A Brief Sketch of the
Philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd

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In order to appreciate the difficulties this article is up against, imagine yourself trying to write a brief introduction to, say, Aristotle's philosophy addressed to those who have never heard of it. The hardest decisions you would have to make are what points to leave out. Then there would be choices concerning which internal difficulties with it need to be covered. Finally, you would also have to make difficult selections concerning which variations on it should be treated and which should be omitted as beyond the scope of a brief introduction. Now the same holds true for the philosophy of Dooyeweerd, not withstanding the fact that it has not been around for over 2300 years as has Aristotle's. For Dooyeweerd's major opus, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought,* is without a doubt the most original contribution to philosophy since Kant, among the most at odds with Kant's conclusions since Kant, and presents a theory of reality that – while closer to the intentions of Aristotle than anyone since Descartes – exceeds even Aristotle's in explanatory power.[1] (And if that doesn't get your attention, then I don't know what will!)

What makes my task somewhat easier, on the other hand, is the fact that the articles which follow this one will apply Dooyeweerd's thought to specific areas: political theory, economic theory, mathematics and physics, and ethics. That frees me to omit any detailed treatment of those areas of his thought, and confine my sketch to the following topics: I.) the nature of religious belief, II.) its role in theory making, and III.) his theory of reality. Each of these requires preliminary explanatory comments.

First, when Dooyeweerd speaks of "religious belief" he means a belief that takes something to be "the absolute origin" of everything else – no matter how that something is conceived. The term "religious", then is not primarily a reference to worship, a formal creed, or membership in a religious organization. It is rather a reference to a person's orientation with respect to what he or she takes to be that on which everything else

depends.[2] In this he reflects his Dutch Calvinist background, for it was Calvin who said: "…that from which all other things derive their origin must necessarily be self-existent and eternal." (*Inst.* 1,5,7), and who took the view that whatever is believed to be the origin of all else is thereby regarded as divine. And this holds true whether or not a person believes it is the God of traditional theism who is that divine origin. So theories that take matter/energy, or sense data, or mathematical laws, etc., to have that status are every bit as much committed to divinity beliefs as are those who believe the origin of all else is God, Brahman-Atman, Dharmakaya, or the Tao.[3]

The second point in this connection is that Dooyeweerd's main application of this idea of what is at the core of religious beliefs is to highlight the way theories of reality cannot avoid including or presupposing one or another such belief. A theory can either be developed on the premise that the Divine transcends the cosmos, or on the premise that some part (or all) of the cosmos itself is divine. But either way, the specific content of one or another religious belief becomes the key to how any theory of reality gets constructed.

Third, by "theory of reality" Dooyeweerd always intends a theory of what a theist would call *created* reality; it does not attempt to include God in its scope. Since he takes God to be the origin of everything "found in creation" (Calvin) - mathematical and logical truths not exempted - nothing in creation exists independently from the rest of creation or from God. Thus he takes as his guideline to all theorizing this rule: belief in God requires that nothing in the cosmos be regarded as the origin of all else in the cosmos.[4] This then becomes the pivotal point for his own theory of reality: since nothing in the cosmos is what all else depends on, all ontological reduction is excluded.[5] His project was therefore to develop a theory of reality that is a systematically non-reductionist account of the natures of things and of the cosmic order.

As note 4 should have made clear, Dooyeweerd is not using "reduction" to mean merely the continued analysis of wholes until we reach their most basic parts coupled with the claim that the nature of the whole is the same as that of the parts. That sense of "reduction" is a mixed bag: for certain subject matters it has yielded important insights, while for others it has been the source of great mischief. But what Dooyeweerd has in his sights is not just whole to part reduction, but that long parade of ontological claims

that assert reality to be – whether exclusively or essentially – characterized by one or two selected *kinds* of properties and laws exhibited to our experience. I'll name only a few of these, but I think they'll be sufficient to give you the general idea. They include such claims as: everything is *numbers* (Pythagoras)*, or physical* (Epicurus, Smart)*, or sensory* (Hume, Mach)*.* They are not all monistic, however, and include mix and match dualisms claiming that everything is the product of the combination or interaction of: the *physical* and the *mathematical* (Heisenberg)*,* or the *logical* and the *sensory* (Kant)*,* and so on.

Aspects of Experience

So to begin his non-reductionist ontology, Dooyeweerd distinguishes a number of large-scale kinds of properties-and-laws that seem to him to be incapable of either elimination or of explaining one another. He calls these kinds "aspects" of experienced reality. And although he argues for his list of aspects as genuinely irreducible, I must immediately point out that the ontology he develops does not depend on any particular list of them. Other thinkers have differed with him as to the correct list of aspects but nevertheless followed the contours of his theory so as to give a non-reductionist account of their aspect lists. In what follows, however, I will be using Dooyeweerd's own list which is this:

Fiduciary
Ethical
Justitial
Aesthetic
Economic
Social
Linguistic
Historical
Logical
Sensory
Biotic
Physical
Kinematic
Spatial
Quantitative

I have tried to avoid nouns in this list so as not to give the impression that they designate classes of *things.* This has resulted in some odd terms and special meanings for some

familiar terms, so I need to comment on them. I will also comment on the order of the aspects on this list, from bottom to top.

The term "quantitative" is used to designate the "how much" of things, and should not be taken to refer to a distinct realm of numbers or to abstract systems of mathematics devised for calculating quantity. There is evidence that animals have a sense of quantity even though they don't invent symbols to represent quantities or discover and formulate laws relating them.[6]

"Kinetic" is used for the movement of things – their motion in space. Many scientists include kinetic laws within physics but Galileo and a number of contemporary scientists disagree.[7]

The term "sensory" is used of the qualities of both perceptions and feelings; it designates the properties and laws of animal and human *sensitivity.*

The term "historical" is familiar but needs explaining anyway. It does not here refer to everything that has happened in the past, because that's not what historians are interested in. What does interest them is whatever in the past is of *cultural* importance. So what this term picks out is the activity and transmission of culture forming power. (Other thinkers have used "cultural", "formative," or "technical" for this aspect.) What is focused upon by it is the human ability to form artifacts from natural materials. This includes the formation of language, theories, music, and social organizations as well as such things as clothes and houses.

Likewise the term "ethical" is familiar, but in need of clarification. Most often "ethical" is used indiscriminately for what are in fact different senses of right and wrong. Here, however, it will not mean acts that are unjust, but acts that are unloving. The term "justitial" is the designation for the kind of properties and laws that hold for things or acts that conform to or violate the norm of *fairness,* while "ethical" will refer to things or acts that fulfill or violate the norm of *beneficence.*[8]
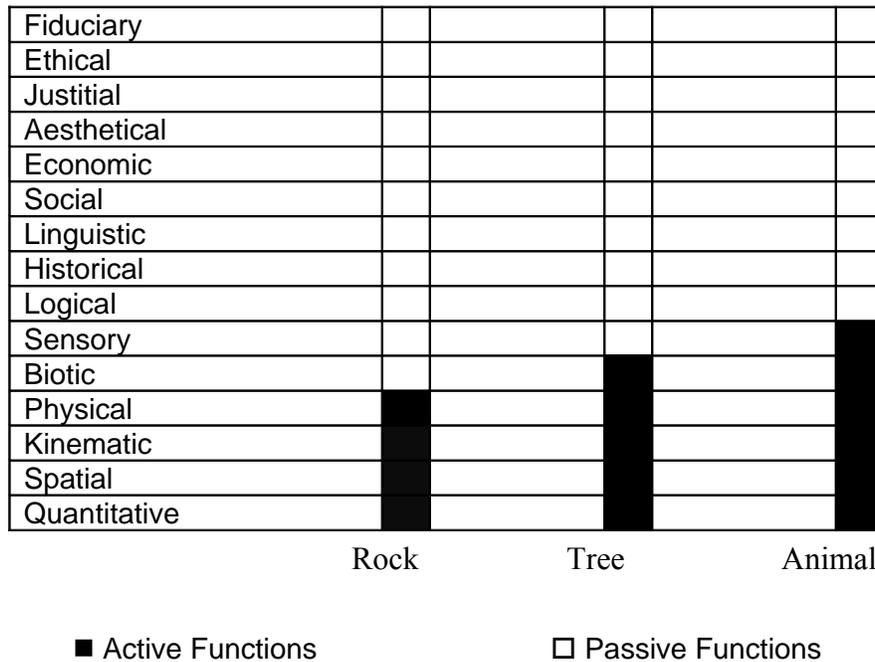
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Finally, *fiduciary* is my term for the reliability or trustworthiness that people, things, beliefs, etc., may have. (Dooyeweerd's own term was "pistical", from the Greek for trust.)

The non-reductionist thrust of Dooyeweerd's ontology starts with regarding the properties of each kind and the laws relating those properties as correlates: there are no utterly unordered properties and there are no aspectual laws that do not order properties of that kind. (There are other sorts of laws besides aspectual laws, of course, and I will explain those in due course.) In addition to regarding laws as correlates of what they govern, Dooyeweerd another idea concerning all laws of the cosmos – an idea that is the key to his ontology, namely, that the law-order of reality is a distinct component of the cosmos, not reducible to either the subjects or the objects they govern. They are not, therefore, merely our generalizations over the ways things with fixed natures behave, as the objectivist would have it. Nor are they the order we impose on what we experience, as the subjectivist maintains. Law-order is sui generis with respect to both knowing subjects and known objects; it governs and connects both but is reducible to neither.[9] Hence his title for this philosophy: the Philosophy of the Idea of Law (which I will shorten to the Law Framework theory.) In this way one of the first benefits of regarding laws and what they govern as correlates is that it frees us from the old dilemma of objectivism vs. subjectivism. Neither the knowing subject nor the objects known are the source of the orderliness of the world we experience. That status belongs to God alone.

Furthermore, according to this theory all concrete things are governed by all the aspectual laws simultaneously, so every concrete thing has some property of every aspectual kind simultaneously. This point can only make sense, however, if we distinguish two ways in which a thing may possess a property: actively and passively.[10] So the theory speaks of them as the two ways a thing can exist and function under the laws of an aspect. For all the difference between them, these two ways are not mutually exclusive. The theory sees all things as functioning passively in every aspect all the time, so that it is only active functions that a thing may lack in certain aspects. In fact, it is the appearance of active functions that is reflected in the order of the aspect list given above, whereby a thing may have active functions in aspects lower on the list but lack them in aspects higher on the list. The order is thus one in which active functions in

lower aspects are preconditions for - but not causes of – active functions in aspects higher on the list.

Consider the example of a rock. According to the distinction being proposed, the rock functions actively in the quantitative, spatial, kinematic, and physical aspects. That is, it possesses properties of each of those aspects and is subject to the laws of each in a way that does not depend upon the rock's relations to the active functions of other things. The rock does not function actively in the higher aspects, however. It is not biotically alive, it does not sensorily perceive, think logically, or use a language. But were the rock not subject to the laws of biology, it could not function passively in the life processes of living things. (It could not even be biotically safe or dangerous.) But rocks clearly can have passive biotic functions without being alive. They can be swallowed by a bird and take part in grinding the food in its gizzard; they can be the wall of an animal's den; they can be the hard surface on which a bird drops a clam in order to open its shell. Likewise, although a rock has no active sensory function, it can be passively perceived by animals and humans that do have such an active function. But unless it were passively governed by sensory laws and possessed passive sensory properties, the rock could not be seen as having any color. Unperceived it has no color *actively;* but unless it possessed the passive potential to appear a certain color, that color could not be actualized in relation to a being with an active sensory function. Ditto for its logical properties. Were the rock not subject to the laws of non-contradiction, identity, and excluded middle, and so possess passive logical properties, we could not form a concept of it. (Be sure not to confuse "active" with "actual" here. Passive properties can be either potential or actual, while active properties are always actual.)[11] Just so, a rock has passive properties that are linguistic (it can be spoken of), economic (it can be valued, bought, and sold), justitial (it can be someone's property or a murder weapon), and so on. The following chart may help clarify these concepts:

	Rock	Tree	Animal
Fiduciary			
Ethical			
Justitial			
Aesthetical			
Economic			
Social			
Linguistic			
Historical			
Logical			
Sensory			■
Biotic		■	■
Physical	■	■	■
Kinematic	■	■	■
Spatial	■	■	■
Quantitative	■	■	■

■ Active Functions   □ Passive Functions

Even at this early stage of explanation, it is possible to see some of the benefits of this theory. Consider only its results for sensory perception. A stick, it says, has the passive dispositional property of appearing brown to normal perception in normal light. When this passive potentiality is actualized in relation to a perceiver it actually appears brown. By the same token, however, the stick has the passive sensory dispositions of appearing bent in water and smaller at a distance. Thus there is no need to postulate that what is bent or smaller is something other than the stick. No need, in other words, to be led into the dead-end of thinking that what we really experience are internal "sense data" rather than the externally real stick. On the sense data theory, the existence and nature of the real stick are forever unknowable. But on the Law Framework Theory we are not isolated from the world and locked into ourselves on the ground that all we know are our own internal states. At the same time, however, this theory allows us to appreciate the element of truth in both objectivism and subjectivism. For example, we agree with the subjectivist that apart from being perceived the stick does not *actually* (manifestly) have brown color. But we deny the subjectivist hypothesis that such qualities are therefore created by us wholesale or exist only in our minds. Thus the theory allows us to agree that sensory qualities are not actually inherent in objects, without being committed to a wholly subjectivist explanation of them. Likewise, we can

agree with the objectivist denial that, say, "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" or that economic worth is entirely our own invention. From the Law Framework point of view, were not economic and aesthetic norms embedded in the law-side of reality and did not objects have such properties passively in correlation to those norms, we could not experience anything in those ways. For instance, were a rock not subject to the norms of supply and demand and diminishing returns, we could not actualize an economic value for it. It is the passive potential of the rock that we actualize when we value it.

The proposal of a distinct law-side to reality and difference between active and passive functions, also shows why it is not plausible that entire aspects emerge or supervene; the element of truth in such views is that it is active functions of things that emerge in higher aspects. But they can only do so in relation to the laws and passive properties already true of things in that aspect. What sense would it make, for example, to claim that the cosmos originally had only physical properties and laws, while later on sensory and logical properties emerged? Were there no sensory laws already governing passive sensory potentials, nothing in the cosmos could be depicted or imagined by us because nothing could have had any appearance at all. And were it not governed by logical laws from the start, the emergence of new active functions would not have been logically possible! Nor can there be a plausible account of how living beings could have arisen were there not biotic laws to make possible passive biotic potentials that could come to be actualized.

In this way the active/passive distinction removes the temptation to deny that aspects are all equally real on their passive property and law side, and paves that way for a more plausible theory of what I will call "strong emergence": 1) active functions in aspects lower on the list are preconditions for things to acquire active functions in aspects higher on the list; 2) the order of preconditionality is not a causal order, so there is no postulation of causes lacking all homogeneity of cause and effect; 3) in fact, every concrete thing, event, or state of affairs has some properties of every aspect. Thus when this theory denies that everything is exclusively physical, e.g., it does not do so by way of maintaining that there are utterly non-physical things. Rather, it dies so by maintaining that all things have passive properties in every aspect of reality, and active properties in at least several aspects.

The Law Framework Theory is well aware, however, that merely pointing to the difference between the active and the passive possession of properties will not, all by itself, get us far in delineating the natures of specific types of things. For that, we need to focus on the way the properties and laws of one particular aspect always characterize a thing's nature more centrally than other aspects do. So the theory speaks of the aspect central to a thing's nature as "qualifying" it. For example, with reference to the chart given previously, it says that a rock is physically qualified, a plant is biotically qualified, while an animal is sensorily qualified. A qualifying aspect, then, is the one that: 1) is central to the nature of a thing, 2) the one whose laws govern the internal organization of the thing taken as a whole, and 3) is the highest aspect on the list in which the thing functions actively (this third requirement is true of natural things but not of artifacts as I will explain shortly).

The idea of a qualifying function has several advantages that recommend it. First, it is an empirical theory open to confirmation, disconfirmation, and revision. It is not a rule to be followed whether or not things fail to fit it. Second, it confirms and corresponds to the way we begin to classify natural things in ordinary language when we speak of them as animal, vegetable, or mineral. In confirming and accounting for that classification, it is on the way to an ontology that recognizes irreducible levels in reality, levels that are strongly emergent with respect to one another. It also differentiates between the ways ordinary language speaks of things as "physical" as opposed to the way many reductionist theories do. Ordinary language refers to a thing as physical to mean that it is real rather than imaginary, or that it has physical properties. It never means a thing is exclusively physical since nothing is ever experienced that way. So the Law Framework theory adds to the ordinary language view by pointing to the way a thing can be physically qualified. By contrast, an act of perception can be sensorily qualified. The act has other active functions which don't qualify it, of course. It actively possesses quantity, spatial location, motion, and includes physical and biotic processes. And passively it can be conceptualized, trained, named, respectful, worth money, just, loving, or trustworthy. But it is qualified by sensory properties and internally governed by sensory laws. In the same way, other acts of humans can be economically qualified (buying and selling), biotically (eating), aesthetically (dancing), or justitially (making a law

or judging a court case). Yet they will all occur under the governance of the laws of every aspect and have passive properties in every aspect, which is why they can be studied from the standpoint of any aspect.

Yet another advantage that recommends the idea of a qualifying function is the way it enables us to draw the important distinction between wholes comprised of parts and wholes comprised of sub-wholes (as well as parts). As is well known, Aristotle held that something is to be taken as a part of a whole provided that it: 1) participates in the internal organization of the whole, and 2) it is either unable to come into existence or to function apart from the whole. This, while true as far as it goes, is not an adequate definition. Human beings surely function in the internal organization of social communities and cannot come into being apart from the social community of their parents. But humans are not merely *parts* of families, schools, businesses, states, or clubs. The supplementary criterion that needs to be added to Aristotle's is that a part must share the same aspectual qualification as the whole. For example, it would not be accurate to call a rock a *part* of a garden because a rock is physically qualified while a garden is an aesthetically qualified whole. The rock is included in the internal organization of the garden, of course, but because it has a different aspectual qualification it is included in it as a sub-whole within a greater whole.

Capsulate Wholes

In this way the idea of a qualifying function enables us to draw the distinction between part/whole relations and sub-whole/whole relations. So the Law Framework theory speaks of the larger whole as "encapsulating" a sub-whole, and the larger whole as a "capsulate whole".[12] This turns out to be a valuable distinction, and so further recommends the idea of a qualifying function. Take, for instance, the example of a marble sculpture of a human body. How are we to understand the relation of the marble to the statue as a whole? It cannot possibly be a part of the whole; the parts of the statue are its arms, legs, torso, etc. Even on the traditional view the marble can't be part of the statue because it can exist apart from the statue. In addition, it makes no sense to speak of the marble as functioning in the internal organization of the statue! But the idea of a capsulate whole does much better. According to it, the marble is a physically qualified sub-whole included in the larger capsulate whole that is the aesthetically qualified statue.

Moreover, the relation between the marble and the finished art work displays another constant feature of the relation of a sub-whole to capsulate whole: no amount of knowledge of its sub-wholes can offer any knowledge of the capsulate whole.

Here are additional examples of the same point. The atoms that are included in a plant are not parts of the plant but sub-wholes encapsulated within it. They can exist and function apart from the plant, they are physically qualified while the plant is biotically qualified, and no amount of knowledge of the atoms could yield knowledge of the nature of plants. (This is further confirmation of a point I made earlier, namely, that the idea of capsulate wholes supports the broader idea of strong emergence - of irreducible levels of reality.) By contrast the cells included in the plant are parts of it. They have the same biotic qualification, and cannot come into existence or function apart from the plant. On the other hand the relation of atoms to a molecule would be a capsulate relation. The atoms of hydrogen and oxygen that combine to form a water molecule are sub-wholes within the capsulate molecule even though they do have the same (physical) qualification. That is because the atoms can exist and function apart from the molecule, and because no amount of knowledge of the atoms will predict that water would freeze at 0 centigrade, expand when it freezes, or feel wet.

Another characteristic of capsulate relations is that, in every case we can think of, a sub-whole included in a larger capsulate whole has its qualifying function subsumed by the greater whole and contributes to the functioning of that larger whole (think of the stone in a bird's gizzard, or a rock in a garden). Moreover, while every capsulate whole will have properties none of its sub-wholes possess, some may have a qualifying function all its sub-wholes lack. This is an additional reason why sub-wholes cannot be considered *causes* of the greater wholes encapsulating them. They are necessary conditions for the capsulate wholes but are never sufficient for them.

Type Laws

This last point leads to the question as to what accounts for the ways properties of different aspectual kinds, as well as sub-wholes with different qualifying functions, combine to form things of a particular type. Put another way: why is it that some

combinations of properties, parts, and sub-wholes seem not to be possible while others are? The answer, says the Law Framework theory, is yet another sort of laws, laws that range across aspects. These I call "type laws": laws that make possible the combining into one thing of properties, parts, and sub-wholes so as to form things of a specific type.[13] This idea further refines our focus upon the natures of things. It is not enough to point to the different qualifications things may have, or to notice that some things are composed of sub-wholes as well as parts. We must go a further step and differentiate types of things according to their type laws.

Please notice, however, that "differentiating according to type law" is not intended to suggest that we can gain knowledge of such a law prior to experiencing things of the type it makes possible. Rather, we postulate such laws to account for the combinations of properties of different aspectual kinds, and of sub-wholes with different aspectual qualifications, within individual things of the same type. On this view, then, a concrete thing is *an individual structural assemblage of properties, parts, and perhaps sub-wholes, determined by a type law and qualified by the aspectual laws that govern its internal organization.* An individual concrete thing is not, therefore, a heap or bundle of parts and properties, while at the same time it is nothing over and above a law-structured combination of those parts and properties. In connection with the idea of a type law, it is worth noting that not all the combinations we can think of are really possible. We can think of combinations forming things which, while not self-contradictory, are nevertheless not possible: a talking rock, a flying horse, etc. The explanation is that these are not possible because there is no type law for them. On this view, then, there is a difference between "impossible" and "not possible:" while we can speak of things that are *impossible* because they would violate a law (a square circle, a self-levitating stone), there are also others that do not violate any law but are *not possible* because there is no type law for them (a talking tree).

It should also be noticed that unlike aspectual laws, type laws do exist prior to the things they make possible and are not strictly correlative to them. On this theory there are not only type laws for every type of natural things but every type of artifact as well.[14]

Artifacts

So far I have applied the concepts introduced by the Law Framework theory only to natural things, because the natures of artifacts are more complex. They require more than the specification of the qualifying function of their natural material and their type law if we're to account for what the natural material has *become.* For example, the stones used to build a house would, by themselves, have no more than a physical qualification. But once they have undergone human formative control and been transformed into a house, the new whole that encapsulates them acquires an additional *social* qualification despite the fact that all its parts and sub-wholes have only a passive function in that aspect. Unless we recognize that such a transformation has occurred, however, we would not recognize the stones *as formed into a house,* and so would miss what they have become.[15]

In this way two new components are asses to the theory in order to identify the nature of an artifact. First, it recognizes that an artifact, unlike a natural thing, may be qualified by an aspect in which it has only a passive function. Secondly, it expands the idea of what qualifies the nature of an artifact to include both the aspect qualifying the *process of transformation by which it was produced,* as well as the aspect qualifying the *kind of plan which guided its formation.* The aspect qualifying the process of an artifact's formation is called the artifact's *foundational function,* while the aspect qualifying the plan which guided its formation is called its *leading function.* So with respect to the example of stones formed into a house, the theory says that the foundational function of the house is *historical* (or cultural) because that process is qualified by the human ability to transform natural materials. But what then is its leading function? One plausible candidate would be to say it is biological. And there is no doubt that a house serves biological needs. We would form them very differently were our bodies significantly different from what they are. But a house is more than bare biological shelter - which is why it differs from a mere lean-to or hut. It provides a place for social exchange and accommodates the need for privacy. And the varying sizes and shapes of its rooms usually reflect a difference in social status among its occupants. In fact, if a building lacked these features we wouldn't call it a house. For these reasons, the theory says that the leading function of a house is *social.*[16]

There is not the space here to give many further examples of how these concepts serve to bring the natures of artifacts into focus, but here are a few. A book

would be said to have a historical foundational function and a linguistic leading function. The poetry signified in the book, on the other hand, would have a historical foundational function and an aesthetic leading function.[17] Likewise, a painting or sculpture would also have an aesthetic leading function. By contrast, a warehouse, with its loading platforms and storage areas, shows an historical foundational function and an economic leading function. Of course, a bank has the same leading function. What distinguishes a warehouse from a bank is the type law of each; the law that determines the internal relations of the properties, parts, and sub-wholes such that it conforms to its type. This is why a fuller account of an artifact's nature must include its type law as well as its qualification by its foundational and leading functions.

At this point it may seem as though all artifacts would have an historical (cultural) leading function. After all, they're all formed by humans, no? While there is a sense in which that is true, there are nevertheless humanly formed artifacts that have their foundation in an aspect other than the historical. To make this point clear, however, I must first explain that the theory sees also social communities as artifacts, formed when humans give specific organization to aspectually differentiated inter-human relations. These differ from non-social artifacts in that their "natural materials" are other human beings. That said, there appear to be (at least) two communities that should not be taken to have a cultural foundational function. These are marriage and family. The reason is that they are not free cultural creations in that they are rooted in our biotic, sexual, nature. Humans give these communities specific forms, to be sure. But it is our biotic make-up that drives the process of their formation and assures these institutions will be given some form or other.

Social Emergence: Sphere Sovereignty

We have already seen why many wholes cannot be analyzed only by distinguishing their parts, but need to be seen as capsulate wholes including sub-wholes. This is especially true of social communities, since they include humans who are never merely their parts. In keeping with the Theism underlying this ontology, human

existence is seen as centered in the "heart" or "spirit" of a person which functions in all the aspects alike but cannot be identified with any of them. Human nature thus has no aspectual qualification.[18] Humans are never, therefore, *parts* of a family, school, church, or what have you, but are sub-wholes encapsulated in them.

This last point is also true of the various communities with respect to one another: they are almost never parts of one another as they have different leading functions and display conformity to different type laws. So, for example, a family cannot be part of a state as is shown by the fact that its members can be citizens of different states. But what is even more important is that *neither can any of the major types of social communities be encapsulated within one another.*[19] Recall that when a sub-whole is encapsulated in a greater whole, the leading function of the greater whole overrides the qualifying function of the sub-whole (think of the stone in a bird's gizzard serving a biotic purpose). In the case of the major social institutions, subsuming one under another would mean that the one(s) subsumed would serve the leading function of the capsulate whole. Thus subsuming a business, school, or church under the state, for instance, would have the effect of stunting or outright cancelling the leading functions of the subsumed communities in favor of the state's leading function: justice. And this requires that we take a non-hierarchical view of society as a whole.

Here's the same point from a different angle, the angle of authority in human life. Is there one supreme source of authority in human social life? If so, what *kind* of authority is it? There have been many reductionist answers to this question. There are theories that have claimed that the source of authority is power, reason (or reason plus virtue), wealth, or superior will. But a genuinely theistic view must reject all such proposals. From the Theistic view, all authority originates with God who has built it into human life in plural ways. There is the authority of parents in a family, of owners in a business, of elected officials in the state, of clergy in a church, temple, or mosque, of doctors in a hospital, and so on. Such organizations are formed to promote and preserve aspectually distinct facets of life: ethical love (family), economic life (business), public justice (state), religious belief and practice (church, synagogue, mosque), biotic health (hospital), etc. Each of these communities has its own foundational and leading functions, its own type law, and its own type of authority.

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This idea of multiple kinds of authority, each with its own proper domain or "sphere" was called "sphere sovereignty" by its great champion, Abraham Kuyper.[20] It stresses that no one kind of authority – and thus no single institution – is the source of all authority in life or the supreme authority over all other kinds. Rather, social institutions of each distinct type have a sphere of competence which corresponds to their leading function, so that each has a relative immunity from interference by authorities of different types or which arise in organizations with different leading functions. In practice this means, for example, that parents set children's bedtimes not governments, churches set requirements for membership not courts, courts interpret the criminal law not churches, schools set educational requirements not parents, and businesses decide what products or services to produce not schools, and so on. Moreover, while a school may be supported by a family, state, church, or business, it may not be *run* by them. If that is what is meant by "state school", then the idea is as self-contradictory as "state church" or "state family."[21]

One of the most important results of this social norm is that the idea of distinct, limited authorities is the one that can best restrain the power of government so as to avoid a totalitarian state. The idea of democracy alone cannot do that. For where government is viewed as all-controlling, giving everyone a vote as to who makes the laws will only result in a tyranny of the majority. And notice that the sphere sovereignty idea not only protects individual rights by limiting the authority of government, but protects the rights of non-governmental communities as well. Moreover, these communities are then not only protected relative to the state but relative to one another. Sphere Sovereignty is therefore the social principle that embodies a strongly emergent view of social life as a distinct level of reality. And more than that, by standing in opposition to all reductionist attempts to subsume all authorities under some one kind, it also reconfirms the non-hierarchical view of the social institutions exercising differing kinds of authorities.

Conclusion

Dooyeweerd's ontology may fairly be called one of "strong emergence" or simply "non-reductionist." This is because it insists not only that no large-scale kind of properties-and-laws is identical with another or may be eliminated in favor of another,

but also because no aspect can be the cause of any other. This is opposed, first, by pointing to the fact that the sort of causality needed to support a claim that, e.g., physical entities combine do as to produce non-physical properties or things, is a stronger sense of "cause" than anything that can be observed in the universe. What we observe is that a physically qualified cause (heating a copper wire) may result in it changing its sensory color (glowing green). But in that case the heating is merely the *occasion* for the green glow; it is not the reason there are such things as green glows in the cosmos. But the latter is the sense needed by causal reductionist theories.

Of course, it is open to the reductionist to say that the strong causes needed by his theory can be postulated as bridge laws that needn't be observed to have explanatory power. The Law Framework reply to that is to point to the fact that causal relations are themselves multi-aspectual and are qualified by every aspect from the physical upward on the list. So what *kind* of law is a bridge law supposed to be? If it is itself a physical law, then how does it relate the physical to its alleged non-physical products? And why would such a view be better off than admitting that no such relation is conceivable? It still runs into the same stone wall that Descartes did with the mind/body relation: relations without any homogeneity of cause and effect cannot so much as be conceived. By contrast, the Law Framework theory sees a multi-aspectual homogeneity of everything in the cosmos with everything else in the cosmos.

In addition, the Law Framework theory has demonstrated impressive explanatory power by developing its idea of irreducible, equally real aspects of reality. From that idea arises the possibility of distinguishing a thing's qualifying aspect, capsulate wholes, type laws, and foundational and leading functions for artifacts. All these converge to recommend that the cosmos be understood as having many distinct but related levels, without being caught in the rut of assuming from the outset that explanation can only mean reduction.

[1] The original edition of the *New Critique* was published by the Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., Phila., 1953. It was reissued by Mellen Press, Lewiston, NY, 1997 (hereafter abbreviated as *NC*). By saying that Dooyeweerd's ontology has greater explanatory power than Aristotle's I do not mean it is more detailed, but that it avoids several dead ends Aristotle's couldn't avoid such as the relation of form to matter and whether artifacts instantiate new forms.

[2] Belief in something as the unconditional reality on which all else depends is central to all religions and is the only characteristic they all have in common. For Dooyeweerd, such beliefs are a product of a person's experience rather then proofs or arguments - though it must be kept in mind that such beliefs can be unconscious assumptions as well as a fervent commitments. Moreover, the experiences that give rise to them vary in their content. For example, while Calvin says "…Scripture bears on the face of it such evidence of its truth as do black and white of their color, sweet and bitter of their taste." (*Inst.* 1, 7, 2), Paul Ziff said: "If you ask me why I'm a materialist … it's not because of the arguments. I guess I'd have to say that reality just looks irresistibly physical to me."

[3] Dooyeweerd never attempted a defense of this definition of religious belief or of the proposition that beliefs in anything as self-existent are equally religious whether they occur in theories or in religious traditions. Both these points are defended at length, however, in chapter 2 of *The Myth of Religious Neutrality* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2005).

[4] On this point Dooyeweerd's position is the same as that of Orthodox theology. As St Gregory Palamas put it, "Christians cannot tolerate any intermediate substance between Creator and creatures…" (quoted in John Meyendorff's, *A Study of Gregory Palamas* (London: Faith Press, 1964), 130.

For the same reason, Dooyeweerd also rejected every attempt to prove God's existence, holding instead that "Whatever can be proven would thereby not be God." The reason is that since the being of God is the creative origin of everything including the laws of proof, it is not subject to those laws. Thus attempts to prove his existence thus inadvertently demote him to the status of a creature by subjecting to the laws of creation rather than maintaining him as their divine origin.

[5] Not every use of the term "reduction" is meant in an ontological sense. For example, there is no objection to the replacement of the caloric theory of heat by that of molecular vibration. The major sorts of theories that are objectionable may roughly be described as follows:

    A. Meaning Replacement. The nature of all reality is to have only properties of kind X, and to be govern by only X laws. This is defended by arguing that all terms with allegedly non-X meaning can be replaced by X terms with no loss of meaning, while not all X terms can be replaced by non-X terms. (Berkeley, Hume, and Ayer defended phenomenalism this way.)

    B. Factual Identity. While the terms of non-X vocabularies cannot be entirely replaced by X terms, nevertheless non-X terms refer only to X properties or laws. The selection of X is defended on the ground that the only or best explanation for anything whatever always has X terms as its primitive terms and X laws as its basic laws. (JJC Smart defended materialism this way.)

    C. Metaphysical Causal Dependency. The nature of reality is basically (not exclusively) made up of X (or X plus Y) kind(s) of things. This is defended by arguing that there is a one-way dependency of properties and laws of the non-X kinds upon entities whose nature is exclusively of the X (or X plus Y) kind(s). (Aristotle and Descartes each defended their idea of "substance" this way.)

    D. Epiphenomenalism. This is similar to metaphysical causality except that the dependent, caused, kinds of properties are less real in that there are no laws within those kinds, so that no genuine explanation can be given in terms of epiphenomenal properties. (Huxley and Skinner argued that states of consciousness are epiphenomenal on purely physical bodies or behavior.)

[6] See Tobias Dantzig, *Number: The Language of Science* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1954), 2-3.

[7] Planck and Einstein, for example. See Einstein's remarks in "Autobiographical Notes" in *Albert Einstein, Philosopher-Scientist,* Ed. P.A. Schlipp (New York: Harper Torchbooks), 43.

[8] The order of the aspects lower on the list are regarded as rigid laws, while the order of the aspects more closely associated with human social life are considered *norms.* Unlike rigid laws such as gravitation, the norms of language, politeness, economics, aesthetics, justice, and ethics constitute an order that humans have the freedom to violate.

[9] For there to be objects with fixed natures there would already have to be (at least) aspectual laws governing how the properties of each aspect relate to one another. And for law-regularities to be imposed by knowing subjects on their experience there would already have to be law-like regularities governing the knowing process. For these reasons, objectivism and subjectivism both point – despite their intentions - to a distinct law side to reality not having its origin in either the object or the subject.

[10] Dooyeweerd's terms for these ways are "subject functions" and "object functions" which has led to much confusion since "subject" and "object" are then used equivocally.

[11] See *NC*, III, 78.

[12] Dooyeweerd's own terms for this idea were "enkapsis" and "enkaptic whole." I have simply Anglicized them.

[13] Dooyeweerd's own term for this was "individuality structure" (see. *NC,* III). This term has so often been misunderstood to mean the internal organization of a concrete individual rather than the law that makes possible its type, that I have coined "type law" as a substitute.

There are, of course, what are called "causal laws" in reality as well as aspectual laws and type laws. But the Law Framework theory prefers to call them "causal relations" because, although they are parts of the order of reality, they are multi-aspectual and have aspectual qualifications. Moreover, there are no causal relations in the three lowest aspects; they arise first in the physical. But although founded on the physical, there are causal relations qualified by each of the aspects above the physical. For example, reproduction is a biotically qualified cause, entailment of a conclusion by premises is a logically qualified cause, and the scarcity of a commodity is an economically qualified cause.

[14] *NC*, III, 106.

[15] Animals also form artifacts, and the account of these is somewhat different. For brevity's sake I deal here only with human artifacts. For the full account see *NC,* III, chapters 2 & 3.

[16] Since the aspect qualifying the leading function of an artifact is the one that qualifies the plan that guided its formation, the idea of a leading function cannot be divorced from the idea of purpose. What is intended, however, is not any subjective purpose a person may have toward an artifact but the purpose embedded in its plan. So although someone may use a chair as a ladder or marry for money, the purpose embedded in such artifacts remains biotic and ethical (love) despite being perverted by a subjective purpose. See *NC,* III, 143, 574.

[17] More precisely, the words of the poem are linguistically qualified while the *event* of reading the poem is aesthetically qualified. See *NC,* III, 110, 111.

[18] The terminology here is tangled. In fact, Bible writers never use "soul" for the center of human existence but for the life of the body – so that it is precisely the soul that dies. Most often they use "heart" for the identity of a person; the seat and source of a person's intellect, will, emotion, talents, dispositions, etc. On this biblical view, then, human nature is not to be identified with any aspectual functions. The human heart lies behind them all as the agent acting in them. So while humans alone have active functions in all the aspects, they have no qualifying function.

[19] There are instances of communities being sub-wholes within a greater capsulate whole, but that is never true of the major institutions of society. The examples are all of auxiliary organizations formed to serve another community such as a PTA formed to serve a school, or a fund-raising group organized to support a charity or hospital.

[20] One of the clearest expositions of this idea was given in his "Lectures on Calvinism", which were the Stone Lectures at Princeton Seminary for 1898.

[21] On the other hand, pointing to distinct *spheres* of authority means that the spheres can be found permeating all institutions and practices. It is not the same as public vs. private, for example. A crime committed in private or in a church or school still falls within the sphere of justice and so is the responsibility of government, just as barter or selling that takes place within a family or government is the business side of those institutions.