" is in line with the long, classical history of "beauty."

Plato, under the influence of Pythagoras, said the beautiful was marked by a whole integrality of working parts fitting together (*prepe*; cf. Aristotle's *taxis*). However, this property of "design," as I understand it, is more appropriately regarded as a matter of enriched form than as that which peculiarly identifies what is "aesthetic." Augustine and many others considered the beautiful to be a matter of intermeshing form (*partium congruentia*), to which Aquinas added the note of "brilliance" (*claritas*). But even the quality of brilliance *quae visa placet* (which when seen delights), as I understand it, is better taken as the recognition of a quality corresponding to an aesthetically deepened feeling,⁶⁶ not as that which grasps a primary, irreducible "aesthetic" state of affairs.

Often the idea of "beauty" followed Plotinian theology and became a pancosmic order (*ordo, perfectio*) with intimations of transcendence. Dooyeweerd resolutely cuts off all such theological speculation around "beauty." In doing so, he offers a genuine reformation of even Abraham Kuyper, who still uncritically cited Anton Raphael Mengs (1728-79), Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-68), and Friedrich Wilhelm von Schelling (1775-1854) to back up his thought that Greek classical art revealed the divine ordinances for the beautiful and that art is the service of geniuses inspired by God to lead us up the scale of creational being to the ideal world.⁶⁷

Dooyeweerd's "beauty" and "harmony," at its best, is closer to Plato's conception of beauty as *symmetria* (measured proportionality) and *haplotēs* (simple unity), genuinely kinetic and arithmetical analogies within aesthetic structure, as I understand them.

Dooyeweerd's idea of "harmony" does not identify what is nuclearly aesthetic at all, but is an analogical concept denoting aesthetic proportionality or eurythmy. Proportionality, properly speaking, is originally a matter of weighted balance or regular rhythm, that is, a property of mathematical calculus, indeed present as a side of all creaturely reality. Dooyeweerd's designation of *mēden agan* (not too much) as a sobering economic analogy within the aesthetic is also a mistaken naming of this same mathematical feature. Aesthetic economy, in my own judgment, is better conceived as a matter of "novelty" than as a matter of frugality or of logical simplicity reminiscent of Occam's razor.

It is so that Dooyeweerd's specific thoughts on aesthetic reality are underdeveloped, and his undefined concept of "harmony" resonates loosely with the major tradition of Western thought on a nondescript "beauty." Such a decidedly general "beauty" doctrine actually militates against the irreducible specificity of "aesthetic" reality which Dooyeweerd's genial theory of modal law-spheres demands.

One might mention a couple other tenets of Dooyeweerd's thought relevant to aesthetic theory which, like his concept of harmony, are concepts he picked up from elsewhere and left critically unreformed.

As one example: "Imagination" for Dooyeweerd is only a sensory function of psychic activity that can produce phantasms of merely intentional objectivity (NC 2:425-26 and 3:115). According to Dooyeweerd's scheme, the aesthetic "conception" of the artist's productive fantasy is lodged in such sensory phantasms before the fancied intentional object is represented in a real, sensible thing like a painting on canvas or a marble sculpture (NC 3:113-16, 119-20). Although such a cumbersome description of artistic activity heads off both a copy-of-natural-object idea of artworks and a subjectivistic expressionism,⁶⁸ Dooyeweerd's analysis remains partial to the neo-idealistic notion of artistic production in which media are secondary to one's artistic activity.⁶⁹ Also, despite the important thesis that the "technical formative function" founds every bona fide artwork (NC 3:121-23, 125), Dooyeweerd lacks the concept of a *constructed image* that is neither a "sensory phantasm" nor a product of aesthetic fantasy. Much more clarity enters analysis on the formation of artworks when we distinguish retinal-images, nonsensory image-constructs, and bona fide aesthetic fictions.⁷⁰

A second example: Dooyeweerd clearly differentiates analytic, lingual, and aesthetic ways of meaning among others (NC 2:224-25).

He describes the nuclear moment of the lingual aspect in terms of "symbolic signification," that is, the understanding of signs (NC 2:222). So for Dooyeweerd "symbol" is synonymous with "sign" in the sense that *x* stands arbitrarily and conventionally for *y*. He goes on to refer to an "abstract symbol" as that which "belongs to a rational system of signs" (NC 2:381). He can do this probably because he assumes that language rests on a logical sublayer.

A problem with this terminology and conception is that Dooyeweerd has opted against a tradition congenial to aesthetic theory which has reserved "symbolic" meaning precisely for that which is semantically and conceptually elusive. For example, Kant's conception of "symbol" as that which occasions much thought (yet is noncognitive) but which cannot be adequately pressed into either a definite concept or made intelligible by language⁷¹ has led, in spite of the romantic idolatry it generated, to much fruitful awareness of "symbolic knowing activity." We may refer to the thought in aesthetics of Ernst Cassirer, Susanne K. Langer, Hans Georg Gadamer, and Paul Ricoeur.⁷² "Symbol" in Dooyeweerd's setup becomes unserviceable for designating anything with "surplus meaning." His identification of symbol with sign is closer to the standard of G. W. Leibniz, Charles S. Peirce, and others who have telescoped semantic and analytic functioning into one another and leave aesthetic interests curiously on a sideline.⁷³

Concluding Comment: Prospects of the Legacy for Aesthetics

Dooyeweerd's living legacy for aesthetic theory lies in the systematic opening his philosophical framework makes for aesthetics as a special science, rather than in any of his specific analyses of beauty, artistic production, or a period of art. Dooyeweerd's general theory of modal law-spheres presents a format that saves aesthetics from elision into semiotics, sociology of art, metacriticism, or dismemberment. The theory of modal law-spheres introduces a whole set of categories, such as "aesthetic law," "relative aesthetic meaning" in a society filled with other related meanings, "kinds of art with enduring tasks," which frees aesthetic theory for a whole range of explorations not usually associated with it as a discipline.

Dooyeweerd's awareness of "aesthetic" subjectivity and "aesthetic" acts as rich matters of primary "naive experience," basic to "artistic" activity as a more complicated kind of human subjectivity (NC 3:114), also opens up a whole vein of creaturely phenomena for analysis that has been left practically unexplored within aesthetics: the numerous depth dimensions of aesthetic activity such

as play, fancy, adventure, entertainment, and festivity, for example, as well as taste.⁷⁴

Dooyeweerd's theory of analogical aesthetic moments within other kinds of human activity prompts one to develop aesthetic theory in close proximity with other sciences since it is proposed that studies in empathy, probability, recreation, diplomacy, liturgy, among others, may be relevant for systematic aesthetic theory, although such phenomena properly belong first of all to psychology, logic, sociology, political science, and theology.

The prospects of Dooyeweerd's legacy for aesthetic theory are good, provided thinkers do not try to refine Dooyeweerd's actual, specific results and scholastically tie up the loose analytic ends.⁷⁵ Instead, thinkers should probe beyond his initial fragments in theory of aesthetics and concentrate upon pursuing some of his specific insights and generating new ones within the integrated, complex encyclopedia of knowledge he has fashioned. Many of Dooyeweerd's insightful, unfinished thoughts on aesthetic matters are worthy of specialized discussion, for example, on the relation of scores, performances, and artworks (NC 3:110) or on the intricate difference between encapsulated art ("bound art") and art-as-such ("free art") (NC 3:138-40).

My own intuition as to the nucleus of an irreducible aesthetic aspect of reality, backed up by scrutiny of various phenomena such as art, style, and imagining things, leads me to pose "allusivity" ("nuancefulness") as the core concept.⁷⁶ Dooyeweerd's notion of "[beautiful] harmony" then becomes simply an elementary mathematical analogue within the structural reality of original "allusivity." I am also convinced that Dooyeweerd's placement of aesthetic structure in the order of modal complexity needs reworking since aesthetic affairs are much more fundamental an underground in human experience than Dooyeweerd seems to admit.⁷⁷

And so one could begin to spend one's inheritance from Dooyeweerd. As long as one is willing to explore the foundations of modal aesthetic theory in the same diaconal and reforming spirit which Dooyeweerd's philosophy breathes, branching out with research into the encyclopedia of the arts,⁷⁸ the complexities of hermeneutics,⁷⁹ and the important problems of discerning and charting art historical development,⁸⁰ I think the gift Dooyeweerd has made to aesthetic theory almost *en passant* could indeed become a genuine blessing for those who need creational order and redemptive direction for their reflection on this vital but often neglected area of praise, joy, and caring in God's world.

Notes to Chapter 3

1. D. H. T. Vollenhoven, who was closely allied with Dooyeweerd in the formation of the philosophical community associated with the Free University of Amsterdam, also posited the irreducible nature of aesthetic reality and legitimated aesthetics as a special science; see his *Isagoogé philosophiae* (1943) (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit Uitgave Filosofisch Instituut, 1967), 23-24. The thought may have been stimulated by Wilhelm Windelband's comments in "Normen und Naturgesetze" (1882) in *Präludien* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1907), 291-92. See NC 2:239-41.
2. Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus* (1735), par. 9, "Oratio sensitiva perfecta est POEMA . . ."; par. 115, "Philosophia poetica est per no. 9 scientia ad perfectionem dirigens orationem sensitivam." Cf. *Aesthetica* (1750), par. 1, 14.
3. See Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781), A21-22; altered in second edition (1787), B35-36. See also Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790), par. 20, 44-45, 49. For commentary see Calvin G. Seerveld, *Rainbows for the Fallen World: Aesthetic Life and Artistic Task* (Toronto: Tuppence, 1980), 115.
4. See Lambert Zuidervaart, "Kant's Critique of Beauty and Taste: Explorations into a Philosophical Aesthetics" (M. Phil. thesis, Institute for Christian Studies, 1975), 143-73.
5. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik*, ed. Friedrich Bassenga, edition of 1842 Hotho publication (Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1955), 1:13.
6. See Karel Kuypers, *Kants Kunsttheorie und die Einheit der Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1972), 157-58.
7. Benedetto Croce, "Filosofia del linguaggio e filosofia dell'arte sono la stessa cosa," in *Estetica come scienza dell'espressione e linguistica generale* (Bari: Guis. Laterza & Figli, [1902] 1950), 156. See especially chapter 18, "Conclusione: Identità di linguistica ed estetica." Cf. Calvin G. Seerveld, *Benedetto Croce's Earlier Aesthetic Theories and Literary Criticism* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1958), 95-97.
8. Max Dessoir, *Aesthetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* (Stuttgart: Verlag von Ferdinand Enke, 1906), xi-xii.
9. Thomas Munro, "Scientific Method in Aesthetics," in *Toward Science in Aesthetics* (New York: Liberal Arts, 1956), 3-150; in same volume see also "Aesthetics as a Science: Its Development in Europe and America" (1950).
10. See index on Cassirer, NC 4:24. Dooyeweerd criticizes Cassirer, however, for being controlled by the "science ideal" in Cassirer's analysis of the development of the "Enlightenment" (e.g., NC 2:348f. n. 2).
11. Later Cassirer seems to gravitate toward a centering on art, almost as if artistic "symbolic form" activity typifies human nature more wholesomely

than any other feature of human action. See Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture* [1944] (New York: Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1953), 41-44. See the papers of 1942-43 on "Language and Art" published posthumously in *Symbol, Myth, and Culture*, ed. D. P. Verene (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 145-95. Cassirer's penetrating study *Zur Logik der Kulturwissenschaft* (Göteborg: Wettergren & Kerbers, 1942) deepens Dilthey's attempt to recognize not only the difference between "natural sciences" and the "humanities" but also the equal legitimacy of studies in both areas as "science." Dooyeweerd's distinction between "pre-logical aspects" and "normative law-spheres" (NC 2:49, 118, 156 n. 2, 335-36) struggles with the same problem and echoes, I think, albeit critically, the matter as it was formulated and left unresolved by Rickert and Windelband who contrasted the areas of *Sollen* and *Sein*. For Dooyeweerd's critique see "Het juridisch causaliteitsprobleem in het licht der wetsidee," *Anti-revolutionaire Staatskunde* 2 (1928): 21-121.

12. See Calvin G. Seerveld, *A Turnabout in Aesthetics to Understanding* (Toronto: Institute for Christian Studies, 1974), 6-10.

13. Herman Dooyeweerd, *Encyclopaedie der rechtswetenschap* (Amsterdam: Free University of Amsterdam, Student Edition, (1946-68). This encyclopedia consists of several volumes of bound mimeographed materials from lectures Dooyeweerd gave at the Free University. They were issued as syllabi in various editions and arrangements from at least 1946 until 1968, although some parts came from the early thirties.

14. Abraham Kuyper, *Encyclopaedie der heilige godgeleerdheid* (1894) (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1908), 1:1-45. This three-volume work was partially translated by J. Hendrik de Vries in 1898 and published with an introduction by Benjamin B. Warfield under the changed title, *Principles of Sacred Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963).

15. See Dooyeweerd, *Encyclopaedie der rechtswetenschap*. See also NC 1:528-41. It is significant that in the most recent *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967) the extensive article on "Encyclopedia" (6:170-99), written by William Gerber, treats the term in the sense of a philosophical *dictionary*. Gerber remarks that in Johann H. Alsted's *Compendium lexici philosophici* "most of the material in it is not arranged alphabetically and is therefore difficult to follow" (6:1-6)!

16. Dooyeweerd is well-known among his students for this example which he repeated with relish every year in the introductory seminar on jurisprudence at the Free University of Amsterdam. See Herman Dooyeweerd, *Encyclopaedie der rechtswetenschap*.

17. See Albert M. Wolters's essay in this volume for the connection between Kuyper and Dooyeweerd on sphere sovereignty. Kuyper introduced the Dutch phrase in the dedicatory speech by that name which he gave at the opening of the Free University, *Souvereiniteit in eigen kring* (Amsterdam: J. H. Kruyt, 1880). These words have become a pregnant formulation of the insight and a veritable battle cry ever since. Following the principle of "a sovereignty for its

own sphere," Christians of the Reformed tradition have been led to exercise communion of the saints outside the church door by establishing Christian schools, Christian colleges, a Christian political party (Anti-revolutionaire Partij in the Netherlands, founded in 1879), a Christian labor union (Christian Labour Association of Canada, founded in 1952), Christian art workshop community and gallery (Patmos in Chicago and Toronto, 1969-79), and similar organizations.

18. Abraham Kuyper, *Souvereiniteit in eigen kring*, 35 (my translation).

19. From a note appended to the letter of application Dooyeweerd sent to J. J. C. van Dijk (15 May 1922), quoted in G. Puchinger, "Dr. Herman Dooyeweerd," in *Perspectief: Feestbundel van de jongeren bij het vijfentwintigjarig bestaan van de Vereniging voor Calvinistische Wijsbegeerte* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1961), 49-51 (my translation). Kuyper, in the 1880 speech, emphasized that science (*wetenschap*) was also a life-sphere (*levenskring*): "Wetenschap die wijs maakt. Uit het leven voor het leven. Eindigende in aanbidding van den alleenwijzen God!" (Scientific theory that makes one wise. That comes out of life and is for our life. That ends in being worship of the one and only all-wise God!) Kuyper, *Souvereiniteit in eigen kring*, 23.

20. Cited by Puchinger, "Dr. Herman Dooyeweerd," 53.

21. Quoted by Puchinger, "Dr. Herman Dooyeweerd," 99 (my translation).

22. See John Calvin, *Institutio Christianae religionis* (Institutes of the Christian Religion), IV.20.4. Martin Luther also broke with the idea of ecclesiastical hegemony which had held big thinkers like Thomas Aquinas captive. But Luther's break with ecclesiastical hegemony did not have the positive appreciation for taking saintly command of "secular" political affairs which Calvin showed. This fact is the reason why Dooyeweerd believed that a sense of Christian philosophy would probably need to rise out of a Calvinian milieu (NC 1:511-23).

23. See Valentine Hepp, *Dreigende deformatie* (Threatening deformation), 4 vols. (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1936-37). It is ostensibly Hepp whom Dooyeweerd is answering in his article on "Kuyper's Wetenschapsleer" [1936], *Phil. Ref.* 4 (1939): 193-94; cf. 198 n. 2. Already in 1937 Dooyeweerd witnessed to the spiritual roots of his philosophical thinking in "Wat de wijsbegeerte der wets-idee aan Dr. Kuyper te danken heeft" *Reformatie* (29 September 1937). The most important, sustained, historical diagnosis in English of Dooyeweerd's roots is the careful, genial work by William Young, *Towards a Reformed Philosophy: The Development of a Protestant Philosophy in Dutch Calvinistic Thought Since the Time of Abraham Kuyper* (Franeker: Wever, 1952).

24. Abraham Kuyper, "Calvinism and Religion," in *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 53.

25. Herman Dooyeweerd, "Kuyper's wetenschapsleer," *Phil. Ref.* 4 (1939): 217 (my translation).

26. Abraham Kuyper, "Calvinism and Art," in *Lectures on Calvinism*, 150-51. It seems possible to me that Kuyper's idea here that religion "alone ef-

fects the communion with the Infinite, in our self-consciousness" is a source of the problem in Dooyeweerd about the so-called "supra-temporal heart." See the essays by James H. Olthuis and C. T. McIntire in this volume. See also John Vander Stelt's analysis of certain unreformed elements in Kuyper's pattern of thought, "Kuyper's Semi-mystical Conception," *Phil. Ref.* 38 (1973): 182-87.

27. Dooyeweerd, "Kuyper's wetenschapsleer," 218 (my translation). Granted Dooyeweerd's apparent wobble on the "supra-temporality" of human selfhood, I still think there are good grounds for reading Dooyeweerd to mean here that the selfhooded subjectivity of the human is not lost in our many modal functions and is not dissolved in the unstoppable, continuous duration of time. Dooyeweerd means to say that the selfhooded subjectivity of every human is the gateway of religious unity humans have for knowing and living in Christ, directed toward the Sovereign Creator. The religious root ("den tijd transcendeerenden religieuzen wortel," *WdW* 1:471) in which selfhooded unity shares is *Christ*. Christ—and not the human heart!—is the Archimedean point, contrary to what Peter J. Steen seems to suggest in *The Structure of Herman Dooyeweerd's Thought* (Toronto: Wedge, 1983), 269. See *NC* 1:506 and 2:465, 473-74. See also note 55 below.

28. Dooyeweerd, "Kuyper's wetenschapsleer," 195, 225-27. Kuyper fell back into a fairly traditional and rough division of the sciences into five faculties: theology, law, medicine, natural science, and philological science (which included philosophy and history with linguistics). Cf. Kuyper, *Encyclopaedie der heilige godgeleerdheid* 2:132-61 (cited in note 14 above). Also *NC* 1:vi.

29. The sharp formulation of this threefold distinction is my own, but the matter is firmly present in Dooyeweerd's thought throughout. Dooyeweerd holds that a *transcendental idea* (a "limiting concept") serves as the real hypothesis for philosophical thought, that is, for the refined, *theoretical concepts* which articulate perceived distinctions. The *transcendental ideas* which limit philosophical thought also point toward *transcendent presupposita* (which for a Christian are biblically revealed *truth*, such as "the divine temporal world-order" and "Christ as the root and fulness of meaning of the cosmos"; cf. *NC* 1:506-8). *NC* 1:23-25, 86-88 and 2:44-46, 187-88. It is this very threefold distinction that makes clear how Dooyeweerd sets his own biblically directed theory off from Kantian and subsequent idealist theory that rests its "critique" of theoretical thought in *Ideas* (cf. esp. *NC* 1:88).

30. I have translated the passage from the Dutch, honoring the italicized emphases of the original as well as making certain refinements. Cf. *NC* 2:572.

31. This passage, too, has been translated by me. Cf. *NC* 2:572.

32. Herman Dooyeweerd, "De strijd om het Schriftuurlijk karakter van de wijsbegeerte der wetidee," *Mededelingen van de Vereniging voor Calvinistische Wijsbegeerte*, July 1950:3-6 (my translation). This article tried to explain why Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven could not follow K. Schilder's movement to withdraw from the Gereformeerde Kerk of the Netherlands.

33. Kuyper, "Calvinism and Art," in *Lectures on Calvinism*, 151 (cited in note 24 above).

34. D. H. T. Vollenhoven made a start on theory of Christian logic in his *Logos en ratio* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1926), *De noodzakelijkheid eener christelijke logica* (Amsterdam: H. J. Paris, 1932), and *Hoofdpijnen der logica* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1948). N. T. van der Merwe carried the exploration further in his "Op weg na 'n christelike logika: 'n studie van enkele vraagstukke in die logika met besondere aandag aan D. H. Th. Vollenhoven se visie van 'n christelike logika" (Master's thesis, Potchefstroom University, 1958). Marinus Dirk Stafleu has impressively done something similar in the supposedly untouchable field of physics: *Time and Again: A Systematic Analysis of the Foundations of Physics* (Toronto: Wedge, 1980).

35. In 1935 Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven provisionally distinguished the following modal ways creaturely subjects were constituted: numerical, spatial, physical, organic, psychical, analytical, historical, lingual, social, economical, aesthetical, jural, ethical, pistic. See Vollenhoven, *Isagoogé philosophiae*, 23-24 (cited in note 1 above), where Vollenhoven adds: "One finds there is a rich variety in this first determination of being creaturely [*bepaaldheid*]. And this wealth of variety is probably still richer than we have seen so far." See notes 60 and 77 below.

Subsequent digests of the theory of modal law-spheres appear in various grades of completeness, clarity, and misrepresentation. Here follows a list of references: J. M. Spier, *Een inleiding tot de wijsbegeerte der wetsidee* [1939], trans. David H. Freeman, *An Introduction to Christian Philosophy* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1954), 31-122; K. J. Popma, *Inleiding in de wijsbegeerte* (Kampen: H. Snijder, 1951), 14-35; K. J. Popma, *Cursus ter inleiding in de wijsbegeerte der wetsidee* (Kampen: Vanden Berg, n.d.), 6-19; Michael Fr. J. Marlet, *Grundlinien der Calvinistischen "Philosophie der Gesetzesidee" als Christlicher Transzendentalphilosophie* (Munich: Karl Zink Verlag, 1954), 48-52; Anna Louize Conradie, *The Neo-Calvinistic Concept of Philosophy: A Study in the Problem of Philosophic Communication* (Natal: Natal University Press, 1960), 99-100; Vincent Brümmer, *Transcendental Criticism and Christian Philosophy: A Presentation and Evaluation of Herman Dooyeweerd's "Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea"* (Franeker: Wever, 1961), 50-56; Ronald H. Nash, *Dooyeweerd and the Amsterdam Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 39, 57; L. Kalsbeek, *De wijsbegeerte der wetsidee: Proeve van een christelijke filosofie* [1970], ed. and trans. Bernard Zylstra and Josina Zylstra, *Contours of a Christian Philosophy: An Introduction to Herman Dooyeweerd's Thought* (Toronto: Wedge, 1975), 76-118; Hendrik J. van Eikema Hommes, *Inleiding tot de wijsbegeerte van Herman Dooyeweerd* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), 33-73. I am afraid that Spier's early oversimplified popularization, and the inordinate amount of minute attention given to the "modal spheres" separated from their religious import often hypostatized into "modalities," misdirected the reception of Dooyeweerd's thought in the English-speaking world.

36. Plato, *Politeia*, 571a1-592b6.
37. Vollenhoven would note carefully how early Aristotle in *Physica* I, V-VI, showed a thoroughgoing interactionary monist conception of the ontic layers of reality. The Aristotle of *De Anima*, however, holds to a peculiarly inter-capsulated form of dualism which Vollenhoven calls Monarchian dualism.
38. Aristotle, *De Anima*, 411b4-414a27, 429a9-429b4, 430a18-26.
39. For example, Aristotle, *De Anima*, 427b6-21. Cf. Nicolai Hartmann, "Die Anfänge des Schichtungsgedankens in der Alten Philosophie" (1943), in *Kleinere Schriften* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1957), 2:181. Cf. also Henry I. Venema, "Aristotle and Imagination" (Seminar paper, Institute for Christian Studies, 1984), 3-11.
40. Plotinus, *Enneades* 1.6.6, 9; 5.5.3-6; 5.8.11-13.
41. See Hartmann, "Die Anfänge des Schichtungsgedankens," 2:167.
42. For example, G. W. Leibniz, *Monadologie* (ca. 1714), par. 14-15, 19, 26-30.
43. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781), A94-130 and chapter ix in the second introduction to Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790).
44. Nicolai Hartmann, *Neue Wege der Ontologie* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1949), 8-9, 43-44. See the comments on Dooyeweerd and Hartmann in Wolters's essay in this volume.
45. Hartmann, *Neue Wege*, 13-15, 17-18, 42-43, 107.
46. Hartmann, "Die Anfänge des Schichtungsgedankens," 2:165, 179 (cited in note 39 above).
47. Hartmann, *Neue Wege*, 44-48.
48. See the comments on Hartmann and Dooyeweerd in Wolters's essay. Dooyeweerd maintains (NC 2:51 n. 3) that his theory of modal law-spheres, articulated in *Wijsbegeerte der wetsidee* (1935-36), antedated Nicolai Hartmann's *Schichtentheorie*. That would be so if Hartmann's *Schichtenlehre* dated from *Der Aufbau der realen Welt, Grundlegung der allgemeinen Kategorienlehre* (1940) and from *Möglichkeit und Wirklichkeit* (1938) where Hartmann developed the ideas. But the *Schichtenlehre* is found already in *Grundzüge einer Metaphysik der Erkenntnis* (1921), and Dooyeweerd quotes this early Hartmann work in *Wijsbegeerte der wetsidee* (NC 4:87) and already in his inaugural address, *De Beteekenis der wetsidee* (1926). Dooyeweerd's early plea to Calvinists in Holland not to join the neo-Kantian way of doing philosophy was also early; cf. "Calvinisme contra Neo-Kantianisme," in *Tijdschrift voor wijsbegeerte* 20 (1926): 29-74. Because Dooyeweerd's scholarly orientation was biblically directed, in the neighborhood of Kuyper, and because Kuyper's philosophical problematics is quite close to that of Nicolai Hartmann (cf. John Vander Stelt, "Kuyper's Semi-mystical Conception," cited in note 27 above), Dooyeweerd may have found his renovation of whatever he learned from Hartmann to be but a tributary flowing into his own river. I use Hartmann's *Neue Wege der Ontologie* (1949) to draw the parallels since this

text is a concise, mature formulation of Hartmann's extensive, ontological explorations.

49. Hartmann, *Neue Wege*, 22-25.

50. Hartmann, *Neue Wege*, 30, 35-41, 84-85.

51. Hartmann, *Neue Wege*, 53-54, 60-61, 69-72, 75-76, 102-4. The English translation by Reinhard C. Kuhn (*New Ways of Ontology* [Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1953], 95), renders page 76 of *Neue Wege* as follows:

Reflecting now that the "being stronger" of the lower categories as stated by the fundamental categorical law denotes ontological pre-eminence and superiority just as much as the "being higher" of the weaker categories, we come to see that stratification involves an interdigitation of two types of ontological pre-eminence and two types of superiority. They are echeloned according to the same order but in opposite directions. The ontological superiority of strength decreases with the corresponding gain in height. So the two types of superiority move, so to speak, along separate lines, co-existing with one another in the same order of ranks without disrupting its unity. The lower categories are superior only in strength. In structure, they are poorer. They leave it entirely undecided whether or not something is above them and even more so *what* is to be above them. They are indifferent toward everything higher. They do not produce it nor do they hinder it. But if something is above them, they support it. For it can exist only by resting upon them.

52. Hartmann, *Neue Wege*, 36, 45-47.

53. Hartmann, *Neue Wege*, 41.

54. Cf. also Herman Dooyeweerd, "De analogische grondbegrippen der vakwetenschappen en hun betrekking tot de structuur van den menschelijke ervaringshorizon," *Mededelingen* (Koninklijke Nederlandse Academie van Wetenschappen, afdeling Letterkunde), n.s. 17 (1954, no. 6): 171-92. This essay has been translated into English by Robert D. Knudsen as "The Analogical Concepts" (Mimeo, n.d.).

55. The important passage of NC 2:473-74 is not a good translation of the Dutch original. Here is my attempt:

When our selfhood, insofar as its transcendent unity as religious root of our whole temporal existence is operative under the transcendental guidance of faith and is busy in the transcendental direction of time with theoretical intuition, then one becomes cosmologically self-conscious within the temporal togetherness and temporal meaning-diversity of all one's modal meaning-functions. It is not one or more modal functions of the human person, but at bottom it is the personality in the unity of its very religious root which is busy in knowing activity. This is so no matter whether the cosmological self-consciousness in the knowing activity is directed in Christ toward the true Origin of all things, the Sovereign Creator and Heavenly Father, or whether the person seeks oneself in the fallenness of sin and seeks the Origin in what is temporal. (*WdW* 2:408-9)

56. See the careful, sensitive, and imaginative account by Arie van Dijk, "Algemene beschouwing (Stoker-Brümmer)," in "Werkcollege systematische

wijsbegeerte" [1965] (Mimeo, 1969), 44-52, under mentor H. van Riessen. Dooyeweerd's concept of "individuality-structure" is a substitute way of accounting for what Western philosophers, including especially Aquinas, try to approximate with the concept of "substance." See Herman Dooyeweerd, "De idee der individualiteitsstructuur en het Thomistisch substantiebeprijp," *Phil. Ref.* 8 (1943): 65-99; 9 (1944): 1-41; 10 (1945): 25-48; 11 (1946): 22-52. Also cf. Dooyeweerd's debate with Stoker in *NC* 3:61-76.

57. Hartmann does seem to allow for both "retrocipation" and "anticipation" of strata in other strata (*Neue Wege*, 71-72), but his emphasis is certainly upon what he believes is objectively valid: the higher strata are not included in the lower (*Neue Wege*, 40, 61-62).

58. Cf. Vollenhoven, *De Noodzakelijkheid eener Christelijke logica*, 46-50 (cited in note 34 above).

59. Such a renaming might help put the Humpty-Dumpty together again that John Kraay has carefully parsed into pieces in his article "Successive Conceptions in the Development of the Christian Philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd," *Phil. Ref.* 44 (1979): 137-49 and 45 (1980): 1-46. It seems to me that Dooyeweerd's conception of the law-idea (ca. 1925) gathers existential poignance in his conception of the Archimedean point (ca. 1935-36), and is climaxed by his naming ground motive (ca. 1943) as the dynamic which gives the whole complex a historical formative power. That is, "Wetsidee" remains crucial for Dooyeweerd's thought, but "ground-motive" reminds us of the historical embeddedness of any and every philosophy.

60. Dooyeweerd himself became convinced during the years between the 1935 Dutch edition and the 1953 English edition of *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* that movement is a prime mode of creaturely things and is not to be confused with the physical aspect of entities, defined by "the energetic" (see note 35 above). "Movement" points in an original way to a kinematic mode of things (*NC* 2:97-100). So Dooyeweerd revised the theory. In 1960 I challenged the precision of Dooyeweerd's thoughts on a "modal meaning of history" when he talked of history "as such" (formative control) and history "at bottom" (as a struggle between the *civitas Dei* and *civitas terrena*). I proposed that we recognize "technical, formative control" as a mode of creaturely existence and understand "historical" as the more global "cultural unfolding of creation's secrets." See Calvin G. Seerveld, "Voor en uit de praktijk," *Correspondentie bladen van de Vereniging voor Calvinistische Wijsbegeerte* 24 (April 1960): 5-10. Several thinkers close to this philosophical categorial framework have found the suggestion helpful. For different comments on Dooyeweerd's historical aspect, see McIntire's essay in this volume. In "Neurosis and Religion," in *Philosophy and Christianity: Philosophical Essays Dedicated to Professor Dr. Herman Dooyeweerd* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1965), 370, W. K. van Dijk suggested that "an oretric" mode between the biotic and psychic aspects of reality might be needed to explain human instinctive drives. This idea has not been followed up; see Arnold H. de Graaff, *Psychology: Sensitive Openness and Appropriate Reactions* (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom

University for Christian Higher Education, 1980). There continues to be a ferment generated by the theory of modal law-spheres which attests to its theoretical fruitfulness. See notes 35 above and 77 below.

61. Robert D. Knudsen characterized Dooyeweerd's method as "phenomenological," "transcendental," and, in a negative sense, "dialectical" in 1962 at the annual philosophy conference at Wheaton College, Illinois (see Knudsen's comments in his "Philosophia Reformanda: Reflections on the Philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd," [Mimeo, n.d.], 9-31). Later Knudsen makes a precision and identifies Dooyeweerd's method as "empirical-transcendental," keeping it quite distinct from any "transcendent-metaphysical" method. See *Anakainosis* 1 (1979, no. 3): 6.

62. In an unfinished paper "The Hermeneutic Problem of Modal Theory" (Mimeo, 1972) and a concept paper for seminar presentation on "The Methodology of Modal Theory" (Mimeo, 1973), Lambert Zuidervaart suggests that the various methodological procedures which Dooyeweerd uses for determining modal nuclei are as follows: intuitive insight, encyclopedic comparison, detection, of antinomy, discovery of analogies, disclosure of object-functionality.

63. See Calvin G. Seerveld, "Methodological Problem of Definition," in *Rainbows for the Fallen World*, 105-9 (cited in note 3 above).

64. Hans Rookmaaker, "Ontwerp ener aesthetica op grondslag der wijsbegeerte der wetsidee," *Phil. Ref.* 11 (1946, nos. 3-4): 141-42.

65. Dooyeweerd seems to be working from secondary sources here, using Heinrich von Stein's *Die Entstehung der neueren Aesthetik* (1886); and he makes the admission: "I will follow Cassirer's plan to show this aesthetic Idea from its strongest side, though indeed I see this strong side in a different light" (NC 2:346).

66. It is part of Kant's sweeping, integrative power of thought that prompted him to incorporate these age-old ideas of *form* and *feeling* (cf. also Susanne K. Langer!) as he probed the nature of "aesthetic" judgment with cognition-denying subjectivism. See note 4 above.

67. Abraham Kuyper, *Het calvinisme en de kunst* (Amsterdam: J. A. Wormser, 1888), 16, 63 n. 23, 67 n. 48, 70 n. 53. Also, *De gemeene gratie* (On common grace) [1895-1901 in *De Heraut*], 3 vols. (Leiden: D. Donner, 1902-1905; 4th ed., Kampen: J. H. Kok, n.d.), 3:557. For an indepth correction of the standard idolization of classic Greek sculpture, showing how the ancient Greek mathematicistic view of artistic norms impeded the development of sculpture, see Dirk J. van den Berg, "'n Kritiese besinning op die moontlike invloed van die vorm-materie grondmotief op die griekse beeldhoukuns" (Master's thesis, Potchefstroom University, 1972).

68. See Calvin G. Seerveld, *A Christian Critique of Art and Literature* (Toronto: Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship, [1963] 1977), 68-69.

69. Benedetto Croce is a prime example of counting media less than integral

to art. Cf. "L'Intuizione pura e il carattere lirico dell'Arte" (1908), in *Problemi di estetica* (Bari: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 1949), 15-23 and "Breviario de Estetica" (1912), in *Nuovi saggi di estetica* (Bari: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 1948), 35-39. See Seerveld, *Benedetto Croce's Earlier Aesthetic Theories*, 93-95 (cited in note 7 above). Dooyeweerd's view of enkapsis tries to honor how the artist's "plastic aesthetic activity remains bound to the natural structure of his material" (NC 3:126) and how the "work of art itself, however, is not an aggregate, but an unbreakable *non-homogeneous whole*" (NC 3:124)! But the idealistic penchant shows through in such phrases as: "the marble cannot play a *constitutive* role in this artistic work" (NC 3:123); "To the artist the marble is important *solely* as a medium of expression" (NC 3:125; italics mine); "And this enkaptic relation is subject to the normative law requiring that in the inner structure of the work of art the marble can *only* function as a material for the expression of the artistic *conception*" (NC 3:126; italics mine).

70. See the forthcoming article, Calvin G. Seerveld, "Imaginativity," *Faith and Philosophy*.

71. Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1781), par. 49.3, 7, 9; 59.3-4.

72. Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, 3 vols. [1923-29], trans. Ralph Mannheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955-57). Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942) and *Feeling and Form* (New York: Scribner, 1953). Hans Georg Gadamer, *Die Aktualität des Schönen* [1974] (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1977). Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976) and *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language* [1975] (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

73 Dooyeweerd certainly does not identify semantic with analytic modes of functioning, and his critique of Husserl's attempt to develop a *reine Bedeutungslehre* is that Husserl was busy with a "logicizing of the modal meaning of lingual signification" (NC 2:224-25). Semanticist P. A. Verburg also rejects most strongly this "error which has become fatal for linguistic theory. It started from Hobbes, Descartes, and Leibniz' rationalistic comparison, assimilation, and equation of words with arithmetical and metrical *symbols*" (P. A. Verburg, "Delosis and Clarity," in *Philosophy and Christianity*, 96; cited in note 60 above).

74. See N. T. van der Merwe, "Aspekte van 'n funksionele beskouing van verbeelding en van 'n tipologie van teorieë oor die verbeelding," *Phil. Ref.* 34 (1969, nos. 3-4): 147-78. See also Henry de Jong, Carroll Ann Goon, Michael Ophardt, Robert Rogers, and Calvin G. Seerveld, "Human Creatures at Play: Explorations in Christian Cultural Philosophy" (Mimeo, 1983). For Dirk van den Berg's involved account of elementary analogues within aesthetic structure, especially as it applies to artistic reality, see his "Aesthetic Extension and Related Elementary Concepts of Modal Aesthetics, Art-Theory and Herme-

neutics," *Tydskrif vir christelike wetenskap* 14 (1978, nos. 3-4): 19-33 and 15 (1979, nos. 1-2): 1-47.

75. Hans Rookmaaker's early article "Ontwerp ener aesthetica op grondslag der wijsbegeerte der wetsidee," *Phil. Ref.* 11 (1946, nos. 3-4): 141-67 and 12 (1947, no. 1): 1-35 was an important attempt to draw out implications of Dooyeweerd's specific ideas in the field of systematic aesthetics and as a general science of art (*algemene kunstwetenschap*), but the exercise proceeded without deep-going, philosophical critique of the basic notions. Rookmaaker himself in the 1960s lamented the abstract character of this early attempt.

76. See Calvin G. Seerveld, "Modal Aesthetics," in *Hearing and Doing: Philosophical Essays Dedicated to H. Evan Runner* (Toronto: Wedge, 1979), 263-94 and Seerveld, "Modal Aesthetic Theory, Preliminary Questions with an Opening Hypothesis," in *Rainbows for the Fallen World*, 104-37 (cited in note 3 above).

77. The order of complexity in the structured ways creatures are subject to God, which I have assumed for analysis since 1959, is as follows: numerical, spatial, kinematic, physical, organic, psychic, techno-formative, aesthetic, semantic, analytic, social, economic, jural, ethical, and confessional. See my "Skeleton to Philosophy 101" (Class syllabus, Trinity Christian College), 22-24 and also *Rainbows for the Fallen World*, 143 (cited in note 3 above). Hendrik Hart seems to support this realignment of modal order in *Understanding Our World: An Integral Ontology* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1984), 405 n. 36; however, at present Hart names the aspect of allusivity "symbolic" (195) and tends to explain language in terms of analyticity. See notes 35, 60, and 73 above.

78. The spectrum I proposed in 1963 still looks feasible to me as a start; see *A Christian Critique of Art and Literature*, 83-84 (cited in note 68 above). Such an encyclopedia of the arts, as well as an encyclopedia of the special sciences, is not exhaustive and not prescriptive with prohibitions and taboos, precisely because it is not "eidetic" in a Husserlian sense. A modal law-sphere theory promises interrelational order and primary tasks to the varied arts.

79. See Calvin G. Seerveld, "Human Responses to Art: Good, Bad, and Indifferent," in *Human Responses to Art* (Sioux Center: Dordt College Press, 1983), 1-18.

80. See Calvin G. Seerveld, "Towards a Cartographic Methodology for Art Historiography," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 39 (1980): 143-54 and D. J. van den Berg, "'n Ondersoek na die estetiese en kunshistoriese probleme verbonde aan die sogenaamde moderne religieuse skilderkuns" (Ph.D. diss., University of the Orange Free State, 1984).