

IS DOOYEWEERD A PANENTHEIST? —
COMMENTS ON FRIESEN'S '95 THESES ON HERMAN DOOYEWEERD'

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1. *The context*

What is the purpose of Friesen's 95 theses and what is the audience he has in mind? The title refers to a major church historical event and suggests that — like in 1517 — we are dealing with a concise statement of a new and radical doctrine that is unfolded in opposition to an established canon. But who is the opponent in this case? What is the established canon that is rejected? And what is new or radical in the summary?

Dooyeweerd's philosophy was definitely new and radical at the time of its conception. It still has an enormous potential for the special sciences. It offers important resources for any (transcendental) critique of 'immanence' philosophies. However, on first reading and without knowledge of the context, Friesen does not seem to aim at offering a new or radical interpretation of Dooyeweerd's philosophy. I read the 95 theses as an attempt to wipe off the dust, to provide the overall picture, doing justice to aspects that (maybe) were neglected or (maybe) were wrongly understood in the reformational tradition. However, the audience he has in mind seems to be one that is already familiar with the basic concepts and the thrust of Dooyeweerdian thinking; not an audience that is opposed to reformational philosophical thinking, but one that might be helped by a succinct summary in order to encourage further study and discussion.

However, after consulting the footnotes in this article, some of Friesen's other articles, and his website, it is obvious that the author has more in mind. My first reading of the theses ended with slight confusion: the tension just mentioned between what the title suggests (something new and radical) and the nature of what follows, i.e., a well-documented, difficult to read, scholarly (although sometimes questionable) summary of Dooyeweerd's basic concepts and ideas. The confusion gradually disappeared when I read Friesen's other work, in which it becomes apparent that he indeed has a mission. There is an established canon to which he protests, i.e. a watered-down, one-sided and basically Vollenhovean version of Dooyeweerd's thinking. The mission is (in short) to protect the reformational tradition from this one-sided interpretation and to rescue Dooyeweerd as an ecumenical Christian thinker who builds forth on the best of a broader Christian mystical tradition (Eckhardt, Boehme and the Christian theosophist Baader).

Friesen has laid down his ideas about the relation between Dooyeweerd and Baader in two articles in the web-based journal *Ars Disputandi* (2003a; 2003b). The German philosopher Franz von Baader (1765-1841) was an opponent of both German idealism and mechanistic materialism. He was a Catholic with

strong inclinations toward Eastern Orthodoxy. As proponent of non-dualism he tried to anchor Christian thinking in the mysticism of Meister Eckhart and Jacob Boehme. Friesen's first article attempts to delineate the commonalities between Dooyeweerd and Baader on crucial issues like the religious root of philosophy, idolatry as absolutization of the temporal, the ground motives, cosmic time, the supratemporal heart, the analogy of the prism and so on. The second article tries to make a case for Baader's influence on Abraham Kuyper: both were anti-dualists and both strived for a reformation of the special sciences.

Two other articles appeared in this journal (Friesen 2005a; 2005b). Both shed additional light on the relation between Dooyeweerd and Baader. The first article describes the possible influence of the Austrian philosopher, economist and sociologist Othmar Spann (1878-1950) on Dooyeweerd. Spann was one of those early 20th century philosophers who despised atomistic rationalism and tried to develop a philosophy of totality (*Ganzheit*) in which the individual is organically integrated into the whole. In his own conception he incorporated many insights of Baader. The second article tries to disentangle Vollenhoven's and Dooyeweerd's different approaches to philosophy. This difference is present at almost every point according to Friesen. Both Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd, in their own manner, said that these differences only concern technical points and do not touch their agreement at a religious level. Friesen seriously doubts this claim of both thinkers. He believes Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven also differed on religious matters. Vollenhoven is for him the representative of a rationalist form of Protestant thought. Dooyeweerd on the other hand developed in the course of his career into a veridical ecumenical thinker, by incorporating elements of an older and more inclusive mystical Christian tradition, a tradition that is panentheist rather than pantheist and that is open for exchange with other world religions such as Hinduism. In his online publications Friesen draws analogies between Dooyeweerdian concepts and ideas on the one hand and insights from Eastern orthodoxy and Hinduism on the other hand.

2. *An uncalled-for reservation*

Although this is not the place for a review of the earlier articles I cannot withstand the urge to express some reservations with respect to the idea of an important influence of Baader on Abraham Kuyper (and subsequently Dooyeweerd). I do this in view of what I am going to say about the current article. Already on the basis of a brief consultation of the first volume of *Encyclopedie der Heiligen Godgeleerdheid* it seems highly unlikely that Baader has exerted a major influence on Kuyper.¹ I mention specifically this text because Friesen quotes from this work to support his thesis. Volume I, second part, chapter 3, section

¹ Friesen refers to Vol. I, p. 370 of the Wormser first edition of 1893 (the article erroneously refers to the year 1894).

iii-iv of the *Encyclopedie* — in which the quotation can be found — contains a more than 200 page discussion of the ‘newer philosophy’ (from Immanuel Kant onward), divided into more than 50 paragraphs, each devoted to one (or two) theologians and/or philosophers.² None of these paragraphs is on Baader. He is actually only referred to in a few sentences. To make a case for a substantial influence on Kuyper by Baader requires an amount of evidence that is not met with these few quotations. This also holds for the other quotations. The work of Abraham Kuyper is immense. There are simply too few quotations to bear the burden of proof.³ The (few) occasions in which Kuyper refers to Baader show a mix of reverence and reservation — reverence for Baader’s powerful non-dualism and reservation for his pantheism. There is nothing that suggests that Kuyper is concealing anything here. The references are quite straightforward: he admires him on certain points (the two points Friesen mentions: non-duality and the inner reformation of the special sciences) but he rejects his framework of thinking and its pantheist implications.

Friesen is aware of this and suggests in addition that a more favourable interpretation on the part of Kuyper might have revealed the deep correspondence between his (Kuyper’s) and Baader’s thinking. Kuyper erroneously interpreted Baader’s pantheism as an identity philosophy, i.e., as a form of thinking in which God and man, spirit and matter are part of the same being. There are however forms of mysticism that do not fall prey to the ontological monism to which such identification leads. Friesen calls these forms of thinking ‘panentheistic’ or non-dualistic. It is because of this misinterpretation that Kuyper did not understand the familiarity between his and Baader’s mysticism. Baader’s pantheism is a form of non-dualism and this non-dualism differs fundamentally from monism (in which God and the world are part of the same being), according to Friesen. He sees Dooyeweerd as the thinker who understood this and who saw the correspondence between Kuyper and Baader. Dooyeweerd, in other words, understood Baader’s non-dualism in its real non-monist sense and, accordingly, read this non-dualism into Kuyper’s work. This leads to the peculiar situation that Kuyper is read (by Dooyeweerd) against Kuyper to uncover the real mystical, non-dualist element in his thinking. For instance, the famous sentences in the first *Lecture on Calvinism* about “that point in our consciousness in which our life is still undivided and lies comprehended in its unity” and “where .. all the rays of our life converge as in one focus”, were probably not understood by Kuyper in their real mystical

² I consulted the second edition issued in 1908 (Kampen: Kok).

³ If such influence was indeed a fact, than Kuyper has concealed this. One might then speculate about the reasons why Kuyper would do so: he could have been influenced so obviously that he simply forgot to mention his teacher. This is highly implausible in view of the excessive degree of explicitness of Kuyper’s thought. He could also have had opportunistic reasons not to mention the influence Baader has exerted, which is also highly implausible given Kuyper’s independence of thought and his immense personality. He finally might have been ambivalent about this influence and not be sure about what to make of it; which is also highly unlikely given the fact that Kuyper is quite clear in the paragraphs he devotes to Baader.

sense.⁴ It is via Dooyeweerd that we now can understand their mystical potential.

The issue is interesting, and there is certainly a case to make of Dooyeweerd's concept of being and the framework he develops to understand the relation between God and creation. However, the arguments for a substantial influence of Baader on Kuyper are quite weak to my opinion. More than once the question has been raised as to whether Dooyeweerd's conception of time, the metaphor of the prism and the entire framework of convergence and divergence do not bear at least some resemblance with a Neoplatonic conception of being, with God as Origin at the top of the pyramid and created reality in its manifoldness at the bottom. Although I am not convinced this interpretation is right, I see a fruitful area of debate about the way Dooyeweerd organized his thought on the relation between God and created reality. Is the framework he develops appropriate? Concepts such as boundary, cosmic time order, modal aspects (as breaking the coherence of meaning totality), convergence and divergence, are clearly meant to reveal in a philosophical way the richness of creation and its dependence on the Creator. However, by revealing creational abundance these terms may at the same time conceal other aspects, for instance the fact that God speaks, that creational structures have become distorted, that God can be met in non-propositional ways, and that human beings find God in the multiplicity and particularity of their concrete lives (instead of in some form of conscious concentration).

I cannot follow this thread here any longer, what I say is meant to make explicit in which way I read Dooyeweerd: as a Neocalvinist thinker who develops a fascinating philosophical framework that enables him to discuss the philosophical issues of his time with his contemporaries. Maybe Dooyeweerd's framework was erroneous or ill-conceived at some points; maybe his terminology resembles Neo-Kantian or Neoplatonic or even mystic concepts at other places. And maybe Dooyeweerd wanted too much in his attempt to combine a strong anthropological antidualism with the idea that the human person is both temporal and supratemporal (cf. for this issue also the final paragraph of section 3 of this article). However, all these weaknesses and problems do not transform him into a Neokantian, or a Neoplatonist, or a mystic, even not in the non-dualist and panentheist sense of Ruusbroec, Eckhart, Boehme, Baader, or Friesen. The notion of (supratemporal) concentration, for instance, is first of all meant to express the ultimately religious rootedness of all human activity and experience. Behind this is the Calvinistic valuing of ordinary life, the denial

⁴ The entire passage reads: "If such an action is to put its stamp upon our entire life, it must start from that point in our consciousness in which our life is still undivided and lies comprehended in its unity, — not in the spreading vines but in the root from which the vines spring. This point, of course, lies in the antithesis between all that is finite in our human life and the infinite that lies beyond it. Here alone we find the common source from which the different streams of our human life spring and separate themselves. Personally it is our repeated experience that in the depths of our hearts, at the point where we disclose ourselves to the Eternal One, all the rays of our life converge as in one focus, and there alone regain that harmony which we so often and so painfully lose in the stress of daily duty. In prayer lies not only our unity with God, but also the unity of our personal life." *Lectures on Calvinism* pp. 6-7 (<http://www.neocalvinisme.nl/tekstframes.html>) or Kuyper (1899, 11).

of a dichotomy between profane and sacred spheres of life, and a rejection of the idea that humans need mediation by something specifically religious (be it the clergy, icons, rituals, sculptures, or spiritual practices) to stay in touch with the Almighty. We find God in the turmoil of our manifold, divergent, and distorted lives. To live *coram Deo* does not require special acts of consciousness.

To be fair, Friesen does not explicitly suggest that such special acts of consciousness are needed. His favorite concept in this context is the Dooyeweerdian concept of 'enstasis'. Dooyeweerd developed this concept in opposition to what he called the antithetical attitude of thought which is characteristic for theoretical thought. Naïve experience has no 'opposite', it is embedded in the fullness of individual temporal reality (NC II, 468). Dooyeweerd, indeed, speaks of an '*Erleben*' and an '*Hineinleben*' of the full temporal reality as it presents itself in the typical structures of individuality and their relations (NC II, 474). All experiential modes are open and active in this state, but no one gains precedence over others. Such experience is also and at the same time a form of self-experience, according to Dooyeweerd. The intuitive awareness of modal diversity and coherence in naïve experience is possible because the modal functions are 'our own' in cosmic time, he says. They come to an "actual and conscious contact" in our intuition (NC II, 474). The selfhood functions as point of reference in this contact - even stronger: the selfhood makes it possible that the modal aspects of temporal reality are not alien to us, but "cosmically our own".

Friesen however makes something different of the concept of 'enstasis'. The state of enstasis is not just ordinary naïve experience, but an empathic form of embeddedness, which is marked by a lack of conceptual fixedness and an absent sense of modal difference.⁵ When a person reaches this state of empathy or receptive attentiveness, there is an 'inner stillness', which orthodox writers have called *hesychia*, an inclusive state of self-awareness. This latter state can theologially be interpreted (Friesen quotes from a meditation by Abraham Kuyper) as a coming together of a divine downward movement and a human upward movement.⁶ Both movements come together in the state of enstasis. Mysticism is concerned with the coordination between the two movements. It is not simply the upward movement from man to God, a movement that absolves one from daily activities and worries. Panentheism means that we are 'in' God, or, as the apostle Paul says, 'in' Christ. It is not the other way around, God is not the same as us. However, as may be clear, Friesen's interpretation of enstasis refers to a certain religious state, whereas Dooyeweerd has a much broader conception of enstasis in mind. For Dooyeweerd, it is basically the state in which we are when we do not theorize. In naïve experience our intuition is opened in the foundational (and not in the transcendental) direction (NC II,

⁵ This is already slightly different from what Dooyeweerd says. For Dooyeweerd in naïve experience there is no absence of experience of modal difference. Coherence and diversity are simply given, and experienced in a non-thematic way. One may be aware (modal difference) of what remains implicit.

⁶ Zie <http://www.members.shaw.ca/jgfriesen/Mainheadings/Kuyper.html> (consulted on April 23 2009) 'Additional notes on Dooyeweerd and Kuyper' (after the references).

474). Friesen, on the other hand, sees enstatic intuition as a state of mystical self-knowledge.

3. *Being*

Why this lengthy comment on other work of Friesen? The main reason for it is that from this background we are better able to understand the implications of some of the theses. The most obvious point is the ontology Friesen reads in Dooyeweerd.

“God alone is being”, he states in thesis 48. Nothing exists in itself, reality does not rest in itself. Created reality exists as ‘meaning’. Meaning is determined by the bidirectional dynamic of ‘referring’ and ‘expressing’: God expresses Himself in created reality; and everything in created reality refers to Him. This, indeed, sounds quite Dooyeweerdian. I have problems, however, with the way Friesen uses these statements to support his interpretation of Dooyeweerd as panentheist. Dooyeweerd does not say that God alone ‘is’ Being. He says: “Being is only to be ascribed to God”. The difference is subtle, but noteworthy. Ascriptions are not identity statements. What is ascribed is a quality, the quality of being a being. Dooyeweerd explains: “A true concept of being is impossible. The word being has no unity of meaning.” (NC I, 73 note 1) Being is not an essence (resting in itself), says Dooyeweerd, nor do we have an ‘autonomous concept’ for such being. We can only form a (religious) transcendental idea of it, i.e., of the idea of Origin. These formulations are much more tentative than Friesen’s identity statement. We cannot grasp being conceptually. The meaning of the term differs from context to context. We can only form a (transcendental) idea of it. Dooyeweerd’s point is twofold: denial of any form of independence of objects/persons within created reality and rejection of the substantialization of the concept of God into an immutable essence. It is therefore that we find such emphasis on dynamism. Reality, Dooyeweerd says, is “a continuous process of realization”. There is no fixed point in reality, reality does not rest in itself (NC III, 109). The issue is not that reality is not ‘real’ or that there is a difference in reality between God and the temporal world. It is that reality does not rest in itself and that we, therefore, cannot conceptually grasp reality in its ‘essence’, i.e., in how it is ‘as such’. So, the contrast is between dynamism and ‘resting in itself’ and not between degrees of reality.

To be sure, Dooyeweerd’s statement about the being of God is slightly confusing, because it runs counter to his inclination to abstain from speculations about the nature of God and of being. This inclination explains for instance his reservations with respect to the term ontology. The tension is at least partially resolved, however, when the context is taken into account. Dooyeweerd warns his readers to stay away from metaphysics and from any theoretical definition of the nature of reality. The context of the quotations is one in which the scholastic notion of *analogia entis* is discussed. We cannot theorize about the nature of God and the relation between Him and this world; he is unlike our concepts; and we cannot fit Him into whatever theology, even not by way of analogy. Conversely, man as image of God nor any other part of reality

resembles God in an analogical way. There is no such thing as analogical being. And then, in a footnote, Dooyeweerd adds that God alone can be ascribed being — i.e. not man, nor any (other) part of reality. In other words, paraphrasing, if he (Dooyeweerd) would be coerced to say something about being, then the only being to which being could attributed is God, but even then with many precautions and further qualifications.

In Friesen the context is quite different. Immediately after theses 48-50 he speaks of “the expression of higher reality in a lower reality” (thesis 51) and about the panentheism that is implied in Dooyeweerd’s reference to the Paulinian “out, from and towards” of created reality to God (thesis 52). Panentheism means in this context that we live in God, but that God (though living in us) does not coincide with us. We are part of God, but this should not be explained in a monistic sense. This non-monistic participation is then further explicated with a scheme of higher and lower spheres of existence. Friesen suggests a threefold distinction between God’s eternity, created eternity (the *aevum*; supratemporality) and created temporal reality. In this scheme God’s eternity is at the highest level and temporal reality at the lowest, with the *aevum* as an “intermediate” (Friesen’s term) between the two. The difference between this conception and classical pantheism is that in the latter God does not have an existence apart from created reality.⁷

There exists an age-old world of ideas behind these formulations. We are here in the sphere of Neoplatonism and its Gnostic ramifications — Neoplatonism with its idea of a hierarchy of being (the ‘great chain of being’), the soul as divine spark in a ‘fallen’ reality searching for the light of the eternal, reality as emanation of a world soul, and God and world relating to one another as mind and body.⁸

I do not think Dooyeweerd should be situated in this world, nor do I believe he was a panentheist. There are many central themes in his philosophy that resist such interpretation: his persistent antimetaphysical stance, the idea of law as boundary between God and creation, his neocalvinistic valuation of ordinary life and ‘naïve’ experience, his rejection of the distinction between sacral and profane parts of reality, his denial of the idea of a ladder of being, and his rejection of Augustine’s Neoplatonism with, *inter alia.*, its lack of an intrinsic and truly historical conception of development (*NC I*, 179; see also Strauss 2004).

However, this having been said, it must be admitted that Dooyeweerd has given foot to Friesen’s interpretation to at least some degree. There has in fact been a discussion about the presumed semimysticism of Dooyeweerd’s concept of the heart for almost half a century (see Wiskerke 1978). Brüggeman-Kruijff (1981) has pointed out that there are similarities between Neoplatonism and Dooyeweerd with regard to the notion of time (time as medium). Geertsema (1970) has remarked that in spite of Dooyeweerd’s emphasis on the

⁷ What Friesen describes as panentheism would Vollenhoven have interpreted as ‘partial theism’ (deification of a part of created reality). From a Vollenhovean perspective the difference between pantheism and panentheism is not fundamental, but one of degree.

⁸ Very useful in this context is Cooper (2006).

discontinuity between God and creation, as expressed by concepts like boundary and law, there is also a suggestion of continuity: the prism metaphor with its idea of unity-in-Origin and diversity-in-time and the idea of supratemporal concentration of functions and modes. Elsewhere I have remarked that it is precisely the notion of Origin (and the transcendental framework in which this notion is caught) that limits the terminological field to a back-and-forth between concentration and divergence, oneness and multiplicity, referring and expressing — at the expense of other anthropological notions such as otherness (in myself and of others), eccentricity, and self-relatedness (Glas 1996; see also Klapwijk 1987).

Moreover, as Geertsema has shown in his response to Friesen, Dooyeweerd has not always been consistent with respect to the issue of concentration. Usually he speaks of supratemporal concentration as if it is exclusively a matter of *direction* (or: dynamism). At other places, however, it seems as if the supratemporal sphere refers to a certain *state*, a mode of being, an intermediate area with its own characteristics. The latter way of conceiving the relation between God and earthly reality is indeed vulnerable to schematization in terms of higher and lower forms of functioning/being and suggests a certain continuity between God and man.

4. *Consequences of pantheism for cosmology and anthropology*

Friesen's pantheist interpretation has consequences for his view on individuality structures and on man. I will only briefly indicate these consequences. Geertsema's response goes more deeply into the two subjects and I basically agree with his comments and suggestions. So, how does Friesen's pantheist interpretation affect his view on Dooyeweerd's cosmology and anthropology? Individuality structures "differentiate out of supratemporal totality", he says (thesis 21). This formulation is consistent with the metaphor of the prism and the idea of concentration/divergence. However, in the context of Friesen's pantheist interpretation these formulations come close to the idea of creation continuously evolving from God. Friesen does not factually say this. He does not explicitly endorse the idea of creation continua nor does he speak of differentiation as creation. There are — in his account — some conceptual barriers left to prevent Dooyeweerd's philosophy from collapsing into straight-forward Neo-Platonism. It is in fact the reason why he calls Dooyeweerd's philosophy pantheist instead of pantheist. There is for instance a difference between eternity and supratemporal totality. Individuality structures differentiate from the latter, not from eternity. And creation is not the same as temporal becoming (*tijdelijke wording*). The differentiation of individuality structures should be interpreted as a matter of temporal becoming — and not of creation. So, Friesen has sufficient resources to resist the suggestion that he offers a Neo-Platonist interpretation. His interpretation is more subtle, but nevertheless one-sided. The pantheism he observes in Dooyeweerd's texts leads to an exclusive preference for the concentration/differentiation metaphor and to a heavy emphasis on the idea of the supratemporal heart as

concentration point from which not only human functions and substructures but in fact all individuality structures evolve. He, for instance, says that individuality structures “do not have any reality at all apart from man, their religious root” (thesis 26). This is one step further than Dooyeweerd ever went. Dooyeweerd’s cosmology is indeed anthropocentric, but to say that individuality structures do not have reality apart from man is an exaggeration and drives reformational philosophy toward idealism. The issue of how physical and biotic entities have an existence apart from man is (almost) a blank spot in Dooyeweerd’s theory of individuality structures.⁹ As far as I know, Dooyeweerd never said they do not exist apart from man. He did say that the entire temporal cosmos (including physical and biotic objects) has ‘fallen’. And he asserted that physical and biotic entities come to fulfillment in relation to mankind. But he never said that they do not exist apart from man.

Another point is negligence of the historical dimension. The excessive emphasis on concentration/differentiation leads to spiritualization of the relation between God and the world. It obscures the centrality of Dooyeweerd’s notion of the historical as foundational layer in the process of opening-up of law spheres. The process of temporal differentiation depends in Dooyeweerd’s view on the level of historical development, i.e., the level of civilization (*beschavingspeil*). This historical dimension lacks almost completely in Friesen’s portrait of Dooyeweerd’s theory of individuality structures and their unfolding (theses 21-35). Thesis 86, devoted to the process of unfolding, does not mention individuality structures (but only modal functions) as intrinsically related to the process of disclosure.

For anthropology basically the same picture emerges: (higher) supratemporal totality (unity) which differentiates in (lower) functions and substructures. The distinction between creation and temporal becoming is applied to this picture: human beings were “first” (? GG) created as undifferentiated supratemporal unity and “thereafter (? GG) formed, and placed within, or ‘fitted within’ temporal reality” (thesis 64). It is true that Dooyeweerd applies the distinction between creation and temporal becoming to man (Dooyeweerd 1942, proposition 29). However, he does not do this in terms of ‘first’ and ‘thereafter’; nor in terms of an initial creation of undifferentiated supratemporal totality and a later temporal differentiation of functions and substructures. It is contradictory (and even nonsensical) in Dooyeweerd’s view to construe temporal relations between creation and processes within created reality (such as the process of temporal becoming). Creation is not subject to temporal relations. The use of terms like ‘first’ and ‘thereafter’ is inappropriate, therefore. Friesen’s use of these terms is even more notable in view of the fact that thesis 64 begins with the assertion that man’s creation as body and soul was completed at creation. This is exactly what Dooyeweerd says.

Within the panentheist framework it might be coherent what Friesen says, but I do not see this as argument in favor of this interpretation. It is the other

⁹ See however NC II, 52 ff. where it is said that “man does not make his appearance in time until the whole foundation for the normative functions of temporal reality has been laid in the creation”. See also NC II, 305.

way around: it is because of the fact that Dooyeweerd never speaks of the creation of man as undifferentiated supratemporal totality that we have to suspect the soundness of the panentheist interpretation. It is true that Dooyeweerd relates temporal becoming solely to the body. We have to remind however that the concept of body encloses all normative functions including the act-structure, so that if the supratemporal heart is taken as concentric directedness of functions (and not as state) there is no conceptual space for the view that man is first created as soul (understood as undifferentiated, supratemporal totality) and then (afterwards) temporally differentiates in the various bodily structures. The way Friesen expresses his view, is not completely consistent, therefore: thesis 64 begins with the fully Dooyeweerdian idea of the creation of man as a creation of body and soul. And then he says that creation of the soul comes first and temporal differentiation of bodily structures comes later.

To conclude, I mentioned Friesen's tendency to speak about the supratemporal heart as if it were a 'state' (of being), or as belonging to an 'intermediate state'. It is inevitable that this leads to a scheme of higher and lower functions and dualistic formulations. It comes as no surprise therefore that he says that "Man expresses or reveals his supratemporal selfhood in the lower (! GG) ontical realm of the temporal cosmos." (thesis 65). I refer here to what has been said about higher and lower functions and their relation to pantheism in the third section. The same thesis 65 states that we live "simultaneously in both the supratemporal aevum and the temporal world". Again, how could there be simultaneity between the supratemporal and the temporal? What could the concept of simultaneity, which by definition refers to temporal phenomena and relations, mean with respect to phenomena that escape from temporality? As Brüggeman-Kruijff (1981) and Geertsema (1970) have indicated in their in-depth studies, there are in fact confusing (and to my opinion incoherent) formulations in Dooyeweerd's work that point to the notion of a parallel existence of the temporal and supratemporal sphere. Friesen is right by pointing at these formulations, however he overemphasizes their overall importance and does not sufficiently acknowledge the prevailing terminology of dynamism, relatedness and boundaries.

5. *Modes as modes of consciousness*

There is, finally, one aspect of Friesen's contribution that I want to address: his view on modes (aspects) as modes of consciousness. "Aspects are modes of consciousness or experience, not modes of being or properties of things". Dooyeweerd's 1974 interview with Magnus Verbrugge to which this statement refers, indeed says that aspects are "ways, fundamental *ways* in which man experiences reality". However, Friesen does not mention what Dooyeweerd immediately adds: "And at the same time, they are also the fundamental ways of his being and existence [*zijn bestaan, zijn Existenz*]." The word 'his' ('his being and existence') refers here to man. The context of this quotation reveals that Dooyeweerd is trying to explain how Abraham Kuyper's notion of sphere

sovereignty influenced his concept of modality, with its irreducible meaning kernel. Dooyeweerd says: “They are often called ways of being [*zijnswijze*], but the Philosophy of the Law-Idea has intentionally limited the term ‘being’ to God.” But, again, this quotation should be interpreted from its context. From this context it is clear that the modal aspects with their sphere sovereignty indicate ‘kinds’ of relatedness of God and creation.¹⁰ They are not just logical distinctions, nor projections from our own mind onto reality. They are ‘kinds’ of relatedness between God and created reality that determine the factual functioning of things, processes and composites of both. Dooyeweerd repeats in the interview what he had said in the *New Critique*, that God alone can be ascribed being. Created reality exists in the mode of dependence. But this dependence does, of course, not mean that things exist only in the mind of the knower. So the order is: created reality exists as meaning; meaning is referring and expressing, it is dynamic; meaning is a way of being given (‘wijze van gegeven zijn’) of this dynamic; the primary distinctions in the way of givenness of created reality are modal; things can only be thought philosophically on the basis of these modal distinctions.

The other reference — to the lengthy and illuminating response to van Peursen’s critical questions — does not hold either, and basically reiterates these points. Van Peursen (1959, 166) had suggested that the modal spheres better can be conceived as product of theoretical abstraction instead of as transcendental conditions for all possible human experience (and theorizing). To this Dooyeweerd (1960) responds that this approach boils down to a subjectivizing of the idea of creation order. The meaning kernel of modal laws is not found by theoretical abstraction, nor within naïve experience; the differentiation of modal meaning has to be presupposed transcendently and must tentatively be interpreted in philosophy, which is in dialogue with the special sciences and naïve experience.¹¹ “The dynamics of meaning”, it is added, “can only realize itself in the indissoluble correlation of law- and subject-side of our temporal horizon of experience *and existence*.” (Dooyeweerd 1960, 109; italics added by GG) Dooyeweerd indeed says that modes are not modes of being and that modes are not properties of things. But this does not mean that he denies existence of these modes outside the human mind. What he denies is existence of things, i.e., things conceived as (philosophically) hypostasized bearers of properties. Modal aspects and the laws that hold for the aspects are fundamental in the sense that they have to be presupposed (transcendentally)

¹⁰ “But the idea of sovereignty in its own sphere has had such a great influence on the Philosophy of the Law-Idea because Kuyper immediately based it on the revelation concerning creation — that God created all things according to their kind [*aard*], that is something that is expressly said there. Which makes it clear that *kind* is not dependent on human thinking, and not set up [*ingeleed*] by man by means of logical distinctions.” See: <http://www.members.shaw.ca/aevum/1974Interview.pdf>.

¹¹ I recommend this article for several reasons: emphasis on supratemporality as directedness; clear expression of the idea of law as referring to the law-side of created reality (with even a suggestion of a distinction between creation order and laws understood as law-side of reality), clarification of Dooyeweerd’s views on (existential) phenomenology and on time.

in order to do justice to the way created reality is given to us, i.e. as a many-faceted dynamic of meaning.

6. Conclusion

I acknowledge Friesen's theses as an intriguing contribution to the ongoing debate on Dooyeweerd's systematic philosophy. Friesen's panentheist interpretation of Dooyeweerd has to be rejected, but Friesen's work has the merit of making us aware of certain aspects of Dooyeweerd's thought that might give rise to such interpretation. The degree of detail with which this interpretation is supported adds to the value of his contribution.

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