

# Principles and Positivization:

## Dooyeweerd and rational autonomy

by

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### I. Introduction

This is a response to Michael J. DeMoor's article "Rational Autonomy and Autonomous Rationality: Dooyeweerd, Kant and Fichte on Subjectivity, Objectivity and Normativity," *Philosophia Reformata* 72 (2007) 105-129. DeMoor argues that although Dooyeweerd opposed Kant's idea of the autonomy of thought, he nevertheless relied on the idea of rational autonomy for the active positivizing of norms. DeMoor finds similarities between Dooyeweerd and Fichte with respect to these three issues:

1. Our consciousness depends on *reflexivity* or self-consciousness;
2. The correlation between subjectivity and objectivity;
3. The autonomy or spontaneity of the agent, by which "binding norms are freely applied to oneself."

An investigation of these issues is very helpful in understanding Dooyeweerd. And it is encouraging to see a comparison of Dooyeweerd's philosophy to earlier philosophers, since he did not claim originality for his philosophy.<sup>1</sup> But DeMoor's conclusions are incorrect. He does not take into account Dooyeweerd's own critique of Fichte, and of the idea of reflexivity in particular. De Moor also misinterprets Dooyeweerd's own philosophy, and as a result he sees similarities where there are none. Dooyeweerd has different ideas of self-consciousness, of the subject, of the object, and of the subject-

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<sup>1</sup> Dooyeweerd said that his philosophy is related to the perennial tradition. See *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1997; Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1969; first published 1953) [*NC*], I, 118. This work is an English translation and revision of Dooyeweerd's *De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee*, (Amsterdam: H.J. Paris, 1935) [*WdW*]. And Dooyeweerd denies originality for his philosophy (See *WdW* II, vii-viii, not translated in *NC*).

object relation. And Dooyeweerd rejects both realism and idealism. A more detailed examination of these issues helps us to understand the historical context of Dooyeweerd's philosophy.

I begin by discussing Franz von Baader's critique of Kant and Fichte. This is because Dooyeweerd's critique of the autonomy of thought comes from Baader's similar critique. Second, many of the arguments raised by DeMoor against Dooyeweerd were first raised against Baader, and a review of these issues will help us to historically situate and to understand Dooyeweerd's own philosophy. I then will examine each of the three issues raised by DeMoor. For the sake of brevity, I will frequently refer to my "95 Theses on Herman Dooyeweerd," which provides references for many of the statements.<sup>2</sup>

## II. Baader's Critique of the Autonomy of Thought

Dooyeweerd's critique of the dogma of the autonomy of theoretical thought derives from Baader. It is not an idea that is unique to reformational philosophy. In other articles, I have shown how Dooyeweerd was exposed to the ideas of Baader;<sup>3</sup> for the present, it is sufficient to refer to the mediation of these ideas by Abraham Kuyper. Kuyper was introduced to Baader's ideas by the theologian J.H. Gunning, Jr.,<sup>4</sup> and Kuyper expressed appreciation for many of Baader's ideas.<sup>5</sup> Kuyper says that Baader's ideas provide the best defence against modernism. And he specifically praises Baader for opposing the idea of the autonomy of thought, which he says is the human desire to rid itself of God:

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<sup>2</sup> J. Glenn Friesen: "95 Theses on Herman Dooyeweerd," *Philosophia Reformata* \_\_ (2008).

<sup>3</sup> J. Glenn Friesen: "The Mystical Dooyeweerd: The relation of his thought to Franz von Baader," *Ars Disputandi* 3 (2003) [<http://www.arsdisputandi.org/publish/articles/000088/index.html>]; "Dooyeweerd, Spann, and the Philosophy of Totality," *Philosophia Reformata* 70 (2005) 2-22.

<sup>4</sup> See Lieuwe Mietus: *Gunning en de theosofie: Een onderzoek naar de receptie van de christelijke theosofie in het werk van J.H. Gunning Jr. van 1863-1876*, (Gorinchem: Narratio, 2006), and my review of this book in *Philosophia Reformata* 72 (2007) 86-91.

<sup>5</sup> See J. Glenn Friesen: "The Mystical Dooyeweerd Once Again: Kuyper's Use of Franz von Baader," *Ars Disputandi* 3 (2003) [<http://www.arsdisputandi.org/publish/articles/000130/index.html>].

Of, om nog dieper in het eigenlijke motief in te dringen, in de Evolutie-theorie schuilt evenals in het Pantheïsme 's menschen zucht om van God af te komen. Niettegenstaande zijn practische Vernunft dreef deze zucht Kant zelfs, van wien Baader terecht schreef: „Grundfehler seiner Philosophie ist, dass ihr . . . der Mensch autonom, spontan ist; er habe die Vernunft von sich; daher macht sie den Mensch zu Gott und wird pantheistisch.”<sup>6</sup>

[Or, if we go even deeper into their real motive, what lies behind both theory of evolution and pantheism is man's desire to get rid of God. Notwithstanding his practical Reason, it was this desire that drove Kant himself, of whom Baader correctly wrote: ‘The basic error of his philosophy is that it...that man is autonomous and spontaneous, and that he has obtained reason from himself; in this way it transforms man into God, and so becomes pantheistic.’]

Kuyper does not give a direct citation from Baader.<sup>7</sup> But we know that Kuyper learned about Baader from Gunning. And Baader did indeed give a critique of the idea of the autonomy of thought. Baader says that human autonomy is an absurd concept.<sup>8</sup> Autonomy and anomie in knowing, willing, acting is the teaching of the absolute spontaneity of man (*Werke* 2, 176, 414; 3, 212). But only God has absolute autonomy (Franz Rev. *Werke* 6, 324). As discussed in my article “Mystical Dooyeweerd,” Baader also refers to autonomy as ‘*Selbstsetzung*’ and he contrasts this autonomy with our being ‘*Gesetzt*’ by God, in subjection to God's law. Dooyeweerd makes this same connection to God's law when he opposes our autonomous setting [*stellen*] our own law to being “fitted into” [*gesteld*] God's law.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Abraham Kuyper: “De verflauwing der grenzen,” (Amsterdam: J.A. Wormser, 1982; <http://www.neocalvinisme.nl/ak/broch/akverfl.html>), 19-20.

<sup>7</sup> Kuyper cites Julius Baumann (1837-1916): *Geschiedenis der Philosophie nach Ideëngehalt und Beweisen*, (Gotha 1890), 342. Baumann was professor of philosophy at the University of Göttingen.

<sup>8</sup> Franz von Baader: *Gesammelte Werke*, (Leipzig, 1851; reprint Scientia verlag Aalen, 1987) 1, 9 [*Werke*]

<sup>9</sup> Herman Dooyeweerd, “Advies over Rooms-katholieke en Anti-revolutionaire Staatkunde.” (1923). See also his *WdW* I, 12, 36 [*zelf gesteld*] and being “fitted into” [*ingesteld, ingevoegd*], I, 6, 22, 36, 64; II, 395, 401, 404, 494.

In rejecting Kant's idea of the autonomy of thought, Baader turned Kant's own ideas against Kant. But just as Baader's use of Kantian terminology does not mean that Baader was a Kantian, neither does Dooyeweerd's use of the same arguments mean that he was a Kantian. It is true that in the 1920's Baader revival, Johann Sauter argued that Baader was the successor and elaborator of Kant.<sup>10</sup> But even Sauter acknowledged that Baader overcame rationalism and empiricism in a different way than Kant. For Kant, "Intuitions without concepts are blind; concepts without intuition are empty."<sup>11</sup> For Baader, the outer world is not blind, but filled with spirit. And our reason is not empty, but possesses a knowledge that is already *given* (Sauter, 88). Dooyeweerd also emphasizes the *givenness* of an experience that is pre-theoretical, and on which all knowing, whether pre-theoretical or theoretical, relies.

Baader appreciated Fichte's teaching of self-consciousness as the *ipsissima res* [highest matter, the very thing itself] of Spirit (*Werke* 1, 175, 179n; 4, 160; 8, 66). But Baader opposed Fichte's teaching that we have only a temporal view [*Anschauwing*] of reality (*Werke* 15, 178). In contrast to Baader, Fichte criticized all ideas of revelation (*Werke* 8, 120ff; 9, 69). Baader explicitly distanced himself from Fichte's "egotistical philosophy" in which the law is a result of an operation of the ego (*Ich*). Instead, Baader emphasized that God is the giver of the law. God is above us, but that does not mean outside of us, for because we are rooted in God, we can never know ourselves as completely outside of Him. Baader criticized Fichte's idea that everything could be explained as deriving from my self (*Ich*) (*Werke* 15, 178). In his idea of freedom, Fichte had a wrong idea of spontaneous intelligent being as opposed to non-intelligent being. For Baader, our spontaneity differs from animal consciousness, but it is not an absolute spontaneity whereby we can ourselves be the source and autonomous creator of law. To pretend to

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<sup>10</sup> Johann Sauter: *Baader und Kant* (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1928) at 607: "Baader ... als der sinnvolle Weiterbildner Kants!" Peter Koslowski reads Sauter as contrasting Baader and Kant, but says that Sauter failed to take into account Baader's theosophical views (Peter Koslowski: *Philosophien der Offenbarung: Antiker Gnostizismus, Franz von Baader, Schelling* (Vienna: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2001), 279.

<sup>11</sup> Immanuel Kant: *Critique of Pure Reason* [1781], tr. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's, 1985), A 51/B 75.

be the giver of Law, in the way that God is, is an “antireligious philosopheme” (*Werke* 2, 445).

And Baader opposed Fichte’s idea of reflexive consciousness. In particular, he criticized Fichte’s idea that the ego (*Ich*) and the non-ego (*nicht-Ich*) were distinguished from each other, but that at the same time the non-ego was both posited and negated in relation to the ego, as if it could be both something opposed to the ego as well as above or below the ego. He says that in Fichte there is a constant war between both, as well as between God and creation and Spirit and nature (*Werke* 9, 34ff; 15, 367; 5, 35). Baader gives the picturesque image of a brawl that is nevertheless supposed to end in a wedding (*Werke* 6, 120).<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, in his picture of the non-ego, Fichte gave priority to the unconscious and selfless in preference to the conscious self (*Werke* 7, 56). But Baader emphasizes that in the non-ego, we must distinguish between the original healthy situation and the sick situation (after the fall). The unhealthy must not be accepted, but rather banned by cultural formation (*Werke* 3, 242ff).

### **III. The dependence of our consciousness on self-consciousness**

Let us now examine the three issues where DeMoor sees similarity between Fichte and Dooyeweerd. I will begin with the issue whether self-consciousness is reflexive. DeMoor refers to Fichte’s view that “in self-consciousness, the self-reverting activity makes an object of itself.” He says that this reflexivity is the foundation for humans being able to autonomously set law (DeMoor 108). But while that may be true for Fichte, DeMoor is wrong in his view that Dooyeweerd believed in this kind of self-reflexive knowledge. Dooyeweerd rejects the idea of reflexivity as being based on an absolutization of the analytical aspect. For Dooyeweerd, we come to self-knowledge by “religious self reflection” (Thesis 1). This self-reflection is not reflexive. Self-reflection is a turning inwards to reflect on our supratemporal selfhood; this supratemporal selfhood affords us an Archimedean point outside of time on which our act of thinking is based. This religious self-reflection exceeds the bounds of theoretical thought. It is therefore

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<sup>12</sup> Einer “katzenbalgerei des Ichs und des Nicht-Ichs” die aber mit ein Hochzeit schließt.

different from a reflexive theoretical thought. Religious self-reflection can exceed theoretical thought because the selfhood is supratemporal and stands above all temporal functions including our functions of thought (Thesis 89). Already in the opening pages of *De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee*, Dooyeweerd specifically contrasts such religious self-reflection (which transcends thought) with the incorrect idea of reflexive thought:

De wijsgeerige zelf-kennis onderstelt dus althans, dat *onze zelfheid*, die ook in hare actueele *denk-werkzaamheid* de grenzen van het denken transcendeert, haar tijdelijke *denk-werkzaamheid* richte op *zich zelve*. Niet het wijsgeerig denken keert reflecteerend tot zich zelve in, maar *ik behoort*, wijsgeerig denkende, tot mij zelve in te keeren. En deze actueele zelf-inkeer in de *denkwerkzaamheid* gaat noodwendig de grenzen van het wijsgeerig denken te boven, zal het inderdaad to de verlangde *zelf-kennis* te komen. (*WdW* I, 9)

Philosophic self-knowledge thus always supposes that *our selfhood*, which in its actual activity of *thinking* transcends the boundaries of thinking, directs its temporal activity of thinking to *itself*. It is not that philosophic thought reflexively turns inwards towards thought itself, but rather that *I am required*, in the process of philosophic thought, to turn inwards to my self. And this actual turning inwards in the act of thinking necessarily transcends the boundaries of philosophic thought if it is really to arrive at the desired *self-knowledge*. [my translation, since *NC* I, 7 is unclear<sup>13</sup>]

On the previous page, Dooyeweerd rejects any idea of using reflexiveness of thought to attain self-consciousness within the immanent limits of thought:

De ik-heid, welke in de wijsgeerige zelf-bezinning tot subjectieven zelf-inkeer komt, lost zich dan op in de immanent “zuivere” denk-actualiteit als noodwendige voorwaarde van alle theoretisch denken. De wijsgeerige zelf-bezinning bestaat dan in niets anders dan in een *reflexie* van het wijsgeerig denken op zijn eigen actualiteit (*WdW* I, 8).

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<sup>13</sup> The *New Critique* gives a rather garbled translation that is hard to understand:

Philosophical self-reflection then supposes in any case, that our ego, which transcends the limits of theoretical thought, should direct its reflecting act of thought toward *itself*. Philosophical thought does not return to itself, in the process of reflecting, but it is the ego which in the process of philosophical thinking should return to itself. And this actual return to oneself in the reflecting act of thought must finally transcend the limits to be arrived at (*NC* I, 7).

[The I-ness, which should arrive in philosophic self-reflection at a subjective turning inwards, is [in this rejected viewpoint] dissolved into an immanent “pure” actuality of thought, which is then regarded as the necessary pre-requisite of all theoretic thought. Philosophic self-reflection [according to this rejected view] then consists of nothing else than a *reflexiveness* of philosophical thought on its own actuality.] [my translation; Cf. *NC I*, 6.<sup>14</sup>].

But, continues Dooyeweerd, in this attempted reflexive way to obtain self-consciousness, the “ghost of the blessed Münchhausen appears.” Although reflexive thought tries to get rid of the real thinking selfhood, the selfhood appears again, just as it was impossible to get rid of Münchhausen in the tall tales that were told about him. There is a kind of infinite regress, for the idea of a transcendental logical pole of thought is no more than an abstraction from our real selfhood, which is operating in its logical function but which cannot be reduced to that function:

...ze wordt zelfs in den verst denkbaren graad van abstractie beïsoleerd, daar zij het product is van een methodisch uitschakelingsproces, waardoor de denker meent, tenslotte de denk-functie *geheel op zichzelf* te kunnen stellen (*WdW I*, 8).

In fact it is abstracted to the highest conceivable level of abstraction, since it is the product of a methodical process of elimination, in which the thinker supposes he is able to finally direct the thought-function *entirely upon itself* (my translation):

The *New Critique* (*NC I*, 8) does not make this clear. It fails to italicize the last words and mistranslates them as “upon himself” instead of “entirely upon itself”—which is the whole point of the rejected idea of reflexiveness. In reflexive thought in immanence philosophy, the logical function of theoretical thought is elevated from the coherence of

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<sup>14</sup> *NC I*, 6 fails to bring out the contrast, and does not even refer to reflexiveness:

That which remains [in this rejected viewpoint] is a so-called “transcendental-logical subject.” It no longer has anything individual in itself and does not *transcend* the boundaries of our logical function. It is conceived of as an immanent, subjective pole of thought, in opposition to which the entire experienceable reality recedes into the counter-pole of “*Gegenständlichkeit*.” As such it is considered to be a transcendental pre-requisite of all concrete theoretical knowledge. For all knowledge is necessarily related to an ultimate “I think.” And the latter is nothing but the ultimate logical unity of the epistemological subject.

meaning, and it is treated as being independent of the rest of temporal reality. We elevate (or absolutize) this function to either the Archimedean point or to the Origin (*Arché*).<sup>15</sup> But this attempt to elevate the logical function of thought is not the act of what these immanence philosophers call the ‘transcendental thinking subject,’ for that is only an abstract concept. The real act, even in their absolutization, is the act of our full I-ness, which transcends thinking (*WdW* I, 24). “In truth the selfhood as the religious root of existence is the hidden performer on the instrument of philosophic thought (*NC* I, 21).

And this is the fundamental flaw in DeMoor’s argument. His argument for rational autonomy depends on a view of reflexive thought that is based on immanence philosophy. It is a view that opposes this supposed logical pole of thought to the “object” outside of thought. In so doing, it misinterprets the selfhood in terms of only one of its functions—the logical function—and it misinterprets the theoretical *Gegenstand*—that which is opposed to the logical aspect—as an object (*WdW* I, 50). We shall see this in the discussion of the relation between subject and object.

For Dooyeweerd, our selfhood transcends the theoretical *Gegenstand*-relation. That is why he rejects the idea of reflexive thought as a way to understand the selfhood.<sup>16</sup> Immanence philosophy cannot see that it has lost sight of our true selfhood. And this is so *even when* it uses the idea of self-reflexive thought:

It remains hidden to Kant that in his understanding the thinker thereby eliminates from critical self-reflection his own activity of thought (*which is only actualized in the temporal coherence of meaning*). This fact must remain hidden to immanence philosophy, even where it supposes that it has been able to come to an essential self-reflexive understanding of thought viewed as itself (*WdW* I, 73, my translation; not in *NC*)

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<sup>15</sup> Note that the coherence of meaning, the supratemporal Archimedean point and the eternal Origin all correspond to Dooyeweerd’s three transcendental problems, and to the three levels of cosmic time, aevum and eternity. See Theses 39 and 40. In *WdW* I, 9, Dooyeweerd says that we may reach this same conclusion by another train of thought, one that derives from the idea that philosophic thought is thinking about a totality.

<sup>16</sup> Herman Dooyeweerd: “Het transcendentale critiek van het wijsgeerig denken,” *Philosophia Reformata* 6 (1941), 1-20 at 13.

But Dooyeweerd also criticized Fichte. One of the longest entries in Volume IV, the index to the *New Critique* is with respect to Fichte.<sup>17</sup> Although Fichte correctly saw the antinomy in proclaiming the product of thought to be a “thing in itself” independent of thought (*NC* I, 301), Fichte “proclaimed practical reason, as the seat of the ethical ideal of personality, to be the deepest root of the entire cosmos” (*NC* I, 362). Dooyeweerd refers to Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre*, where Fichte conceives of the “thinking ego” in the reflexive-logical sense (*NC* I, 78).

The first and highest *principle* of Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre* is the “absolute ego” which posits itself. Dooyeweerd says that at first we might suppose that here Fichte has discovered the religious root of the whole temporal cosmos. But it soon turns out that this first principle embodies nothing but the proclamation of the absolute sovereignty of “practical reason,” in the sense of the Humanist ideal of moral freedom. And the first absolute “*Tathandlung*” (practical act) of reason originates from the absolute ego *thinking* of the absolute ego upon itself. (*NC* I, 416; *WdW* I, 384—“zich zelf denken”). This is Fichte’s idea of self-reflexive thought.

Fichte’s search for the radical unity of a selfhood beyond the theoretical diversity of syntheses, and his insight into the continuous coherence of meaning of the cosmos are both misdirected by his Humanistic cosmological idea, and by his use of dialectical logical thought (*NC* I, 426). Fichte correctly saw that Kant’s attempted solution of *apriori* synthesis, based on the transcendental *logical* function, could not be a real solution. But Fichte, instead of focusing his reflection towards the supra-theoretical ego, sought other functions of the ego as a connecting link. In some of his writings, Fichte appealed to a productive power of imagination, whereby the ego produced the non-ego, but for him this was a function of feeling. Fichte incorrectly supposed that he had based his synthesis on pre-theoretical experience. But feeling is only a pre-logical function. It is not the same as our full pre-theoretical experience. Only cosmic consciousness<sup>18</sup> can grasp the true

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<sup>17</sup> This index, compiled by H. de Jongste, improperly refers to J.J. Fichte instead of J.G. Fichte. Similar errors appear in the *NC*.

<sup>18</sup> See discussion below of the meaning of ‘cosmic consciousness.’

unity of all aspects of reality, because in its transcendent root our selfhood transcends all its modal functions (*NC I*, 430-31).<sup>19</sup> Dooyeweerd says that Fichte was influenced by Jacobi's irrationalistic philosophy of feeling (*NC I*, 451). Much earlier, Baader also criticized Jacobi's reliance on feeling.

Elsewhere, Dooyeweerd says that Fichte tried to use the *ethical* aspect as the connecting link. He says that Fichte is "the father of the entire dialectical-reflective way of thinking." Fichte noted the pitfall in conceiving of the selfhood in its logical thought-activity, when he spoke of a tension between "absolute ego" and "thinking ego." Fichte sought the selfhood not in "theoretical" but in "practical reason." "In other words, to him, theoretical thought was *ethically determined* from the outset" (*NC I*, 142-43). Dooyeweerd rejects that solution, too. Fichte's idea of practical reason absolutizes the moral aspect, and his dialectical thought usurps the task of the cosmic order (*NC I*, 420). But is not this priority of practical reason—of practical judgments—the very solution that DeMoor is attempting to revive? DeMoor acknowledges that for Kant, it is practical philosophy that gives the ability to autonomously apply norms to oneself. And he acknowledges that in Fichte, theoretical reason is grounded in practical reason (DeMoor, 113-114).

As we have seen, Dooyeweerd emphasizes that our self-knowledge is derived from "religious self-reflection" in which we recognize our supratemporal selfhood. This self-reflection is not reflexive. Religious self-reflection goes beyond the bounds of theoretical thought and is not caught within theoretical thought as in the case of reflexive thought. So what are DeMoor's arguments for finding reflexivity of thought in Dooyeweerd?

### 1. Cosmic consciousness

DeMoor says that both Kant and Fichte ground their idea of autonomy or self-legislation in the "capacity for reflexivity or self-consciousness; that is, the ability to relate our actions to ourselves as the agents of those actions" (DeMoor 114). He sees an analogue of

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<sup>19</sup> Note: Dooyeweerd has his own view of productive imagination, but it is not limited to the sensory aspect. For Dooyeweerd, imagination is one of the three directions of acts that arise from out of our supratemporal selfhood, and which function in all aspects.

this in Dooyeweerd's idea of cosmic consciousness, where we are aware of our temporal functions as "our own." DeMoor refers to Dooyeweerd's statement that we would not even be aware of a sweet taste if our intuition did not relate our sensory impressions to our selfhood (DeMoor 122, citing *NC II*, 478). This is a point that has received far too little attention in reformational philosophy. See Thesis 5. But it is there not to demonstrate the reflexivity of our thought (which Dooyeweerd rejects), but rather the way that our temporal body, which functions in the temporal aspects, is related to our supratemporal selfhood. Cosmic consciousness has nothing to do with any reflexivity in Fichte's sense. DeMoor misunderstands this reference to cosmic consciousness of sweetness as being theoretical. But cosmic consciousness is always pre-theoretical. Dooyeweerd warns against this being misinterpreted theoretically:

This integral experience of reality must not in any way be misinterpreted theoretically in accordance with the functionalistic view-points of immanence-philosophy (e.g., as something of a purely sensory psychological nature, or as a synthetical logical arrangement of sensory impressions. (*NC II*, 474-75).

Cosmic consciousness is pre-theoretical and is related to religious self-reflection, and to our *Hineinleben*, entering into temporal reality (*NC II*, 475; Thesis 1).

Dooyeweerd elsewhere speaks of the importance of what is our own: our temporal functions are "not foreign" [*niet vreemd*] to us.<sup>20</sup> Dooyeweerd's use of the idea of cosmic consciousness is to overcome a dualistic anthropology of body and soul. In immanence philosophy, it is frequently only the logical aspect that is viewed as our true self, which is then absolutized. The other temporal functions are then deemed foreign, and need to be related to the logical. But Dooyeweerd emphasizes that all of the temporal functions, not just the logical, are "our own." As already mentioned, he views Fichte as having absolutized the moral function. And so Fichte's reflexivity, even if it tries to get around the problem of logical absolutization, does not solve the problem of absolutization in immanence philosophy.

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<sup>20</sup> Herman Dooyeweerd: *De Crisis der Humanistische Staatsleer, in het licht eener Calvinistische kosmologie en kennistheorie* (Amsterdam: Ten Have, 1931), 103.

## 2. Cosmological consciousness

Whereas cosmic consciousness belongs to naïve experience, cosmological consciousness belongs to theoretical experience (See Thesis 91). In theory, we first become aware of the modal aspects, which are split apart from their coherent *systasis* into a *dis-stasis*.<sup>21</sup> In cosmological consciousness, we become aware of these aspects *as distinguished in theory* as “our own.” We experience the identity of these aspects with our own modes of consciousness, and our *theoretical* intuition<sup>22</sup> relates the aspects back to the unity of our supratemporal selfhood, in which these aspects coincide (Theses 11, 83, 84, 90). But DeMoor confuses cosmological and cosmic consciousness; he cites NC II, 474 as being theoretical, when it is not (DeMoor, 122). Theory cannot reveal the analytical aspect as “our own.” For that we rely on cosmic consciousness (NC II, 475).

DeMoor refers to NC II, 473:

In the transcendental temporal direction of theoretical intuition, our selfhood becomes *cosmologically conscious of itself* in the temporal coherence and diversity of all its modal functions.

But DeMoor does not cite the words that immediately following:

It is human personality that operates in cognition; it is not one or more of its abstracted modal functions. In its religious root this personality transcends its temporal acts and modal functions.

So cosmological consciousness is the consciousness of our supratemporal selfhood in relation to the modal aspects, which have been distinguished or set apart in theoretical dis-stasis. Cosmological consciousness is not a consciousness based on merely one modal function in an abstracted sense (whether that modal function be the sensory, the analytical, or the ethical). Therefore, Dooyeweerd’s idea of cosmological consciousness has nothing to do with either Kant’s logical unity of apperception, nor with Fichte’s reflexive kind of self-consciousness.

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<sup>21</sup> DeMoor mistakenly refers to the coherence as *enstasis*. The coherence is *systasis*. *Enstasis* is the entering of our supratemporal selfhood into that *systasis*.

<sup>22</sup> Dooyeweerd distinguishes pre-theoretical from theoretical intuition. See his last article, “De Kentheoretische Gegenstandsrelatie en de Logische Subject-Objectrelatie,” *Philosophia Reformata* 40 (1975) 83-101 [‘Gegenstandsrelatie’].

### 3. Enstasis

DeMoor also refers to the way that Dooyeweerd distinguishes human consciousness from animal consciousness. Animals merely experience a *subjective undergoing* of sense impressions whereas human consciousness is *enstatic* (DeMoor 123, citing *NC II*, 539). Again, ‘*enstasis*’ is a term that is too often ignored by reformational philosophy. But DeMoor does not quite get it right. Dooyeweerd’s emphasis is not just on temporal continuity, which he calls ‘*systasis*.’ His emphasis in using the term ‘*enstasis*’ is the way that our supratemporal selfhood is able to enter into temporal reality. We do this both in naïve experience and in theoretical experience. This is what distinguishes us from animals, which merely undergo sense impressions, as opposed to the entering into of temporal reality and experiencing it as “our own.” Dooyeweerd also refers to this entering into as a ‘*Hineinleben*’ (Thesis 1). Animals, who are caught within time, are *ecstatically* lost within time. So Dooyeweerd’s use of *enstasis* relates to our supratemporal selfhood; it does not support Fichte’s immanent view of consciousness.

## **IV. The correlation between subjectivity and objectivity**

In the opening pages of the *New Critique*, Dooyeweerd criticizes those who posit a transcendental subject of thought, a subject that is not really transcendent, and who then oppose such an abstraction to all of experienceable reality in the supposed counterpole of “*Gegenständlichkeit*” (*WdW I*, 8). Is it not precisely that kind of polarity of subject and object that DeMoor is advocating? We need to examine more closely what Dooyeweerd means by ‘subject,’ ‘object,’ and the ‘subject-object relation.’

### 1. Supratemporal subject versus immanent subject

DeMoor acknowledges that his comparison between Fichte and Dooyeweerd does not “go all the way down.” He says,

Unlike in Fichte’s conception, Dooyeweerd’s intuition relates not to a primarily rational, transcendental ego, but to the transcendent religious self-hood (though it seems that this transcendent selfhood nevertheless has a certain transcendental role to play, even if it is not itself the final unconditioned condition). (DeMoor 123 fn27)

But Fichte's use of the ego as rational and transcendental depends on immanence philosophy, and an absolutization of temporal aspects. How then can there be any similarity in his view of the selfhood with that of Dooyeweerd's supratemporal transcendent selfhood?

## 2. Object:

### a) A generated world versus the givenness of experience

DeMoor correctly cites Dooyeweerd's view that for Fichte, the absolute ego has the infinite task to create from itself the cosmos as the product of absolute freedom. The "I" posits itself and the "not-I" simultaneously (DeMoor 119, citing *NC I*, 416). And yet DeMoor wants to argue that for Fichte, the world is not created by the ego, but only "posited by the ego as that which limits the ego's freedom." "The external world, as mentioned, is thought of as being *for* the subject. This does not mean that it is *created* by the I..." (DeMoor, 108, 109). What can he mean by "only posited?" Dooyeweerd's criticism here seems appropriate—that Fichte's metaphysic of history, as shown in his *Grundzüge*, is under "a constant threat of an *a priori* construction of historical development. The empirical temporal material of experience is reasoned away (*NC I*, 480). In contrast to Fichte's views of the world being generated or posited by the ego, Dooyeweerd's own view is that the cosmic world order is one that is *given* by God (Thesis 2).

### b) Object versus *Gegenstand*

DeMoor wants to show a contrast between noetic subject and known object (DeMoor 121). But this is the same contrast that Dooyeweerd finds in immanence philosophy and rejects. The theoretical *Gegenstand* is not the same as an object. A *Gegenstand* has no ontical reality. It is purely intentional.<sup>23</sup> Dooyeweerd points to the current in immanence philosophy that relies on reflexive thought. He says it makes "a fatal confusion between

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<sup>23</sup> DeMoor misinterprets 'intentional' as referring to objects outside of oneself. Dooyeweerd's use is to refer to what is within ourselves. Thesis 88.

object and *Gegenstand*' (WdW I, 50). We need to discuss this in more detail by examining the subject-object relation.

### c) Subject-object relation

#### i) Supposed interdependence of subject and object

For DeMoor, the subject and object of knowledge are mutually dependent (DeMoor, 106). But from Dooyeweerd's point of view, to say that there is mutual dependence would result in Fichte's dialectical view of the selfhood. For Dooyeweerd, objects outside of us do not determine our identity. That would amount to a mediated knowledge of our supratemporal selfhood in terms of the temporal (as in postmodern ideas of mediation). Instead, for Dooyeweerd it is the temporal that is known by means of our selfhood. The mediation is always upwards for Dooyeweerd, just as it is for Baader. Baader says, quoting St. Martin, we explain the world by man, not man by the world (*Werke* 11, 233). Dooyeweerd says that same thing in reference to the animal world:

Man cannot be understood if we begin with animals. It is the other way around: animals can only be understood on the basis of man, for only within the act-structure of human embodiment can the animal substructure of this act-structure disclose its relation to our acts of knowledge and thus become known by us.<sup>24</sup>

Dooyeweerd says that we analyze the temporal world only by relating it to our inner selfhood. We *illuminate* the world from within. We apply a *figure* (which is intentional and internal) to the external world. We can do this because we are aware of the identity of the modal aspects within our own temporal functioning in the world and aspects within which other individuality structures function. But the mediation is always upwards. The world finds its meaning and existence in man, and man in turn finds his meaning and existence in the Origin, God (Theses 3, 9, 66, 67, 74, 77, 94).

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<sup>24</sup> Herman Dooyeweerd, "Schepping en Evolutie," *Philosophia Reformata* 24 (1959) 113-159, at 135 (my translation). He repeats this in "Van Peursen's Critische Vragen bij "A New Critique of Theoretical Thought," *Philosophia Reformata* 25 (1960, 97-150, at 135.

ii) Naïve experience and theoretical experience

DeMoor says that naïve experience is the “home” of the subject-object relation, but says that the subject-object relation also takes place in theoretical thought (DeMoor 121 fn25, 122). That is incorrect, as Dooyeweerd strenuously argued in his last article against D.F.M. Strauss (“Gegenstandsrelatie”). First, the subject-object relation is restricted to naïve experience. Second, the subject-object relation does not give us knowledge of the modal aspects; in our pre-theoretical experience, we have no awareness of the modal aspects as distinct. Third, the subject-object relation is restricted to our knowledge of individuality structures, and our naïve concepts are similarly restricted. Finally, Dooyeweerd emphasizes that the subject-object relation is not just between modal aspects, but also within each modal aspect itself. This view of the subject-object was denied by Vollenhoven,<sup>25</sup> and so is not commonly understood in reformational philosophy. Vollenhoven admitted only a relation between humans and objects in the world, and that is also how DeMoor sees it: as a relation between agents and things (DeMoor 120). DeMoor cites Dooyeweerd in support of his proposition that the subject side is the active knowing side and the object side is the known side:

The modal subject is the *active* pole on the subject-side of the modal aspect, whereas the modal object is the *passive*, merely objective pole (*NC* II, 370, cited by DeMoor 120 fn23).

DeMoor says that this “grounds the epistemic relation between knowers and things known). But this is a misinterpretation. As Geertsema correctly points out, the subject-object relation is a modal relation, and not an epistemological one.<sup>26</sup> This specific passage in the *New Critique* concerns the subject-object relation within the modal aspects themselves; it is contained in the chapter “The Subject-Object relation in the modal aspects.” Within each aspect, or mode of our consciousness, there is a subject-object relation. Earlier aspects are objectified in the later. This gives a very different view of

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<sup>25</sup> See J. Glenn Friesen: “Dooyeweerd versus Vollenhoven: The religious dialectic within reformational philosophy,” *Philosophia Reformata* 70 (2005) 102-132.

<sup>26</sup> Henk Geertsema: “Dooyeweerd on Knowledge and Truth,” *Ways of knowing in concert*, ed. John Kok (Dordt College Press 2005).

perception.<sup>27</sup> And, as we shall see, it has a bearing on the positivization of law in the normative aspects.

The page of the *New Critique* cited by DeMoor, as well as the previous pages (368-9), clearly state that the modal object must not be confused with the theoretical *Gegenstand*. On page 368, Dooyeweerd criticizes Fichte for doing exactly that:

In Fichte's subjective freedom-idealism the object as the *non-I*, as the counterpole to the transcendental *I*, turns into 'the sensualized material of our duty.' this subject-object schema appears in all possible manners of precision and variation in Humanistic philosophy. (*NC* II, 368)

Dooyeweerd rejects such a humanistic identification of object and *Gegenstand*. But that is precisely what DeMoor is attempting to do! DeMoor is attempting to identify the transcendental "I" as the subject, the knower, and Fichte's "non-I" as the theoretical object. He is advocating what Dooyeweerd has already rejected. Dooyeweerd goes on to say that this wrong identification of object and *Gegenstand* is related to a view of objectivity that is identified with universal validity and law-conformity. But Dooyeweerd says that objectivity must not be confused with universally valid law-conformity. Subject and object are both individual. And on page 371, Dooyeweerd says that the relation between the individual subject and the individual object cannot be reduced to general or typical law. And so DeMoor's whole argument of creating norms or general laws by means of a subject-object relation is based on a humanistic immanence philosophy that is contrary to Dooyeweerd's own philosophy.

Theoretical thought is based on the *Gegenstand*-relation and not the subject-object relation. DeMoor misunderstands the *Gegenstand*-relation when he says that the analytical aspect is "the subjective pole of the *Gegenstand*-relation" (DeMoor 121). But this is the same logicistic error made by Strauss. Dooyeweerd's last article "Gegenstandsrelatie" is directed against this error. It is not the *aspect* that is the subjective pole. The subject is our full selfhood, even in the act of theoretical thought.

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<sup>27</sup> See J. Glenn Friesen: "Imagination, Image of God and Wisdom of God: Theosophical Themes in Dooyeweerd's Philosophy," (2006), online at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/hermandooyeweerd/Imagination.html>].

Our supratemporal selfhood, as subject, enters into temporal reality and opposes one aspect to another, in a purely intentional and non-ontical way [Thesis 89]. That opposition is not the same as the subject-object relation.

To confuse the *Gegenstand*-relation with the subject-object relation will also confuse the distinction between naïve and theoretical experience (See “Gegenstandsrelatie”).<sup>28</sup> Already in *WdW* I, 50 Dooyeweerd pointed out the danger of this confusion. He refers specifically to the idea of reflexive thought: “There is a current in immanence philosophy that sees philosophic thinking as reflexive, turned inwards to the act of thinking itself.” He goes on to say that such immanence philosophers cannot give an account of the nature of the synthesis of meaning.

But immanence philosophy supposes that naïve experience is caught in the same over-against [*tegenoverstellend*] attitude of thought as are the special sciences. As we shall see, this is the greatest possible misunderstanding of the nature of naïve experience. It also shows that immanence philosophy, by the choice of its Archimedean point, is not really able to give an account of naïve experience. (*WdW* I, 50, my translation).

## **V. The autonomy or spontaneity of the agent**

DeMoor says that this issue of autonomy arises only because he has established the other two similarities with Fichte. As already discussed, DeMoor has not established those two points at all. Therefore, the following discussion may be superfluous. But let us look at his argument anyway.

DeMoor wants to distinguish the dogma of the autonomy of thought from the idea of rational autonomy in normative law. This distinction appears in the title of his article. DeMoor argues that Dooyeweerd is caught in an idealist paradox of norms: that “the same act cannot simultaneously *generate* or *apply* a rule and *be subject to that rule*” (DeMoor 118). He says that Fichte may have discovered the solution to this dilemma. He refers to Fichte’s idea that the subject’s being-determined is a “being-determined to be

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<sup>28</sup> The confusion of naïve experience and theoretical experience is evident in DeMoor 120 fn24, where he tries to use the word ‘epistemic’ to include both. Our aesthetic appreciation of a rose may indeed be pre-theoretical. But why call it ‘epistemic?’ A judge’s knowledge of the insufficiency evidence is certainly theoretical.

self-determining”—that we are summoned to engage in a self-determining activity. In this way, DeMoor wants to arrive at the postmodern idea that we humans have been given the “gift” of autonomy.<sup>29</sup> As I pointed out in “Mystical Dooyeweerd,” Sauer had already interpreted Baader’s philosophy in this postmodern way.<sup>30</sup> But I do not think that this interpretation is correct, either for Baader or for Dooyeweerd. Both of them deny any such idea.

But let us look at DeMoor’s arguments for why he says that we are subjectively called to determine ourselves in an autonomous way:

### 1. The subjective *a priori*

DeMoor correctly points out that Dooyeweerd distinguishes among various horizons of experience: the religious, temporal, modal and plastic horizons (*NC* II, 552-60). Dooyeweerd insists that the religious structural horizon is *given* to us, set by God. This is the ontological *a priori*. For Dooyeweerd, the cognitive subject does not create the horizon of his experience himself (DeMoor 123, citing *NC* II, 548). And there is also subjective *a priori* that is dependent on the ontological *a priori*; it gives insight into the ontological *a priori* (DeMoor 123-24, citing *NC* II, 552). Another way of saying this is that Dooyeweerd distinguishes between ontical conditions and subjective presuppositions (Thesis 2).

But DeMoor then confuses these issues by saying that even the religious *a priori* has a subjective character because we can direct it towards God or away from God. But the fact that we can subjectively misunderstand the ontological givenness does not make that givenness subjective! We subjectively “give an account” of those ontical conditions (Theses 2, 3). In the giving account, our theoretical thought is directed by religious Ground-motives that direct our thought either towards Truth or falsehood (Theses 36, 37). We can subjectively deny the true conditions of knowledge and substitute

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<sup>29</sup> He refers to James Olthuis: “Be(com)ing: Humankind as Gift and Call,” *Philosophia Reformata* 58 (1993) 153-72.

<sup>30</sup> Hanjo Sauer: *Ferment der Vermittlung: Zum Theologiebegriff bei Franz von Baader* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977).

absolutized temporal conditions. But that does not mean that the ontical conditions themselves are subjective. And yet DeMoor says that human experience would be impossible without a subjective mediation of (insight into) structural law (DeMoor 124). But that makes ontology dependent on epistemology, the same mistake made by Strauss, and rejected by Dooyeweerd in his last article “Gegenstandsrelatie.”

## 2. The subjective moment in positivization of law

A second, quite different argument for rational autonomy is Dooyeweerd’s statement that there is a subjective moment in the positivization of normative law. Here is the quotation cited by DeMoor (125):

In the historical and post-historical aspects the laws acquire a concrete sense through human positivizing of Divine normative principles. The human formative will is then to be conceived as a subjective moment on the law-side of these law spheres themselves (NC II, 239).

### a) The quotation is taken out of context

DeMoor says (125) that this quotation shows that the structural horizon of our experience is *constituted* by the subjective *a priori*. DeMoor acknowledges that for Dooyeweerd, this subjective moment applies only to the normative spheres, and not to the pre-normative aspects. Thus, it is not correct to say that the entire structural horizon of our experience is involved in this process. That is one significant difference from Fichte and Kant, who believed that we are involved in constituting even natural laws. But even with respect to the normative spheres, this quotation refers to “human positivizing of *Divine normative principles*.” On the same page, Dooyeweerd specifically rejects the idea that the human formative will is the creator of the positive norms. And so DeMoor’s conclusion is not one that Dooyeweerd himself accepted.

### b) False either/or choice of idealism or realism

DeMoor gives a false dichotomy between realism (a given, pre-existing law) and idealism (creating the law). DeMoor says that Dooyeweerd wants “to maintain a robust realism about normativity” (DeMoor 106). By ‘realism,’ DeMoor means a view where laws are a cosmological *a priori*, and cannot be instituted by creatures that are subject to them (DeMoor 120). By ‘idealism’ he means that the *a priori* normative conditions for

both subjectivity and objectivity are ideal: instituted by agents subject to them, rather than simply imposed from outside (DeMoor 123).

But Dooyeweerd rejects both idealism and realism. He rejects a critical realism that assumes a formally knowable “world in itself.” It is incompatible with naïve experience. But naïve experience is also incompatible with critical idealism. Both realism and idealism “fundamentally curtail the integral structure of reality” (NC III, 46-47).

Because it is a side of temporal reality, the law-side cannot be separated from the subject-side. The Enlightenment tried to separate the subject-side from the logical law sphere (NC I, 132). But Dooyeweerd says that there is no absolute law that is separate from the subject-side. Dooyeweerd does not accept the idea of absolute norms existing for every historical situation. There are no absolute logical, ethical aesthetic norms. He says that this is thoroughly contradictory, and is an attempt to conceive of their meaning *modi* apart from their intermodal coherence with all the other aspects. (NC II, 240). The entire conception of absolute rights of the individual is, as such, in conflict with the fundamental structure of any positive legal order. Every right is by nature relative (NC II, 357, fn 1).

But realism and idealism are not the only choices here. Robert Nozick<sup>31</sup> sets out five possibilities in discussing these issues:

- i) nihilism. No true values or ought statements exist.
- ii) realism or Platonism: values exist and have their character independently of our choices and attitudes.
- iii) idealism or creationism: values exist, but their existence and their character are both dependent on our choices, attitudes, commitments and structuring
- iv) formationism or romanticism: values exist independently of us, but inchoately. “We choose or determine (within limits?) their precise character; we sculpt and delineate them.”
- v) realizationism: “We choose or determine that there be values, that they exist, but their character is independent of us.” The existence of values is dependent on us, but the content of value is independent of us: we have an

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<sup>31</sup> Robert Nozick: *Philosophical Explanations* (Belknap Press, Harvard, 1981), 555 ff.

independent external standard to align with and track. Nozick discusses how this view has been emphasized in mathematics, physics, the arts, psychoanalysis and literature; he believes it is a coherent position. He expands on this view of how we can choose that there be value but do not choose its character.

I find Nozick's possibilities much more satisfying than DeMoor's either/or choice. Dooyeweerd seems to me not to fit within option (iv). Although Baader certainly influenced romanticism,<sup>32</sup> romanticism tends to absolutize the modal aspect of feeling. Option (v), the realization of values that are independent of us, appears much more correct, if we take Dooyeweerd's idea of "*principles*" that need to be realized. But Dooyeweerd would not agree with Nozick's use of the terms 'reflexivity' and 'autonomy' in relation to such realization.

### c) Principles

This idea of a principle, which is positivized in different historical circumstances, can be understood only on the basis of Dooyeweerd's view of totality that differentiates both as to its law and subject-sides. And this is very different from either realism, which assumes a constant or absolute reality, as well as from idealism, which assumes that we construct values without reference to any guiding criterion.

For Dooyeweerd, even if norms are not specified absolutely for each historical situation, they are given "in principle." This is comparable to the constitution of the Free University, which Kuyper set up referring to reformational principles. Dooyeweerd praised him for not specifying them any further.<sup>33</sup> To understand this, we need to see the use of the idea of principle [*beginssel*] in Dooyeweerd and in Christian theosophical thought. Principles are given in the beginning, just as God created *in principio*.<sup>34</sup> But this creation was as a totality. It does not make sense to speak of universals or of

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<sup>32</sup> See Eugène Susini: *Franz von Baader et le romantisme mystique* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1942).

<sup>33</sup> Herman Dooyeweerd: 1964 Talk and Discussion. The Talk has been published in *Philosophia Reformata* 72 (2007) 1-19. A translation of both the Talk and Discussion is online at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/hermandooyeweerd/1964Lecture.html>].

<sup>34</sup> That is how the Vulgate translates Gen. 1:1. "In principio creavit Deus cælum et terram." This shows that the idea of "principle" has a long history.

individuals in relation to such totality. The totality individuates in time, both as to subject and object. Man's task is to illuminate temporal reality from within by relating it back to the supratemporal root (his selfhood) and to the Origin (God). Man failed at this task, and so Christ, the New Root, was needed. (Theses 75, 94).

This idea of a "principle" which is supratemporal and only *realized* temporally is one that was current at the time that Dooyeweerd was formulating his philosophy. For example, J.D. Bierens de Haan, a Hegelian Dutch philosopher (1866-1943) wrote about totality in the sense of "central Principle" ("*centrale Beginsel*").<sup>35</sup> As totality, this central principle is not a sum of all phenomena. And whoever thinks truthfully must think of the experienceable world in connection with its central principle. (pp 14-15). The problem of philosophy is to understand the experienceable world in connection with Totality." (p. 248).

But it is not only Hegelians that speak of principles in this way—as being realized in time. We also find this in Baader (Sauter, 87 ff). Baader says that all knowing is both given and given to us as a task ("*gegeben und aufgegeben*"). The "true *a priori* is only the principle or the beginning of knowledge, and not yet its completion."<sup>36</sup> There is no finished virtue and no finished truth (*Werke* 8, 37). There is no virtue without heartbreak (*Herzzerbrechen*) and no knowing without racking our brains (*Kopfzerbrechen*) (*Werke* 5, 259; 2, 156; 1, 146; 9, 109ff). We must take the knowledge that is given "in principle" ("*im Prinzip*") or "potentially" ("*in potentia*") and complete this by effectual spontaneity ("*auswirkende Selbsttätigkeit*"). We assist truth in its victory by successively sublating the untrue (*Werke* I, 37f; 2, 156; 9, 9f). And so Baader did not agree with Kant in viewing the categories as constant. Sauter correctly observes that Kant viewed the categories in too mathematical a way. Baader criticized Kant's view that our concepts determine the blind matter of our experience. For Kant's view assumes that the concepts are already

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<sup>35</sup> J.D. Bierens de Haan: *De Weg tot Inzicht*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Amsterdam: S.L. van Looy, 1920). From discussions in *Opbouw*, it is clear that Dooyeweerd had knowledge of his work.

<sup>36</sup> Baader, *Werke* 8, 37: "wahre Apriori ist nur Prinzip oder anfang der Erkenntnis und noch nicht deren Vollendung."

finished, whereas for Baader, the form and that which is fulfilled both come into existence in their conjunction, and this is possible only by means of the “inner presence” of a common supra-individual unity (Sauter, 87, citing *Werke* 12, 266f). In our thinking, we need to hold ourselves in immediate free community with original thought (*Urdenken*) (*Werke* 8, 107). Our thinking depends on our prior being thought by God. Not “*cogito ergo sum*” but “*cogitor (a deo) ergo sum*” (*Werke* 12, 238). Positivizing is also related to Baader’s idea of active knowledge, or ‘*erkennen*.’ Susini compares *erkennen* to Claudel’s idea of ‘*connaissance*,’ or ‘*co-naissance*.’ It is a giving birth to something, a constructive knowledge. But this constructive knowledge should not be confused with constructivism in today’s sense of the word. For Baader, *erkennen* is not a matter of inventing new principles, but of discovering them. It is a *finden* (finding), and not an *erfinden* (invention). The knowledge that we find comes from a source that ‘dominates’ and founds this knowledge. (Susini I, 432; *Weltalter* 261).

Baader also says that the law needs to be fulfilled in the finite being. Man has the power to fulfill the laws for creatures (*Elementarbegriffe*, 553). This response needs the cooperation of the finite being (*Zeit* 32, 33). Man must organize and re-create the world; the laws are in the world but must be actualized. This is done by our perception [*vernehmen, wahrnehmen*] of the invisible laws that govern the earthly world. Nature is a book from which we decipher the divine characters or hieroglyphs in order to perceive the voice of God (*Werke* 11, 29, 149).

Like Baader, Dooyeweerd also says that there are no absolute truths. He says, on the page immediately following the one relied on by DeMoor, “the notion of absolute logical, ethical and aesthetic norms is thoroughly contradictory” (*NC* II, 240). Dooyeweerd praised Kuyper, who in setting up the constitution of the Vrije Universiteit, referred only to “reformational principles” without spelling them out (“1964 Talk”).

#### d) Positivization and the historical aspect

In the quotation cited by DeMoor on the subjective element in positivization, Dooyeweerd says that there is a subjective “moment.” Moments are the anticipations and retrocipations within an aspect. On the page immediately prior to this quotation, it is

clear that the moment he is referring to, both in its original form and in its anticipations and retrocipations, is the historical aspect. Dooyeweerd refers to an “interlacing of super-arbitrary principles and human formative will” within the historical aspect, and by analogy in the succeeding normative spheres. It is in the historical moment that the human formative will is involved. So to understand what Dooyeweerd means, we need to understand the importance of the historical aspect for him, as the aspect of “free formative control.” Many reformational philosophers have denied the existence of this historical aspect, and perhaps this is why DeMoor does not discuss it. It is by means of the historical aspect that Dooyeweerd believes he can avoid viewing norms in the rationalistic way (as absolutes) or in the positivistic way (as being created by humans) (NC II, 239). Rather, the norms are principles that are realized in history. To understand this better, we need to look at Dooyeweerd in more detail.

i) Subject-object relation within each aspect

As already discussed, the subject-object relation is not between a knower and an object, but within the modal aspects themselves. Thus, every modal structure has a subject-object relation within it. As discussed, Vollenhoven and his followers deny this. It seems that DeMoor does not recognize this, either. But if every modal aspect has the subject-object relation within it, then it is not surprising that the normative ones have a subjective “moment” within them.

ii) Moments are temporal analogies

Moments are the temporal anticipations and retrocipations. These analogies are not the same as the supratemporal religious law, or the “principle” that is only realized in time. Moments are analogies. In this case, Dooyeweerd says it is the historical moment that is of interest. As already discussed, Dooyeweerd denies that there are absolute logical, ethical and aesthetic norms. We cannot understand these modes apart from their intermodal coherence with all the other modes. And, Dooyeweerd says, among these is the historical modus (NC II, 238-41). The historical mode of experience is the mode of “free formative control.” The interlacing of superarbitrary principles and human formative will is “on the law-side of the historical sphere” and “in an analogical way for

all the later normative law-spheres” (NC II, 238). DeMoor gives no discussion of this mode. That may be because he, like Vollenhoven and many other reformational philosophers, does not accept this as a mode. But without this, it is not possible to understand the idea of positivization. And our positivizing formation is “an historical analogy in all the post-historical law-spheres” (NC II, 237). This gives a “variable formation” to these norms, but not an arbitrary formation. “Their supra-arbitrary Divine content has been given in *principle* only” (NC II, 238). Because Vollenhoven and reformationals who follow him have denied that the historical is a modal aspect, they do not understand this argument. Because they deny the historical, they fall into the error of historicism. And I suggest that DeMoor’s view of norms being created is a result of that kind of historicistic thinking, and that he therefore views norms as entirely determined by historical development.

### iii) Free historical formation

Dooyeweerd says that even the analytical aspect (which precedes the historical aspect in time) is only given in principle. We have been given principles such as the principles of identity, contradiction, sufficient reason, exclusion of the third (NC II, 238). But even these logical principles require theoretical forming in order for us to think scientifically (NC II, 241). All later normative spheres are founded on the formation of those logical principles. Temporal normative freedom is founded in the logical aspect of thought. Thus, positivizing is rational. But DeMoor is incorrect that it is rational “autonomy” for that would ignore the giving of norms “in principle.”

The historical aspect is the mode of “free formative control.” It cannot be done without the analytical, but it is this free forming that in turn is the basis for the positivization of the later norms. Even the pre-analytical norms can only be *disclosed* by historically founded human formation, and so even these norms have only a restricted independence of historical development (NC II, 239).

But what does Dooyeweerd mean by “free” in this “free formative control?” DeMoor identifies freedom with spontaneity and autonomy. But for Dooyeweerd, such a meaning for spontaneity is related to the freedom pole of the dialectical humanistic Ground-

motive. DeMoor acknowledges that Fichte followed this freedom pole, and he cites Dooyeweerd's criticism that this view believes that one creates the cosmos from oneself (DeMoor 119, citing *NC I*, 416). It is therefore surprising that he wants to attribute this same view of freedom and spontaneity to Dooyeweerd.

But what Dooyeweerd means by free control is a contrast with animal instinct. For example, a spider may spin a web according to a fixed form, but we have freedom to form in accordance with a project that we intend (*NC II*, 198). We differ from animals in that we have a supratemporal selfhood that is able to enter into time, whereas animals are lost within time (Thesis 71). As already discussed, Baader has a similar view: our spontaneity means we are different from the animals, but we do not have absolute spontaneity. Dooyeweerd says that even in the natural aspects, preceding the analytical aspect, we have freedom. The only difference is that this freedom in the natural aspects does not appeal to rational judgment (*NC II*, 238).<sup>37</sup>

#### iv) The historical opening process

How are the supratemporal principles *realized* in time? To understand this, we need to look at the "opening process."

Dooyeweerd says that the dynamic nature of the law-side is not so much found in the fact of positivization as in the unfolding of the anticipations in the law-spheres:

Volgens de W.d.W. schuilt de zin-dynamiek aan de wetszijde der normatieve aspecten niet, gelijk Van Peursen meent, in de menselijke positivering van de normbeginselen, maar veeleer in de ontsluiting van hun anticiperende structuurmomenten, die zich eerst in de voortwijzende tijdsrichting openbaren. ("Critische Vragen," 111)

[According to the WdW, the meaning-dynamic on the law-side of the normative aspects does not consist in their human positivization, as Van Peursen supposes, but much rather in the unfolding of their anticipatory

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<sup>37</sup> Even though we are not involved in positivizing the natural laws, these laws are not static, but have a fully dynamic nature. Dooyeweerd rejects any idea of "*Vorhandenes*" here. The natural laws are not static. But neither are they formed by human creative activity. See "Critische Vragen," 112.

structural moments, which first reveal themselves in the forward-looking direction of time.]

Dooyeweerd distinguishes between realization in a closed society and in an opened society. In a primitive, closed society, the realizations are by means of retrocitations in the aspects. Such a closed society may even have legal principles that have been positivized to legal norms. But when the positivizing reveals itself in the opened or anticipatory direction, it can do this only by means of the anticipatory moments that are determined by the modal structure of the relevant aspects. From this discussion, it appears that Dooyeweerd's idea of positivization includes the idea of freedom, in the sense of freedom to open up a society, and then freedom to discover the anticipatory moments. But that is not an invention or creation of the norms, but an imaginative opening up of a structure that is given only in potential. Even the pre-logical aspects can be opened up. He gives the example of the laws of energy, which in a closed society reveal themselves only within the domain of inorganic nature.

### 3. DeMoor's problem of the freedom to be wrong.

DeMoor recognizes that if he is correct in his interpretation of our freedom to *create* norms, then we have the problem of how such free activity of positing could ever be wrong. An agent is only free when capable of making an error, violating a norm that it nonetheless remains bound by (DeMoor 111).

Dooyeweerd does not have this problem, since for him the criterion is whether our positivizing is directed towards the supratemporal root and Origin—thus fulfilling temporal reality—or whether it is directed merely temporally in an absolutizing and idolatrous way (Theses 66, 75). He also provides another criterion for historical positivization: that it be progressive and not reactionary (*NC II*, 242).

DeMoor's problem of how a free choice of law can be wrong, is a real antinomy, which arises only because he has begun with immanence philosophy. He tries to get out of it by pointing to two possible solutions:

a) Hegel's dialectic of concept and object (DeMoor 127). It hardly needs to be pointed out that Dooyeweerd rejects any such dialectic.

b) Alternatively, we could attempt to show how our “call” to be autonomous can have a determinate content. This would correspond to Nozick’s fifth view of the nature of norms. But DeMoor correctly sees that this would conflict with Fichte’s requirement to be autonomous, and that for Fichte, it would be inappropriate to “act heteronomously” (i.e., in accordance with an outside determinate content). But such a view of law as heteronomous is precisely what Dooyeweerd (and Baader before him) advocate.

DeMoor concludes that his view of rational autonomy does not commit one to the dogma of the autonomy of rationality. He says

...rationality (as a kind of norm-responsiveness and application) cannot be autonomous since it is made possible by a normative summons from another (ultimately from God); it is the agent that is autonomous, not the agent’s functions (128)

And yet there is confusion here. For the norm-responsiveness he advocates is to a norm that we ourselves determine. In Kant, this was related to the dogma of the autonomy of thought. In Fichte, the idea of the reflexivity of thought is related to an elevation of the moral aspect. In its over-emphasis on the freedom of the individual agent, it remains immanence philosophy caught within a dialectic of nature and freedom.

## **VI. Conclusion**

DeMoor’s article is helpful in returning reformational philosophy to an examination of its historical sources. But the comparisons with Kant and Fichte do not lead to the conclusions that DeMoor suggests. Dooyeweerd, like Baader, criticized both Kant and Fichte. DeMoor fails to take this criticism into account. And DeMoor misinterprets Dooyeweerd’s philosophy.

Dooyeweerd does not accept the idea of the reflexivity of thought. Religious self-reflection goes beyond theoretical thought, and it can do so because our supratemporal selfhood transcends all temporal functions, including the analytical. In contrast, reflexive thought is based in immanence philosophy and does not go beyond theoretical thought. Kant’s logical unity of apperception absolutizes the analytical aspect, and Fichte’s logical-reflexive dialectical thought absolutizes the moral aspect.

Dooyeweerd does not share Fichte's idea of the subject-object relation. Dooyeweerd's ideas of subject and object are also very different. And for Dooyeweerd, the subject-object relation does not characterize our theoretical thought.

And Dooyeweerd does not see positivization in terms of autonomy, but as a realization within history of divine *principles* that are given to us supratemporally. Dooyeweerd is neither an idealist nor a realist, and so his thought is not subject to the dilemma that DeMoor sets out. But DeMoor's own conclusions are involved in an antinomy between the absolute freedom of setting laws for ourselves and the possibility of such freedom being exercised improperly. To say that freedom can be exercised wrongly is dependent on a law outside of our freedom. Dooyeweerd rejects both the dogma of the autonomy of thought and DeMoor's idea of rational autonomy.