The alleged 'essentialism' of Dooyeweerd

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Abstract

Ed Echeverria argues that Jonathan Chaplin attempts to avoid social constructivism by grounding the normativity (structural-typical invariance) of societal entities in the invariant "possibilities or potentials given with the created nature of the human person" – which is, according to Echeverria, still "essentialist". His own "solution" is to return to the metaphysical legacy of Bavinck's version of Thomism by proceeding from invariant (ante rem) *Divine ideas and ideas in the* Logos (in re). *The author argues that Chaplin and Echeverria need to contemplate in a more comprehensive and systematic way the foundational coherence between* constancy *and* dynamics (change, variability). *A systematic analysis has to consider the uniqueness and coherence between the kinematic and physical aspects – accounting for Plato's insight that change can solely be detected on the basis of something constant (persistent) – articulated in natural scientific terms by Galileo (inertia) and Einstein. It is also argued that Echeverria does not realize that the classical realistic distinction between* universalia ante rem *and* universalia in re *respectively rests upon the reification of God's law for (Plato) and the orderliness (law-conformity) of creatures (Aristotle). The implication is that Plato stumbled upon God's law as order for and Aristotle upon the universal side of entities. Aristotle holds that when this house does not exist anymore it is not houseness that is destructed. Essentialism cannot be equated merely by acknowledging the existence of (natural and social) entities or the existence of invariant (modal and typical) principles, but in the reification of entities (a legacy of the Greek-Thomistic substance concept). Its counter-pole is found in functionalism, the reification of modal functional relationships – but Dooyeweerd is not guilty of either substantialism (essentialism) or functionalism.*

Opsomming

Ed Echeverria argumenteer dat Jonathan Chaplin sosiale konstruktivisme probeer omseil deur die normatiwiteit (struktuur-tipiese invariansie) van samelewingsentiteite in die konstante moontlikhede van die geskape natuur van die menslike persoon te fundeer. Volgens Echeverria is dit egter nog steeds "essensialisties". Echeverria se eie oplossing is om terug te keer tot die metafisiese erfenis van Bavinck se weergawe van die Thomisme. Hy doen dit deur uit te gaan van invariante (ante rem) *goddelike idees in die* Logos (in re)*. Die outeur argumenteer dat Chaplin en Echeverria 'n omvattende en sistematiese nadenke oor die funderende samehang tussen* konstansie *en* dinamiek (verandering*) van stapel moet stuur. So 'n analise moet ag gee op die uniekheid en samehang tussen die kinematiese en fisiese aspekte en wel deur rekenskap te gee van Plato se insig, naamlik dat verandering slegs vasgestel kan word op die basis van duursaamheid. Hierdie insig het natuurwetenskaplike beslag gekry deur die denke van Galileo (inertia) en Einstein. Daar word ook aangevoer dat Echeverria nie besef het nie dat die klassieke realistiese metafisika se onderskeiding tussen* universalia ante rem *en* universalia in re *onderskeidelik op 'n verselfstandiging van God se* wet vir *(Plato) en die* ordelikheid *van* (wet-matigheid) *skepsele berus (Aristoteles). Die implikasie is dat Plato iets gesien het van God se wet as* orde vir*, terwyl Aristoteles iets van die* universele kant van die dinge *raak-gesien het. Aristoteles verdedig die siening dat wanneer* hierdie *huis tot niet gaan dit nie* huis-wees *is wat vergaan het nie. Essensialisme* kan nie *bloot gelykgestel word aan die bestaan van natuurlike en samelewingsentiteite of die bestaan van invariante (modale en tipiese) beginsels nie. Veeleer moet essensialisme gesien word as 'n* verselfstandiging (reïfikasie) *van dinge ('n erfenis van die Grieks-Thomistiese substansie-begrip). Die keersy van essensialisme is in die* funksionalisme te vinde *– en Dooyeweerd is nóg aan substansialisme, nóg aan funksionalisme skuldig.*

1. Echeverria starts a discussion

In a Journal on *Markets Morality* Ed Echeverria published a *Review Essay* on the philosophical foundations of the thought of Bavinck and Dooyeweerd (Echeverria, 2011). His *Review Essay* primarily focuses on the Bavinck biography written by Ron Gleason (2010) and Jonathan Chaplin's work on Dooyeweerd as a *Christian Philosopher of State and Civil Society* (Echeverria, 2011).

2. The conversation partners: Bavinck, Dooyeweerd and Chaplin

Echeverria commences by paying attention to the philosophical and epistemological differences between Bavinck and Dooyeweerd. His aim is to evaluate these differences from Bavinck's Thomistic standpoint. In the second place he proceeds with an outline of "Dooyeweerd's normative institutional pluralism and its foundational social ontology". Against this background he then continues his analysis by examining "Chaplin's rebuttal of the charge of essentialism against Dooyeweerd – that societal structures, such as marriage, family, the state, and business corporations, though humanly established, have unchanging ontological identities" (Echeverria, 464).

3. Essentialism and universalia

The crucial question according to Echeverria is whether "any institution, has essential properties". Echeverria positions the underlying issue by asking whether or not there is a third alternative "between social constructivism and institutional essentialism"? (Echeverria, 465)? Regarding the philosophical presuppositions Echeverria follows the encyclical letter, *Fides et Ratio*, of John Paul II (1998) by acknowledging the "sapiential dimension to all intellectual inquiry", an "epistemological realism" and "a metaphysical dimension".[1] Of particular interest for our current discussion is what Echeverria lifts out in respect of Bavinck's conviction that "present in his [God's] mind are the ideas of all things" [universalia *ante rem*]. This represents the acceptance of *universalia ante rem* (in God's mind) by Bavinck. But Bavinck concurrently continues the view that these *universalia* are inherent in the things owing to the Logos: "That is the light of reason, the intellect, which, itself originating in the Logos, discovers and recognizes the Logos in things (Echeverria, 2011:465).

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1   In passing it should be noted that in his *Encyclical Letter* reason and faith are not treated as *modal functions* or *aspects* of the human being. Much rather they are seen as interdependent existents. According to John Paul faith trusts reason: "Faith therefore has no fear of reason, but seeks it out and has trust in it" (John Paul, 1998). However, since Dooyeweerd has highlighted the multi-aspectual structure of human acts it should be kept in mind that an act of faith and a logical-analytical thought-act both functions within every aspect. This means that no act of faith is possible apart from its logical-analytical function and that no thought-act is possible apart from its function within the certitudinal aspect.

Bavinck explicitly articulates his own position in terms of the medieval distinction between the forms or ideas (*universalia*) in God's mind and universalia *in re* (inherent within the things): "The *universalia* are *in re* because they existed *ante rem* in the Divine consciousness".[2]

4. Christian philosophy and sphere-sovereignty

Bavinck elucidates his position with the aid of a "Christian philosophy that has transformed the Platonic-Aristotelian doctrine of the idea" (Echeverria, 2001:467). At the same time Bavinck maintains the distinction between God and the inselfsufficiency of all creatures.[3] Echeverria points out that Bavinck in addition affirms the principle of sphere-sovereignty by acknowledging that the various walks of life, such as "family, society, the state, occupation, business, agriculture, industry, commerce, science, art ... each have a certain measure of independence, which they owe to the will of God as it manifests itself in their own nature. In time, by God's providence, they develop and are changed in accordance with their nature (Echeverria, 2011:468).

What is important here is that "the development and changes of these realities are made in accord with their irreducible natures and according to Echeverria "this is Dooyeweerd's view too" (Echeverria, 2011:468).

5. Normative institutional pluralism

Echeverria characterizes Dooyeweerd's view of human society as "normative institutional pluralism" and then explains the difference between Dooyeweerd's approach and the realistic "universalia ante rem in God's mind" view of Bavinck.

Echeverria does this by referring to what Dooyeweerd says in the second volume of *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* about the realistic metaphysics:

> This turned the order of the creation into a *lex aeterna* founded in Divine *reason*. And the Divine principles of the creation became the *universalia ante rem* (in

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2   "De universalia zijn *in re* omdat ze *ante rem* in het Goddelijk bewustzijn bestonden" (Bavinck, 1904:23, see also pages 48-49). The third mode of existence of the *universalia* was supposed to be within the human subject *post rem*, as universal concepts.

3   "God zelf is de waarheid, de waarachtige, de wezenlijke God, in onderscheiding van alle schepselen, die geen bestand hebben in zichzelven" (Bavinck, 1904a:10). ["God himself is the truth, the authentic, essential God, distinct from all creatures that are not selfsufficient."]

Divine reason) and *in re* (in temporal things). After all that we have had to say about this, it will be clear that we unconditionally reject such a metaphysics, because *fundamentally* it sets the Divine order of the creation aside to replace it by an absolutized *reason* (Dooyeweerd, 2017:559).

6. An ambiguity in the thought of Bavinck

However, in the second volume of his *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* Bavinck distances himself from the Platonic (*ante rem*) view while endorsing the Aristotelian "in re" approach. He says that we should not assume "the reality of universal concepts … in a Platonic or ontological sense prior to the thing itself *(ante rem),* but in an Aristotelian sense in the thing itself *(in re)* and therefore also in the human mind subsequent to the thing itself *(in mente hominis post rem)*" (Echeverria, 2011:470). We shall return to this issue because his just-quoted position clearly differs from his statement quoted above, namely that the "*universalia* are *in re* because they existed *ante rem* in the Divine consciousness". [4]

On page 470 of his *Review* Echeverria explains the view of Bavinck by providing the just-given quote (Echeverria, 2011:23), namely that "the universals are *in re,* because they are *ante rem* in the divine consciousness".[5]

7. Dooyeweerd's social ontology and essentialism

Subsequently Echeverria explains a number of basic distinctions of Dooyeweerd's (social) philosophy largely as they are presented by Chaplin. The focus of his analysis is on "Dooyeweerd's Social Ontology and Essentialism" (Echeverria, 2011:474 ff.). Echeverria immediately points out that it is unfortunate that "Chaplin has no discussion of essentialism as such" (Echeverria, 2011:474).

The conception of Dooyeweerd causing the accusation of *essentialism* concerns the invariant identity of societal entities. Echeverria formulates this issue by quoting Chaplin: "While they are in every case established by

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4   In passing we may mention that according to Echeverria Dooyeweerd distinghuishes three dimensions of reality: "(1) modal aspects, (2) typical law, and (3) enkaptic interlacement" (Echeverria, 2011:470). But enkaptic interlacements belong to the dimension of individuality-structures. For Dooyeweerd the first dimension is the dimension of cosmic time which is the foundation of the dimensions of modal aspects and (natural and societal entities).

5   Apparently he did not note the difference between what Bavinck said in the four volume *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* (1895-1899) and in his Christelijke Wereldbeschouwing (1904).

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human initiative, they are governed by 'invariant' (or 'enduring' or 'constant' or 'immutable'), universally valid, typical structural principles that condition, and indeed make possible, their factual existence" (Chaplin, 2011:86). This prompts Echeverria to ask: "Does Chaplin reject Dooyeweerd's claim that societal structures have stable ontological identities by virtue of invariant structural principles grounded in the order of creation?" – to which he answers: "Yes, he does" (Echeverria, 2011:475).

8. Dooyeweerd's static essentialism: Chaplin and Wolterstorff

According to Echeverria the primary reason for this affirmation is that "he [Chaplin] thinks Dooyeweerd's social ontology suffers from an internal inconsistency in that notwithstanding his rejection of Platonism, Dooyeweerd nonetheless does not escape from a static essentialism. Chaplin calls upon Wolterstorff in this regard. He remarks that although "Wolterstorff is not a social constructivist, he is evidently uncomfortable with what he seems to regard as the static essentialism of Dooyeweerd's social ontology and rejects the claim that social structures are bound to invariant principles" (Chaplin, 2011:98).

> Chaplin sets off reflecting on what he characterizes as the controversial proposal of Dooyeweerd, namely "that social institutions possess an 'invariant structural principle'" (Chaplin, 2011:71). He explains it further:

The charge of essentialism is typically advanced by those who hold that a specific way of understanding the essence or nature or identity of a group of people or an institution imposes an external definition on them, disrespecting their subjectivity and misrepresenting their real interests or potentials (Chaplin, 2011:108).

Moreover, essentialism, according to Chaplin, "assumes a concept of stable ontological identities that is untenable in the light of evidence of continual social flux and variation. "Dooyeweerd's theory of invariant structural principles" is an instance of "irreducible institutional identities".

9. Normative structures rooted in universal irreducible human functions

Now suppose, as Chaplin continues his argument, "we replace the notion of invariant typical structural principles with that of normative structures rooted in universal irreducible human functions". His alternative aims at avoiding "the criticism that the very notion of multiple, universal irreducible human functions is essentialist" (Chaplin, 2011:108).

> It then views the norms for social structures as arising "out of the functional capacities of a complexly articulated human nature". They constitute the deeper sources of irreducible institutional identity, in the sense that the structural configuration of an institution is not presented as an independent imperative operating on humans from without but as a requirement recognized by humans in the course of historical experience as being necessary for particular kinds of social human flourishing (Chaplin, 2011:108).

Chaplin believes that modified in this way his conception "can avoid the charge of *institutional* essentialism" because "social structures are to be responsive to irreducible human capacities as these manifest themselves in particular historical conditions" (Chaplin, 2011:108).

10. The alternative position advocated by Echeverria

Echeverria opts for a position different from both Dooyeweerd and Chaplin:

> Therefore, Chaplin thinks the normative foundation of social structures needs a critical reformulation more consistent with Dooyeweerd's anti-Platonism. In addition, Chaplin seems, after all, to accept the claim that we need a social philosophy, unlike Dooyeweerd's, that is open to what he calls "ontic structural novelty", radical innovation, as it were, and not merely the historical unfolding of "inner typical laws" given with the original order of creation. Bavinck's ontology of creation, of being and becoming, is like Dooyeweerd's, but it does not suffer from the same internal inconsistency. Bavinck's ontology epistemologically grounds the structural principles in the Logos and metaphysically in the divine ideas in God himself.

Clearly, Echeverria wants to continue key elements of the medieval realistic metaphysics. He does this particularly in respect of the metaphysical doctrine concerning the "divine ideas in God himself" and epistemologically regarding "the structural principles in the Logos".

Chaplin argues for a reformulation of Dooyeweerd's view regarding the normative structures of social institutions but Echeverria points out that Chaplin "does not abandon social structural principles that are normative" but rather "rejects Dooyeweerd's thesis that social structures have stable and irreducible ontological identities". The implication is that Chaplin "abandons the claim that such principles are invariant, being grounded in the creation order". As a result "Chaplin does accept the charge of essentialism against Dooyeweerd" (Echeverria, 2011:476).

11. Does the distinction between principle and giving shape to it entails an essentialist view

The issue is that for Dooyeweerd "structural principles are not themselves subject to historical change" although there is a "dynamic historical disclosure of structural law" (Echeverria, 2011:476). Such invariant principles also do not allow for "ontic innovation": "What is disclosed is what is already given 'in principle'" (Chaplin, 2011:97). Consequently, Chaplin makes a plea for dispensing with the phrase "invariant structural law". It could then be

> replaced with a notion of normative imperatives grounded in and directed to this given, stable, but dynamically unfolding, created structure of the human person, with its complex arrangement of functions (capacities, potentials, needs). Structures have an enduring design only in the sense, and only to the extent, that they answer to enduring human functional capacities (Chaplin, 2011:106-107).

In the same context Chaplin declares "that the normative design of social structures emerges out of a *normative conception of the human person*. The principles of possibility Dooyeweerd speaks of would then be seen as embedded fully in human nature, viewed as principles emerging from the possibilities or potentials given with the created structure of the human person" (Chaplin, 2011:106).[6]

12. Echeverria on Dooyeweerd and Chaplin

Before we look crtically at the alternative position assumed by Chaplin we have to assess how Echeverria approaches the issue. We have noted earlier that he wants to follow in the footsteps of the Medieval realistic metaphysics with its metaphysical doctrine of the "divine ideas in God himself" and the

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6   See the criticism of this view articulated by Strauss in 2016.

accompanying epistemological position regarding "the structural principles in the Logos".

Echeverria continues later on by stating that rather than to "follow Chaplin" and "reject the invariance of internal structural principles guaranteeing [the] irreducible identity of institutions and grounded in the order of creation" he wants to embrace "a unique metaphysical ground and justification posited in Thomist thought". He then quotes Aquinas saying:

> There cannot be an idea of any whole, [including the creation] unless particular ideas are had of those parts of which the whole is made; just as a builder cannot conceive the idea of a house unless he has the idea of each of its parts. So, then, it must be that in the divine mind there are the proper ideas of all things. Hence, Augustine says, "that each thing was created by God according to the idea proper to it", from which it follows that in the divine mind ideas are many (Echeverria, 2011:477).

> Echeverria then proceeds on the same page stating that regarding "the transcendent validity[7] of invariant, internal structural principles in Dooyeweerd's social ontology" he prefers to "rely on Bavinck's Thomistic metaphysical and epistemological structure – doctrine of divine ideas and Logos – against Dooyeweerd and Chaplin".

13. Echeverria's immanent criticism of Chaplin

Echeverria then raises an immanent-critical point: Chaplin did not succeed in abandoning the idea of "an invariant structure" to serve as the foundation of normativity for "he grounds the normative design of social structures in the objective structures of human nature" (Chaplin, 2011:480). Moreover "this invariant structure" roots "the normative structure of an institution" – which, according to Echeverria, is an essentialist position. He says: "This is essentialism" (Echeverria, 2011:480). Echeverria continues on the same page with the remark that it is therefore understandable that Chaplin wonders if he avoided "essentialism altogether given his normative concept of the human person".

Echeverria concludes by expressing his conviction that "Christian scholars, both Catholic and Protestant, will profit from Dooyeweerd's normative institutional pluralism and its foundational social ontology" (Echeverria, 2011:480).

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7   Dooyeweerd considers structural principles to be transcendental rather than transcendent.

14. What is lacking in Dooyeweerd's thought according to Echeverria?

Echeverria does not consider Dooyeweerd's conception of "the irreducible identity of social structures in invariant, internal structural principles based on the order of creation" acceptable because he holds that the real mistake is Dooyeweerd's "rejection of a unique metaphysical ground and justification posited in Thomist thought".

> The explanatory power of Dooyeweerd's social ontology, particularly in its account of invariant structural principles, will be strengthened if his students, like Chaplin, embrace Bavinck's version of Thomism (Echeverria, 2011:480).

We may summarize the debate between Echeverria and Chaplin as follows: Echeverria points out that Chaplin attempts to avoid social constructivism by grounding the normativity (structural-typical invariance) of societal entities in the invariant "possibilities or potentials given with the created nature of the human person" – which is, according to Echeverria, still "essentialist". His own "solution" is to return to the metaphysical legacy of Bavinck's version of Thomism (proceeding from invariant Devine ideas and the *Logos* in things).

15. Some historical and systematic considerations operative in the issues discussed

At this point we have to reflect on some historical and systematic considerations operative in the issues discussed thus far. Such an investigation will help us to understand what informs the views of Echeverria, Bavinck and Chaplin.

16. Essentialism versus continual flux

We commence by looking at the term *essentialism*. Apparently this term is of a recent origin. It emerged in 1939 within the German language domain and six years later in English – introduced by Popper in the first volume of his *Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945).

Popper emphasizes the important influence exerted by the claim of Heraclitus, namely that all things are "in continuous flux". If this is the case, then "it is impossible to say anything definite about them" (Popper, 1966-I:28). Moreover, if everything changes, so Popper explains Plato's point of view, "no real knowledge of them, but, at the best, vague and delusive opinions" will be possible. Plato assumed transcendent, eternal, static ontic

forms (*eidē*) above the world of becoming (subject to the continuous flux of Heraclitus). It was within this context that the distinction between *essence* and *appearance* – attached to the *substance* concept – emerged.

17. Being and becoming

From the perspective of the history of Greek thought the substance concept is rooted in the problem of *being* and *becoming*: how is it possible to say that something *is* when everything constantly changes? Ter Horst provides a neat characterization of Greek philosophy in terms of the problem of being and becoming (equivalent to the distinction between essence and appearance):

> The solution of Parmenides and to a lesser extent of Democritus is to reduce becoming to being. The solution of Heraclitus is to reduce being to becoming. Plato's solution is to maintain being and becoming by dividing them over different domains. Finally Aristotle attempts to hold on to both by uniting them in a very particular way (Ter Horst, 2008:68).[8]

The crucial issue here is Plato's insight that without something enduring or persistent it will be impossible to *know* anything (explained in Plato's dialogue *Cratylus* 439 ff.). Plato therefore introduces the enduring essence *auto to eidos* ("own being") of things. It is remarkable, as noted above, that the term *essentialism* appears to be only of a recent origin. In 1929 Przywara introduced the compound term "Essenzephilosophie" as counter-part of "Existenzphilosophie" and eventually introduced the term *essentialism* in 1939 (see Schneider, 1972:752). Within the English-speaking world Karl Popper used this term in 1945 as part of the expression *methodological essentialism*.

18. Popper on methodological essentialism

Popper explains his understanding as follows: "I use the name methodological essentialism to characterize the view, held by Plato and many of his followers, that it is the task of pure knowledge or 'science' to discover and

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8   De oplossing van Parmenides en in mindere mate van Democritus is om het worden te herleiden tot het zijn. De oplossing van Heraclitus is om het zijn te herleiden tot het worden. Plato's oplossing is om zowel het worden als het zijn te behouden door ze over verschillende domeinen te verdelen. Aristoteles' oplossing tenslotte poogt beide te behouden door ze op een heel bepaalde wijze met elkaar te verenigen (Ter Horst, 2008:68).

to describe the true nature of things, i.e. their hidden reality or essence" (see Popper, 1966:31 ff.). This explanation is related to other perennial philosophical problems, such as the relationship between what is universal and what is individual, the relationship between endurance and change and the distinction between what is knowable and unknowable. These issues converge in the long-standing substance concept, dating back to Plato and Aristotle.

19. The historical influence of Aristotle's substance concept

Aristotle's view of substance is particularly instructive. He distinguishes between a strictly individual primary substance (*proten ousian*) and a secondary substance. The crucial question then is: is the *essence* individual or is it universal? Aristotle commences his *Categoriae* with the idea of a primary substance. Primary substances are most properly called substances by virtue of the fact that they are the entities that underlie everything else, and that everything else is either predicated of them or present in them (Aristotle, 2001:10; *Cat*. Chapter 5, 2b15-17). The following statement of Aristotle highlights the (individual-universal) difference between a primary and a secondary substance:

> All substance appears to signify that which is individual. In the case of primary substance this is indisputably true, for the thing is a unit. In the case of secondary substances, when we speak, for instance, of 'man' or animal, our form of speech gives the impression that we are here also indicating that which is individual, but the impression is not strictly true, for a secondary substance is not an individual, but a class with a certain qualification; for it is not one and single as a primary substance is; the words 'man', 'animal', are predicable of more than one subject (Aristotle, 2001:12; *Cat*. Chapter 5, 3b10-18).

For Aristotle only the union of matter and form constitutes a substance – where the form actually is universal (the secondary substance). "Man-ness" or "being a man" is universal in the sense that it applies to "more than one subject". Moreover, the Aristotelian conception of a substance rests on the underlying dualism of *matter* and *form* – two eternal principles of origin. "For Aristotle matter is an eternal principle of motion and change and of the unbounded transition of the one into the other; the form is a similar eternal principle of enduring being."[9] But neither matter nor form come into being and

9   "De materie is bij Aristoteles een eeuwig beginsel van beweging en verandering, en van ongelimiteerde overgang van het ene in het andere; de vorm is een evenzo eeuwig beginsel

pass away. It is only the *compositium*, the substance, constituted by matter and form that comes into being and passes away. Only what is composed out of the subject (= matter) and form is susceptible origination and perishing.[10]

Whether or not the "essence" of a substance is viewed as its universal substantial form (Aristotle's secondary substance) or merely refers to an individual existent, the primacy of the classical concept of a substance asserted itself throughout the Medieval era. Even Descartes continues the view that a substance is self-existent: "By substance we can conceive nothing else than a thing which exists in such a way as to stand in need of nothing beyond itself in order to its existence" (*The Principles of Philosophy*, Part I, LI – Descartes, 1965:184). Yet since the Renaissance the natural sciences switched to a new appreciation of relational concepts (function concepts).

20. Order for and orderliness of

What is really at stake in the distinction between Plato with his transcendent *eidē* and Aristotle with his immanent universal substantial forms (secondary substances)? This is an important question because it informed the earlier mentioned medieval speculation about the *universalia ante rem*, transcendent, seated in the "divine Mind" (Plato) and *in re*, inhering within the created entities as their universal forms (Aristotle). In addition this realistic metaphysics postulated *universality* within the human mind, *universalia post rem*. Its after-effect is also seen in the copy theory of truth – truth is the correspondence between thought and being (*adequatio intellectus et rei*).

The over-estimation of change present in the claim of Heraclitus that everything changes prompted Plato, in line with the static space metaphysics of Parmenides, to find an enduring basis for change. We noted that he found it in the *essential* being (*auto to eidos*) of things, their static transcendent ontic forms. The form in which Plato presents his position in *Phaedo* opposes what is invisible and constant with that which is visible and changeable (observable through the senses). But when the soul leaves aside the mediation of the body its focus is on the world of the pure and eternal, immortal and unchanging, constant and equally-natured things (*Phaedo*, 79d). [11]

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van blijvend zijn" (Ter Horst, 2008:28).

10 "Evenals de materie ontstaat of vergaat de vorm als zodanig niet. Het compositum, de uit vorm en materie samengestelde substantie, is dat wat ontstaat en vergaat. Alleen het uit subject (= materie) en vorm samengestelde is namelijk vatbaar voor ontstaan en vergaan" (Ter Horst, 2008:49).

11 "The *soul* exhibits the greatest similarity to the divine, immortal, conceivable, simple,

Some of the terms applied to circumscribing the *eidē* reflect features also found in the concept of a *law* – albeit with a metaphysical twist attached to them. A law is supposed to be an *order for* whatever is subject to it and whatever is subjected to a law evinces this subjectedness in its orderliness or law-conformity. The speculative response of Plato to the Heraclitian doctrine of constant flux therefore stumbled upon God's "law for" reality, elevated into a supra-sensory sphere of static being. Aristotle gives the next step by transforming the transcendent ontic forms into the universal substantial forms which actually stumbled upon the (universal) *orderliness* (*lawfulness*) of entities within reality.

In other words, the universal substantial forms in Aristotle's thought is intended to make the transcendent *eidē* of Plato immanent – inhering within concretely existing substances. It relates to *being-this* or *being-that*. For example, Aristotle holds that a concept (*logos*) is not subject to *coming into being* and *passing away*. It is not 'house-ness' that comes into being, but only *this* house (*Metaph*. 1039 b22-26; Aristotle, 2001:807). The conditions for being a house constitute the *order for* its existence. In its "house-ness" every existing house shows that it conforms to the conditions for "being-a-house."

21. The turn-around caused by nominalism

However, by the end of the medieval era the late Scholastic nominalist movement (John the Scott, William of Occam) questioned Plato's *eidē* and Aristotle's universal substantial forms. The nominalist orientation in fact denies universality and by implication both the *order for* and the *orderliness of* reality. It accepts universality only within the human mind – clearly seen from its subjectivist concept of truth: the *compatibility of concepts within the human mind*. Reality now collapsed into a structureless chaos, allowing human understanding to step in as the new law-giver. This development reached its rationalistic peak in Kant's idea of human understanding as the a priori formal law-giver of nature (Kant, 1783, II:320; § 36). Understanding in the philosophy of Kant is restricted to the *phenomena*, because the "Ding an sich" (thing-in-itself) is unknowable – which shows that the substance concept with its distinction between essence and appearance is still operative in Kant's epistemology.

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indissoluble, constant and 'self-identical', while the *body* bears the greatest similarity to the human, mortal, multifarious, non-conceivable, dissoluble and never-constant" (*Phaedo*, 79d-80b:1-6).

At this point it should be noted in passing that the theological tradition is also heavily indebted to the Greek substance concept. We merely have to contemplate the after-effect of the distinction between *being* (essence) and *appearance*.

22. The important distinction between the kinematic and physical aspects

The systematic perspective behind this distinction could be illustrated by briefly reflecting upon the coherence between the kinematic aspect and the physical aspect. The former is characterized by its core meaning of uniform motion, best captured with the term *constancy*, and the latter by its core meaning of *dynamic change*. Since change can only be detected on the basis of constancy (as we have remarked earlier – a discovery made by Plato) our awareness of identity (persistence amidst change) is made possible by this foundational coherence between the kinematic aspect and the physical aspect.

However, this foundational relation between *constancy* and *dynamics* was blurred by the Greek Medieval substance concept because this concept assumed that something exists independent of anything beyond itself (just compare the definition of Descartes quoted above). The essence-appearance distinction motivated the distinction between God's self-knowledge (*theologia archetypa* directed towards God as He is "in Himself") and the knowledge through which He revealed Himself to us (accommodated to creation – *theologia ectypa*).

Bavinck explains that the *theologia archetypa* concerns the knowledge with which God knows himself and that the *theologia ectypa* is the knowledge of God as accommodated and 'anthropomorphized' to be suitable for the finite human consciousness:

> Nonetheless it contains the true conception that the *theologia ectypa*, which is granted to creatures through the revelation, is not the absolute self-knowledge of God, but that knowledge of God as it is accommodated to and made suitable for the finite consciousness, therefore anthropomorphized.[12]

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12 "Desniettemin ligt er de ware gedachte in, dat de *theologia ectypa*, welke door de openbaring aan schepselen geschonken wordt, niet is de absolute zelfkennis Gods, maar die kennis Gods, gelijk ze geaccommodeerd is naar en geschikt gemaakt is voor het eindig bewustzijn, dus geanthropomorphiseerd" (Bavinck, H. 1918. *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, I. 6, 4, p.144).

We have to keep in mind that Echeverria calls upon Bavinck regarding the threefold existence of the *universalia* – which represents actually a Thomistic element in the thought of Bavinck.

23. The substance concept and the relation between God and creation

The substance concept opened the way for two equally unacceptable options. The two sides of the coin are therefore that either the essence of God is elevated to a sphere of unknowability or it positions the multiple creaturely perfections in the essence of God before they are copied back into creation. The first option needs the idea that this unknowable God has to *accommodate* Himself by assuming them in order to reveal Himself.

24. An alternative approach

An alternative approach may acknowledge that we are capable of obtaining the *ability* to exceed the confines and limitations of conceptual knowledge, namely in the use of *concept transcending knowledge*. Consequently, the distinction between conceptual knowledge and concept-transcending (idea-) knowledge may safe-guard us both from the pitfalls of negative theology and of the accommodation idea subjecting God to His laws for creation.

In other words, understanding the distinction between "God in Himself" and "God as revealed to us" is entirely dependent upon an implicit (but speculative) exploration of the inter-modal coherence between the kinematic and the physical aspects of reality. Once this relation is embedded into a space metaphysics opposing essence and appearance (being and becoming) it is not any longer possible to escape from the dualistic split between "God in Himself" and "God as revealed to us". A concept-transcending use of the kinematic meaning of constancy – in the garb of the idea of God's identity (theo-ontologically twisted into the idea of "God-in-Himself") – finds support in the meaning of *space*, for whenever the idea of "God-in-Himself" surfaces prominence is given to God's *transcendence* above creation. Of course it is not realized that the terms *transcendence* and *above* are *spatial* terms employed in a concept-transcending manner (i.e., spatial terms employed in referring to what exceeds the boundaries of the spatial aspect).

Both Chaplin and Echeverria need to contemplate in a more comprehensive and systematic way what the implications are of the foundational coherence

between constancy and dynamics (change, variability). Such a systematic analysis will have to consider the uniqueness and coherence between the kinematic and physical aspects while exploring Plato's mentioned insight, namely that change can only be detected on the basis of something constant (persistent). In addition it should be acknowledged that subsequently this insight was articulated in natural scientific terms by Galileo (inertia) and Einstein (the constancy of the vacuum speed of light), as well as in a more precise formulation of the first main law of thermodynamics: energy-constancy.

25. Constancy and change: ontic normativity

When Chaplin claims, as quoted earlier, that essentialism "assumes a concept of stable ontological identities that is untenable in the light of evidence of continual social flux and variation" (Chaplin, 2011:108), he does not realize that change never occurs at the *cost* of constancy, but solely on the *basis* of something enduring. In addition the reality of *ontic normativity* should be acknowledged, opening up the insight that ontic normativity reveals the intertwinement of universal, constant principles that can only be made valid (enforced) through the intervention of a human subject. Moreover, the ontic existence of universal constant principles encompasses more than merely *modal* universality, which merely relates to the fact that whatever there is, functions (either as subject or as object) within all aspects of reality. While modal laws – such as the law of gravity, the principle of non-contradiction, the principle of economic trust (credit) and the principle of jural causality – hold for all possible classes of entities, type laws (such as those for being-an-atom, being-a-house and being-a-state) only apply to a limited class of entities. These type laws are still *universal*, but their universality is *specified*. The type law for being an atom, being a house or being a state is universal – it makes an appeal to *all* atoms, *all* houses and *all* states. However, since not everything is an atom, a house or a state there is an ontic limitation: the type law for being an atom, a house or a state, only applies to atoms, houses and states. That is to say, type laws apply to a specified (and therefore) limited class of entities only.

The creativity entailed in acts of positivizing universal and constant principles is not hampered by underlying (modal and typical) principles, but rather made possible by them. Acknowledging this state of affairs exceeds the confines of any particular school of thought. Habermas, for example, explicitly uses this term, for example when he speaks of "the positivization of law" (Habermas,

1996:71, and 1998:71, 101, 173, 180). And already in 1930 the word *Positivierung* was used by Smend (see Smend, 1930:98). Hartmann also employs the idea of positivizing (*Positivierung*).[13]

Chaplin's understanding of the idea of "continual social flux" does not realize that this phrase contains a kinematic and physical element as well as a qualifying term: "social". *The* terms "continual" and "flux" reflect the kinematic meaning of what endures or persists and the physical meaning of *change*. Either their original meaning or analogies of these kinematic and physical terms are employed within the context of cosmic later modalities. This explains why expressions such as "constantly changing", "always changing" and so on, are found in the various special sciences where they are frequently employed in an *analogical* sense. Compare expressions like *social constancy and social change* or *historical continuity and historical change*. Chaplin's view in this regard did not reach the insight of Plato. Therefore Echeverria is fully justified in his criticism that accepting universal constant (invariant) structural principles for societal entities (irreducible in an ontic sense) is not a mistaken view. Unfortunately the Thomistic alternative mediated by Bavinck and advocated by Echeverria does not realize that the assumed *ante rem* and *in re* status of *universalia* is nothing but a reification of God-given modal laws and type laws ("law-for" and "lawfulness-of").

Echeverria explains the view of Bavinck by asking for the grounds enabling humans, "at the very moment of perceiving things, to form the basic concepts and principles that would guide him further in all perception and reflection"? Bavinck answers: "The Logos who shines in the world must also let his light shine in our consciousness. That is the light of reason, the intellect, which, itself originating in the Logos, discovers and recognizes the Logos in things. It is the internal foundation of knowledge *(principium cognoscendi internum)*" (Echeverria, 2011:465).

In his work on the Christian world view Bavinck states: "The universalia are *in re* because they existed *ante rem* in the Divine consciousness … We know the things because they are, but they are because God have known them" (Bavinck, 1904:23).[14]

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13 Hartmann writes: "Dagegen ist hier wichtig, daß den Werten die Tendenz zur Realisierung immanent ist" (Hartmann, 1926:154 ff.). "Soll aber ein Wert realisiert, ein Ziel erreicht werden können, so muß das Ziel zunächst erkannt und als solches gesetzt werden. D.h., daß der Wert zunächst positiviert werden muß" (Hartmann, 1926:160 ff.; see Horneffer, 1933:105).

14 "De universalia zijn *in re* omdat ze *ante rem* in het Goddelijk bewustzijn bestonden … Wij kennen de dingen, omdat zij zijn, maar zij zijn, omdat God ze gekend heeft" (Bavinck, 1904:23, see also pages 48-49).

26. Reifying God's law and the law-conformity of creatures

Clearly, Echeverria does not realize that the classical realistic distinction between *universalia ante rem* and *universalia in re* respectively rests upon the reification of God's *law for* (Plato) and the *orderliness* (*law-conformity*) *of* creatures subject to God's law. Plato stumbled upon God's law as *order for* and Aristotle upon the *universal side of entities.*

As noted earlier, the thought of Bavinck is ambiguous in respect of the *in re* existence of the *universalia*. They are "in" the Logos (Christ) as well as "in" the creatures. This view blurs the distinction between God and creation because it equates the second person of the Trinity with the universal (law-conformative) side of creaturely subjects.

In conclusion we have to point out that Chaplin's view regarding the "continual social flux and variation" of human society flows from a different background. It derives from the historicist uprooting and relativizing of constancy as a condition of change.

In passing we may note that since the Renaissance the emphasis on the substance concept was increasingly replaced by the function concept. *Functionalism* is the counter-pole of substantialism, found in *functionalism*, the reification of modal functional relationships, and Dooyeweerd is not guilty of either substantialism (essentialism) or functionalism.

Human understanding as a priori formal law-giver of nature was eventually expanded in the neo-Kantian Baden school where Rickert introduced quasi-Platonic eternal values that are valid. Historicism soon relativized this view and as a result we ended up with the so-called social construction of reality and a subject-centred freedom of choice – every individual can choose his or her own "values".

27. Historicism: Popper and Chaplin

The underlying assumption of the result is the complete fluidity of society. The controversy regarding the methodological nominalism in the natural sciences as opposed to the essentialism still present in the humanities paves the way for emphasizing the "importance of change in society". It also exhibits "other aspects of historicism". Popper continues:

> The physicist, so runs a typical argument, deals with objects like energy or atoms which, though changing, retain a certain degree of constancy. He can

describe the changes encountered by these relatively unchanging entities, and does not have to construct or detect essences or Forms or similar unchanging entities in order to obtain something permanent on which he can make definitive pronouncements. The social scientist, however, is in a very different position. His whole field of interest is changing. There are no permanent entities in the social realm, where everything is under the sway of historical flux (Popper, 1945:33).

This characterization of an element of historicism – the *whole field of interest is changing* and *everything is under the sway of historical flux* – shows striking similarities with Chaplin's view that philosophically "the concept of stable ontological identities … is untenable in the light of evidence of continual social flux and variation" (Chaplin, 2011:108).

Echeverria concluded his article by recommending us to reconsider the Thomism present in the thought of Bavinck. My recommendation, in turn, is that Echeverria may benefit from reconsidering the speculative (Thomistic) metaphysical epistemology present in Bavinck's thought – positioning God's law for (order for) and the orderliness of creation inside the *Divine Mind* and the *Logos*. Also that both Echeverria and Chaplin may benefit from exploring the implications of a proper understanding of the foundational coherence between the kinematic and physical aspects of reality and the significance of this relation for a critical elucidation of the substance concept and essentialism.

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