

Chapter 3. Five Perspectives that Guide this Rethink

Chapter Summary: Five perspectives guide this rethink and make it possible:

1. Everyday life; 2. Dooyeweerd's philosophical understanding of reality; 3. Christian/religious perspectives and the insights they bring; Embracing all ideas (left, right and recent); 4. Engaging with and embracing extant ideas; 5. Multi-aspectual Overall Good.

State: Content and argument stable. Needs critique from others. Wording: edits needed.

We will rethink economics in five main ways but, before we do, we introduce the **perspectives** from which we view and discuss economics. If you wish, you may **skip this chapter** to go directly to the economics, returning here later to understand the perspectives that have formed our approach, which are:

- ◆ §3-1, **A pre-theoretical way of thinking**, in which we respect everyday experience and intuition as well as theories and rules of economics;
- ◆ §3-2, **Dooyeweerd as philosophical foundation**, especially his idea of aspects;
- ◆ §3-3, **Christian and other Religious perspectives** as uncovering oft-forgotten issues providing impetus for change of approach;
- ◆ §3-4, **Engaging with and embracing** all kinds of ideas, whether left or right, orthodox or heterodox;
- ◆ §3-5, **Multi-aspectual Overall Good** as an explicit overall aim of economics.

3-1. Respecting the Pre-theoretical Stance

Summary: We aim to respect the pre-theoretical stance of 'everyday' experience of the reality of economics, along with the theoretical stances that generate ideals and theories.

"Existing economics is a theoretical system which floats in the air and which bears little relation to what happens in the real world" remarked Coase [1999], and it is still true. At least three things divorce economics from the real: theories, rules and ideals.

Theories express humanity's generic understanding of the way that reality operates, can operate and tend to operate across many situations and through time (past, present, future). [Note: Theories]. **Rules** are theories about what we should do in various situations. The **ideal** is the Good of which we conceive and for which economics aims. Specific **ideals held by people**, such as what motivate many recent ideas in economics, are often a reaction to harmful practice or inadequate theories and rules, and point towards some aspect of that Good. All three express something **generic** about the real; understanding what is generic offers an answer to "Why?", can help us predict and can guide us.

But what is the **real world**? It is more than just 'what happened' and certainly is not the usually-cynical "But in the real world it's only money that counts!", which is often just a disguised stubborn refusal to consider anything else. What we call the **real** refers to all the **diversity, coherence and complexity** as it occurs now, did in the past and could in the future. **Everyday life** is the main concrete expression of reality, so we make sure its voice is heard among the clamour of economics theories, rules and ideals. The real includes the generic laws, norms or mechanisms by which things exist and occur, of which theories etc. are a partial expression.

The reason why theories, rules and ideals divorce economics from the real is that they all **focus** on one or two aspects at the expense of all others, such as the economic and quantitative aspects in economics (see below). At best they

treat other aspects as anonymous “**externalities**”; at worse they **ignore** them. In Chapter 4 this is called reductionism. Two examples of this are in the word cloud at the start of the <“index.html”>Introduction, the first showing ignoring, the second, other aspects that are important:

Example 1. **GDP**, notoriously takes account only of financial transactions, so that it grows even though these result from crime or damaging economic activity that undermines health or environment, and it fails to include good, healthy unpaid activity like housework especially in the Global South.

Example 2. **Obesity** arises from over-consumption of inappropriate foods, which happens not just because of economic reasons like over-supply and cheapness, but because of immediate enjoyability of the foods, heavy marketing, rivalry between the firms that produce them, and the injustice of those firms not bearing responsibility for the harm they cause (which are meaningful in the aesthetic, lingual, pistic and juridical aspects listed later).

We will argue, especially in Chapter 4, that economics practice and theory **must respect** the whole diversity and complexity of ‘the real’.

We do not reject theories, rules and ideals, but rather engage with those offered by others and we affirm, critique and enrich them (and sometimes develop our own) because theories express generic understanding of the way reality tends to operate. We employ a conceptual framework and philosophical approach (outlined in next section) that comfortably incorporates the messiness of the real along with the desire to understand its generalities. It recognises the diversity of the real with the clarity of the ideal, the theoretical with the practical - a different way of thinking, based on recognising the importance of **multiple aspects** of reality such as mentioned above (aesthetic, lingual, pistic and juridical, for example, along with economic), with which to augment extant theories, rules and ideals and generate new ones. [Note: ‘Real-world economics’].

Believing this may be possible motivates us to try. Instead of rejecting or accepting, we seek to **rethink** theories, rules, ideals and also the very practices of economics - but not in ways usually expected in academic thought. Our approach to (economic) theory **brings together** theoretical thinking and knowledge with pre-theoretical attitudes of thinking, “wisdom” and “intuition”. It is not well served by the usual academic way of building theory on existing theory, nor even occasionally introducing new Kuhnian paradigms. Sometimes appropriate theories and paradigms have not even been formulated. Though we will refer to extant theories and paradigms, we will also refer to non-academic material, with examples drawn from **everyday experience**, quotations from **non-academic sources and stories**.

This everyday perspective resonates with the others, in that opposing views occur in real life (§3-x3), in that everyday reality exhibits multiple aspects (§3-2), that religious perspectives (not doctrinal) tend to relate to the whole of life in all its aspects (§3-5), and that Multi-aspectual Overall Good is aspired to by all life (§3-6).

3-2. Our Philosophical Foundation: Dooyeweerd’s Philosophy

Summary: Here we outline what readers will need of Dooyeweerd’s philosophy in order to understand the Rethink.

Philosophy is what tries to make sense across all aspects and spheres of life. Not all philosophy can cope with the complexity of the real, but often try to reduce it to one or two aspects (monism, dualism). Dooyeweerd can, and that is the main reason this Rethink is based on his philosophy.

Dooyeweerd presents three major themes in philosophy: on the nature of reality itself, especially its complexity, on theoretical and pre-theoretical thinking

about reality, and on presuppositions lying at the root of theoretical thought (including worldviews, ground-motives, standpoints and religion). It is the first from which we most benefit, so we explain it in some detail, for later reference.

3-2.1 Dooyeweerd on the Nature of Reality: Meaningfulness At Root

Summary: Dooyeweerd viewed reality in terms of its meaningfulness, and this offers a fresh way of understanding much in economics.

To Dooyeweerd, the diversity of the real that we experience in everyday life lies not just in the things, occurrences, normativities and situations we encounter, but, more fundamentally, in diversity of **meaningfulness**. This is a radical departure from most of 2,500 years of philosophy, which has borne, and is still bearing, much philosophical fruit, enabling us to understand everyday experience and 'the real' more faithfully. Traditionally, meaning was seen as something 'added on' to things, occurrences and situations, as a kind of property but to Dooyeweerd, meaningfulness is fundamental and inescapable.

Greek philosophy treated Existence or Being as fundamental, whether dynamic (Heraclitus) or static (Parmenides), having substance and accidents (Aristotle). The presupposition of the fundamentality of Existence continues to the present day, epitomized in Kant's claim that "Existence is not a predicate" because it is too fundamental for that.

Philosophically, the Greek presupposition leads us astray. Being seems obvious for pebbles, plants and pencils, but in what sense do the following exist: politicians, policies, Prokofiev's Classical Symphony, dollars, your latest idea, the accident that happened yesterday, the number 7, Gandalf, God? And why is it that the following do not exist: the accident that was prevented yesterday, the present King of France, a square circle? The Greek presupposition cannot adequately answer those; Dooyeweerd can.

To Dooyeweerd, Being (including process) emerges from Meaningfulness. As he pointed out,

"A bird's nest is not a 'th.ing in itself', which *has* a specific meaning in the bird's life. It has *as such* no existence apart from this meaning." [NC,III, 108]

Apart from its meaningfulness in the bird's life, it is merely a pile of bits of solids of a certain size and physical consistency (spatial, physical aspects) but it exists as nest by virtue of the biotic and psychical aspects (its function in breeding and where young birds learn their first few behaviours). Likewise, the politician exists, as politician, only by virtue of the juridical aspect, the policy, as policy, only by virtue of the juridical and lingual aspects, Prokofiev's symphony, the aesthetic and psychical aspects, dollars, the economic, lingual and juridical aspects, your latest idea, the analytic and psychical aspects, the number 7, the quantitative aspect, and so on. The reason why the present King of France does not exist is because of the juridical aspect, and the square circle, the spatial aspect.

We can see this in economics, for instance, where **money** is treated as a commodity. Theoretical discourse tries to work out where its value comes from, by reference to things like rarity or labour, but only partial and misleading understanding is achieved, which generates antinomies, paradoxes and problems like whether cryptocurrencies are 'real' money. The idea that the value of money lies in its use may be seen as a step towards recognising meaningfulness as fundamentally important. We go further and understand money wholly in terms of its meaningfulness of various kinds.

To a Dooyeweerdian perspective, money is not a 'thing in itself' that happens to have a certain value; as with the bird's nest, it has, as such, no existence apart from its meaningfulness as a token of exchanging value. This has far-reaching implications for how money is to be treated, especially bringing in many kinds of value. (See <"money.html">*On Money*, summarised in Chapter 8.)

Dooyeweerd understands temporal reality to have two sides, what he calls the fact-side or subject-side, and the law-side. The **fact-side** refers to all that actually exists, happens, happened, and will happen. The **law-side** refers to the meaningfulness and laws that enable and guide that existing and happening. (Critical Realism makes a similar distinction, between what it calls the real and the actual but differently from Dooyeweerd.) It can be useful to see the law-side as an ocean of meaningfulness; just as it is the ocean that enables fish to swim and be fish, so it is the entire set of aspects (explained below) within which all actuality functions and exists [Basden 2019], as depicted in Figure f3-2.1, with an indication of the diversity discussed in the next section.

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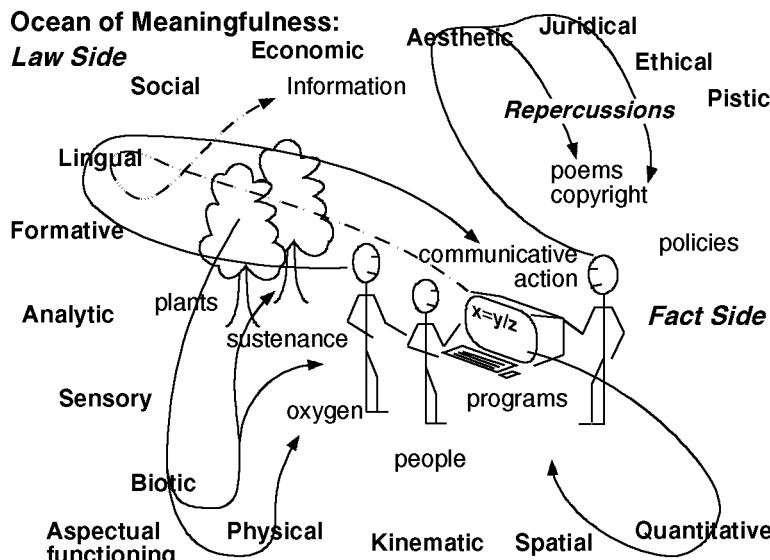


Figure f3-2.2. 'Ocean' of Meaningfulness in which all exists and occurs

3-2.2 Diversity and Complexity

Summary: Diversity is founded in distinct modalities of meaning (aspects) that, together, yield countless types of thing, process, etc.

The huge **diversity** of things, occurrences, situations we experience emerges from diversity of meaningfulness (as we explain below). While there are trillions of different types of thing, process, etc. there are (Dooyeweerd argued) around fifteen distinct basic kinds of meaningfulness, which interact in myriad ways, and separating out kinds of meaningfulness helps us handle complexity. These basic kinds of meaningfulness he called "**aspects**", a word that we will adopt throughout this Rethink, since his use is close to its use in ordinary English language [Note: Word *Aspects*].

We experience plants, air, mobile phones, conversations, insults and praise, greed and generosity, beauty, friendships, resources, and so on. Each is that kind of thing by virtue of its meaningfulness in an aspect: respectively the biotic,

physical, formative (technical), lingual, pistic, ethical, aesthetic, social and economic aspects.

To Dooyeweerd, in contrast to Kant's *Ding an Sich*, there is no being-as-such but only being-as-X, where X is an aspect. [Note: Meaning and Being].

A further complication is that most things are meaningful in several aspects together. For example, **Money** exists by virtue of the lingual aspect (being a token ..), quantitative aspect (.. of a given amount ..), economic aspect (.. of value ..), social aspect (.. that is agreed ..), ethical aspect (.. and trusted), physical aspect (gold, paper, etc.), and so on. See Chapter 8 for a discussion of this.

The being of most things is **multi-aspectual**, and each aspect plays an essential role in things being of a particular type - a mountain, a memory, money, a market or a movement in the economy. Respectively, important aspects are: physical with spatial; psychical with biotic, analytical and formative; lingual with social, economic, quantitative and ethical; social with economic and ethical; economic with kinematic, along with some minor aspects in each case.

Recognising which aspects are important in the being, becoming or happening of a thing, and why they are important for things of that type, is important to understanding it and how it can 'be' several different things at the same time. Each type of thing is defined by a unique profile of aspects, which Dooyeweerd called **structure offor individuality** and Clouser calls **type laws**, and it is this that enables, governs or guides the being, becoming, functioning and ceasing-to-be of individuals of that type. Each aspect in a type law fulfils a different role, some of which Dooyeweerd discussed. The qualifying aspect is a thing's primary meaningfulness and 'destiny' (lingual for the pen), the founding aspect governs its coming-into-being, there are also leading and internal leading aspects, and so on; Dooyeweerd's theory of this seems unfinished, for example can there be dual qualifying aspects? In our discussions we usually just refer to a **primary aspect** or "aspect(s) in which it is primarily meaningful", to avoid such philosophical niceties.

How modes of meaningfulness, being, law, functioning, norms etc. relate to each other is set out in Basden 2019 and Chapter 4 of Basden 2020. So, we need to know: what aspects, what modalities of meaning, are there? Or, at least, is there a soundly-based set of aspects that we may use as a conceptual tool in this Rethink?

3-2.3 Dooyeweerd's Suite of Fifteen Aspects

Summary: Dooyeweerd offers a philosophically grounded suite of 15 aspects, which we will use as our conceptual tool.

Regarding aspects of reality, Dooyeweerd did three things. He investigated the nature of aspects, which is discussed below, discussed how to distinguish aspects, which is discussed in Basden [2019], and tried to distinguish and identify what aspects there are, in what possible ways can reality be meaningful, coming up with a suite of fifteen aspects, which we discuss here.
[Note: Dooyeweerd's Discussion of Aspects]

Though his **suite of fifteen aspects** has been modified by some, we will use Dooyeweerd's suite as our main conceptual tool, because each aspect makes various kinds of thing, process, relationship and value possible (as explained below). The following list summaries the aspects and Readers should refer back to this while they are reading. For each aspect is given: the name(s) we will use for it, the kernel modality of meaningfulness it makes possible, some example concepts derived from this, then, in smaller text, some example relationships and

functioning meaningful in the aspect, then finally examples of how it is important in economics.

- ◆ <<http://dooy.info/aspects.smy.html#qnv>> Quantitative aspect, making discrete quantity and the notion of amount meaningful and possible, enabling "more" and "less". In economics: price.
- ◆ <<http://dooy.info/aspects.smy.html#spa>> Spatial aspect, making continuous extension meaningful and possible, and simultaneity, outside, overlap, etc. relationships. In economics: location.
- ◆ <<http://dooy.info/aspects.smy.html#kin>> Kinematic aspect, making movement meaningful and possible, flowing movement, enabling rudimentary change rather than stasis. In economics: movement of goods.
- ◆ <<http://dooy.info/aspects.smy.html#phy>> Physical aspect, making energy + mass meaningful and possible, enabling causality and 'the arrow of time'. In economics: medium for currency (gold, etc.).
- ◆ <<http://dooy.info/aspects.smy.html#bio>> Biotic aspect, making life functions meaningful and possible, enabling vitality, health, growth, self-maintenance, reproduction, but also their opposite, disease. In economics: dependency of the economy on biodiversity and health.
- ◆ <<http://dooy.info/aspects.smy.html#psy>> Sensitive aspect, making sense, feeling, emotion meaningful and possible, enabling interactivity, but also hurt. In economics: emotions and interaction of individuals to stimuli.
- ◆ <<http://dooy.info/aspects.smy.html#anl>> Analytical aspect, making distinctions meaningful and possible, enabling clear focus, conceptualisation and logic - but also confusion. In economics: distinctions of value, suppliers, etc.
- ◆ <<http://dooy.info/aspects.smy.html#fmv>> Formative aspect, making deliberate forming and shaping meaningful and possible, with purpose, ends-and-means, technique, tools, technology, power, history, and the like, enabling achievement, industry, innovation and creativity - but also destruction and laziness. In economics: economic planning.
- ◆ <<http://dooy.info/aspects.smy.html#lng>> Lingual aspect, making symbolic signification meaningful and possible, enabling recording and communication, so pieces of meaningfulness are externalised - but also deceit, obfuscation, misinformation and misunderstanding. In economics: token of value; communications.
- ◆ <<http://dooy.info/aspects.smy.html#soc>> Social aspect, making social relating meaningful and possible, enabling agreement, friendship, togetherness, roles and social organisation - but also enmity, isolation and loneliness. In economics: exchange, agreement on value of currency.
- ◆ <<http://dooy.info/aspects.smy.html#eco>> Economic aspect, making frugality and resource meaningful and possible, enabling careful production, conservation and use - but also waste and destitution. In economics: waste, carefulness.
- ◆ <<http://dooy.info/aspects.smy.html#aes>> Aesthetic aspect, making harmony, surprise and fun meaningful and possible, enabling enjoyment in life and holistic wisdom - but also boredom, incongruity and fragmentation. In economics: harmony of 'the economy'.
- ◆ <<http://dooy.info/aspects.smy.html#jur>> Juridical aspect, making due, rights and responsibilities meaningful and possible, enabling justice and appropriateness - but also injustice and inappropriateness. In economics: legality and equality.

- ◆ <<http://dooy.info/aspects.smy.html#eth>> Ethical aspect, making self-giving love meaningful and possible, enabling generous openness to others, mercy, forgiveness in both individuals and the attitude throughout community and society - but also self-centredness, self-protection, competitiveness, meanness. In economics: generosity and trust.
- ◆ <<http://dooy.info/aspects.smy.html#pis>> Pistic aspect, making belief, aspiration, commitment, meaningfulness, religion, etc. meaningful and possible, enabling courage, perseverance, going against the crowd, and major changes in society's mindset - but also cowardice, lack of commitment, hypocrisy, meaninglessness, idolatry;. In economics: belief in, presupposition of, the workings of markets.

That there is an economic aspect undergirds our presupposition of such a thing as **economics that is worthy of our consideration**. We will reflect on it once we have explained all our perspectives.

Every one of those aspects contribute to the diverse meaningfulness of everyday experience and the complex 'real life' that is economics. We function in all of them simultaneously, usually intuitively and unaware of them, take them for granted as we function economically. Each aspect offers a different 'lens' through which to view reality.

Difficult to remember 15 aspects? For our convenience we may group them, such as mathematical, natural, individual, social and societal - as long as we clearly remember that such groupings are of our own making and not actual.

3-2.4 Using Dooyeweerd's Aspects as Conceptual Tool

Summary: Dooyeweerd's suite of aspects offers a very useful and versatile conceptual tool because it enables us to clearly separate out issues and is a yardstick by which to detect ignored issues, in both theory and practice.

We employ Dooyeweerd's suite of aspects throughout this Rethink as our main conceptual tool, because they help us in everyday life to:

- ◆ separate out distinct issues, so as to clarify what is important;
- ◆ reveal issues that are overlooked, so as to ensure they are included;
- ◆ allow us to probe more deeply, and listen more attentively to reality and move sensitively to all the various ideas;
- ◆ obtain normative evaluation and guidance, so as to see in what ways economics practice and theory needs to change.

See Basden [2023].

So, for example, we can understand more clearly the difference between various kinds of economics. While neo-classical economics focuses solely on things meaningful in the economic aspect, developmental economics brings in the social and juridical aspects alongside the economic, environmental economics brings in the biotic aspect, happiness economics brings in the aesthetic aspect, and so on. Some of these more recent ideas bring in other aspects too but most are weak on the ethical and pistic aspects [Note: Ethics] (attitude and mindset). Seeing the differences as arising from emphasis on different aspects suggests an **integration in economics** might be possible. To approach integration, we can 'listen' to what each kind of economics says about their favourite aspect, then we can appeal to overlooked aspects in each to bring hidden issues into the light.

Two warnings: 1. Aspects can never be 100% precisely defined (Dooyeweerd offers philosophical reasons for this) so we are always aware that we work with an interpretation of them. 2. Dooyeweerd warned that no such suite of aspects is ever final or complete [Dooyeweerd, 1955, II, 556] but merely a best guess at the diversity of meaningfulness, and is always open to challenge

and refinement. However, as Basden [2020, 209-212] argues, Dooyeweerd's suite is probably the best available, more comprehensive and better grounded than most, even Maslow's [1943] hierarchy of needs. [Note: Comparison]. So we adopt Dooyeweerd's suite, and the interpretations given above, throughout this document, but with caution and some humility. Readers are free to substitute their own interpretations, and even suites, if they wish - but the aspects they adopt should have the following characteristics.

3-2.5 Characteristics of Aspects

Summary: To employ Dooyeweerd's aspects we need to recognise their irreducibility, inter-dependency, normativity and a host of other characteristics.

To Dooyeweerd, aspects are much more than categories; they are

- ◆ ways of seeing that are not just subjective but depend on the reality of the thing seen,
- ◆ modalities of meaning,
- ◆ modes of being,
- ◆ modes of functioning,
- ◆ spheres of law,
- ◆ basic kinds of normativity or Good,
- ◆ distinct rationalities,
- ◆ kinds of possibility,
- ◆ and more.

This is why, in this rethink, very much reference will be made to aspects. The idea of aspects has important implications for economics because it helps us do justice to all kinds of thing, functioning, norms, etc. that are found in real-life economic activity. It dethrones and decenters money, businesses and transactions, replacing them with values, humans and responsibility.

This section explains the characteristics of aspects, with some examples and what it implies for this rethink. Readers need not read this section in detail on first reading, but just scan the topics (in **bold** text) and **refer back here** later, to properly understand what is being said throughout the Rethink.

3-2.5.1 First, characteristics of aspects together

Summary: Aspects together transcend us, are multiple, equally important, can be known, and enable time.

- ◆ Aspects **transcend** temporal reality, including our experience and our theories. They pertain whether or not we recognise them or properly understand them, and do so across all cultures and eras. An obvious example is the law of gravity, but even the human aspects also pertain whether or not we recognise them. Examples: Ignoring the economic aspect jeopardises sustainability. So does ignoring other aspects.

This motivates us to seek an understanding of economics that goes **across all cultures** and times, of which Global North and South economics, and pre-modern, modern and recent are special cases.

- ◆ All things and occurrences are **multi-aspectual**, meaningful in all aspects in principle. Examples: Money is economically meaningful as resource, linguistically meaningful as token, quantitatively meaningful as amount, socially meaningful as agreed value, and so on.

This motivates us to see economics no longer as isolated from other spheres of life but as **embedded** among them, **integrated** and interwoven with them.

- ◆ Aspects **can be distinguished and known**, even if never understood fully. The kernel meanings of aspects are **grasped by intuition** better than by theoretical thought or analysis. Examples: We know justice when we see it, but cannot define it precisely. Examples: Value, amount, agreement - understood intuitively in everyday life, but never fully definable.

This makes us **respect real-life experience** of economics and economic activity in all its manifestations, as discussed earlier.
- ◆ Every aspect is **equally important**, each with its unique role in contributing to the well-functioning of reality. So Dooyeweerd talked not about higher and lower aspects but earlier and later; see below. Examples: The economic aspect should not be elevated above the biotic (biodiversity or health), the ethical or pistic (trust, belief), etc. nor they above it.

So, in economic theory and practice, we should take **every aspect** into account and ignore or **overlook none**, seeking to understand the contribution each makes to whatever we are trying to do or understand, and to delve into issues that lie underneath them and reveal hidden ones.
- ◆ **Time** is multi-aspectual with different kinds of time, such as physical and psychical. This led Dooyeweerd to a radically understanding of time as having different aspects, with shorter timescales in earlier aspects and later, maybe decades, in later. See <<http://dooy.info/time.html>> Dooyeweerd's Theory of Time for more.

So we may hope to understand **short- and long-term issues** within the same conceptual framework of aspects. Pre-social aspects are more immediate, post-social ones longer and post-aesthetic aspects longer still, such as changes to societal mindset and attitude.

3-2.5.2 Second, characteristics of individual aspects

Summary: Each aspects individually is an irreducibly different sphere of meaning and law, are normative but are not absolute.

- ◆ Each aspect is a "**modality of meaning**". At its centre is a meaning-kernel, and around it is a constellation of meaning. So reference to an aspect is a reference to ways in which affords meaningfulness to things. Figure f3-2.5 shows the meaning-kernel of the economic and a host of things meaningful because of the economic aspect [Basden 2020].

<img src = "pix/economic.gif" alt = "The kernel and some of the constellation of the economic aspect " width = 379 height = 300

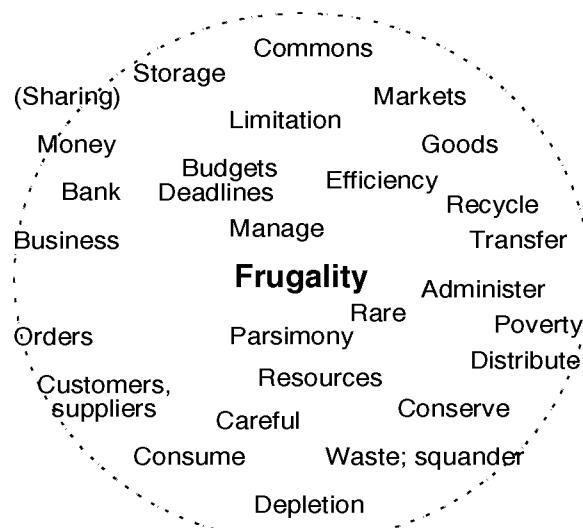


Figure f3-2.5. Some of the constellation and kernel of economic aspect.

- ◆ Each aspect is gives us basic **laws** that enable and guide functioning in that aspect. They pertain whether or not we know them or agree with them. Laws of the economic aspect are **non-determinative**. Examples: Squandering resources (carelessness) eventually tends to sustainability. Demand-supply curves also express a basic law, but in a manner distorted by reductionism, and are often treated too deterministically. (Non-determinacy is also called "freedom" especially in the later aspects.)

A sound understanding of the laws of the economic aspect is essential for prediction - but see below about inter-aspect dependency.
- ◆ Aspects are **inherently normative** for all temporal reality. Every aspect introduces a distinct kind of Good and most also a corresponding Evil or Harm. When we function against the laws of aspects Harm will eventually come. Examples: Physical aspect introduces causality, biotic introduces vitality of organism, lingual introduces communication, economic introduces respect for objects as resource (see Chapter 4). This gives a basis for philosophical **axiology** that embraces all four main ethics paradigms, utilitarian, deontological, virtue and structural.

This implies the importance of **responsibility**, even in the absence to hard evidence. It helps economists (and those who use economics) deal with the **idea of Good and Evil** in a very natural way, rather than having to bolt it on (as some ethics in economics do).

It also offers **guidance** in practice and a sound means of **evaluating and prioritizing** past events, present opportunities and future possibilities. Explicit reference to the distinct kinds of good and harm meaningful in each aspect can enhance **mutual respect** among different camps.
- ◆ **No aspect is absolute**, in three senses. 1. To function in any aspect requires functioning in other aspects; see inter-aspect dependency. 2. No aspect can be the foundation for explaining any other aspect (c.f. Reductionism). 3. In temporal reality, no aspect can do entirely and fully what it makes possible without other aspects. Examples: The lingual aspect, the symbols or utterances we generate to parcel up 'pieces of meaningfulness' can never fully express what we mean. The economic aspect on its own can never fully achieve sustainability.

This urges **humility** in prediction, planning and theory-making and subsequent openness to new ideas.

3-2.5.3 Third, about relationships among aspects.

Summary: Aspects relate by being irreducibly distinct, depending on each other, which implies an order, are never in conflict, and in which the meaning of each contains analogical echoes of others.

Though **irreducibly distinct**, all aspects are **interconnected** in several ways, giving them an **innate coherence**. To understand these relationships helps in analysing situations, theories and ideas, as seen in Aspectual Analysis below.

- ◆ Dooyeweerd's aspects are **irreducibly distinct** in their meaning and laws.
Examples: If we try to understand economic activity purely in terms of mathematics or psychology we miss much. (Their mutual irreducibility of meaningfulness and law is known as their "sphere sovereignty").
When aspects are used properly in categorization or classification, there is little danger of category errors. This can reduce our fear and helplessness in the face of complexity, giving hope that we can tackle and manage it, even if never fully.
Irreducible distinctness explains the differences between fields (of study and practice), and sub-fields within them. Example: Economics studies the economic aspect, sociology, the social; accountancy adds the quantitative aspect.
- ◆ There is **no conflict** among aspects; functioning in one never undermines functioning in others. Apparent inter-aspect conflict usually arises from misunderstanding aspects, and/or from dysfunction in an aspect. Example: the popular myth that ethicality in a business undermines business success arises from misunderstanding both the ethical and economic aspects and their meaningfulness and norms.
This guides us to critically question with theoretical explanations or practical situations in which inter-aspect conflict is presupposed, but **look deeper**, ask why there might be conflict and seek proper solutions rather than make do with unsatisfactory compromises.
- ◆ **Inter-aspect dependency.** Each aspect depends on others for its full meaningfulness. This is in two directions, foundational and antecipatory. **Foundational dependency** is when functioning in an aspect requires good functioning in earlier aspects. **Antecipatory dependency** [Note: "Anticipation"] is when later aspects 'fill out' the meaningfulness of an earlier aspect. Example: Social depends foundationally on lingual in order to occur; lingual depends antecipatorily on social for its fulfilment, its full meaningfulness. Economic depends foundationally on social, lingual, etc. to occur, these anticipate the economic for their efficiency. Though inter-dependent, aspects are nevertheless irreducible, so *some* economic economic can occur without social (e.g. my own frugality), and *some* social without economic (such as when not using any resource not thinking about value).
Understanding inter-aspect dependencies helps us in **tackling complexity** and in **planning**, and would enable other aspects to be brought into **theories**, models and measures.
- ◆ Aspects form a **sequential order**, which expresses their inter-aspect dependency.
- ◆ Each aspect contains **analogical 'echoes'** of all others. Example: Economic growth is an analogy from the biotic aspect. Causality is meaningful in the physical aspect, but all kinds of aspectual repercussion echo causality but are less determinative. Intuition detects these analogies, but when we try to analyse them, we must remember that they do not operate according to the laws of the original aspect; economic growth operates according to the laws of the economic aspect, not the biotic. Arguing from analogy is dangerous and misleading, especially about economic growth!
Inter-aspect analogies can be useful when **communicating ideas**,

such as in teaching economics; it employs intuitive understanding of aspectual meanings. Analogies can also help reflective thinking.

- ◆ To show the difference between analogy and dependency, the following (draft) table gives examples of both analogical echoes of each aspect within the economic, along with actual functioning in each aspect on which economic activity depends. This shows some of the multi-aspectual meaningfulness of economics; what needs to be added is repercussions of economic activity, such as climate change, which is discussed in Chapters 6 and 9.

<img src = "pix/t3-AnlgyDepcy.gif" alt = "Examples of analogy of each aspect in the economy and how economic activity depends on each aspect. 1024,1548" width = 341 height = 519

Aspect	A good economy depends on ...	Analogical echo in the economy
Quantitative	Amount	Price
Spatial	Land	Location of funds
Kinematic	Transport	Money flow; Trickle down Economic movement
Physical	Energy, materials Stable climate	Price flexibility; Inflation; Liquidity; Market solidity
Organic / Biotic	Health Biodiversity	Economic growth
Psychic / Sensitive	Hunch	Market sentiment
Analytic	Comparing suppliers	Price differential
Formative	Economic planning	Efficiency Economic power
Lingual	Money (token of value)	Market message
Social	Exchange; Agreement Financial institutions	Company
Economic	Frugal use of resource	-
Aesthetic	Market harmony	Economic stability
Juridical	Fair prices Justice for all Financial legislation	Equal pay
Ethical / Attitudinal	Trust Gift / generosity Mercy to debtors	Investment Goods, services
Pistic / Faith	Belief in currency Belief in the economy	?

Table t3-Anlgydep. Examples of analogy of each aspect in the economy and how economic activity depends on each aspect

3-2.6 What Aspects Enable in Reality

Summary: Reference to aspects help us understand things, properties, functioning, good and evil, etc. more deeply, because aspects make all these possible.

Because of those characteristics, aspects may be seen as the very foundation of

reality as it exists and occurs, and we experience it (the fact-side). Some emerge from aspectual meaningfulness and some from law.

3-2.6.1 What Aspectual meaningfulness enables

Summary: Aspectual meaningfulness enables category, property, relationship, rationality, and being.

Aspectual meaningfulness enables or makes possible:

- ◆ **Distinct categories.** Category errors, overlap and omissions can be reduced by using Dooyeweerd's aspects because of their fundamental irreducibility and equality. Examples: Maslow's hierarchy of needs align closely with some of Dooyeweerd's aspects.
Dooyeweerd's aspects have proven excellent in **classifying** things, especially multi-level classifications.
- ◆ **Basic kinds of properties** that things can exhibit Examples: The weight (physical), colour (psychical), value (economic), beauty (aesthetic), ownership (juridical) of a thing. Some properties are meaningful in multiple aspects.
So we can expect everything to have **multiple kinds of property** and to be classifiable in a variety of ways, different according to aspect.
- ◆ **Distinct kinds of relationships**, ways in which things can relate to each other; Examples: X greater than Y (quantitative relationship), X outside Y (spatial), X implies Y (analytical), X buys Y from Z (economic), X rewards Y (juridical).
- ◆ **Distinct rationalities**, implying different ways in which things make sense or nonsense; Examples: deductive logic (analytical), lower prices - more customers (economic). What makes sense in one aspect is usually irrelevant, in another. There can never be any conflict among distinct rationalities; seeming conflicts usually arising from misunderstanding aspectual kernels. There is no single overarching rationality to which all the aspectual rationalities submit.
Separating out aspectual rationalities of aspects explains and resolves many **paradoxes**. Example: Xeno's paradox of Achilles not being able to beat the tortoise in a race lies in trying to treat kinematic rationality as spatial rationality. Replace that with an economics paradox = = = =. This can be useful in critiquing and refining theories.
- ◆ **Being** (including process) and distinct **types of thing / being**. As mentioned above, to Dooyeweerd, all being, all existence, is being-as-X where X is the meaningfulness offered by aspects. Example: Mountains, memories and money are things by virtue of the physical, psychical and economic aspects. All types are multi-aspectual (e.g. mountains are things of beauty, aesthetic aspect); see below. This is the basis for philosophical **ontology**.
That aspects define types of thing makes us **open to the complex nature of things** without trying to reduce it, and especially allow us to see things like money, interest rates and banks in different ways.

3-2.6.2 What Aspectual Law enables

Summary: Aspectual Law enables normativity, possibility, functioning, repercussion and knowing.

Aspectual law enables or makes possible several things. Often we have the laws of multiple aspects operating together, and taking account of all aspects is what often constitutes **wisdom**.

- ◆ Different **normativities**, different kind of Good and Bad, for each aspect. So things and situations can be good or bad in a variety of ways, and can be both good in some aspects while bad in others, which in turn implies that

nothing, and no people, can be justified or condemned absolutely but only relative to one aspect or another. Example: frugality rather than waste.

So evaluation and guidance must always be with humility.

- ◆ Distinct kind of **possibility**, implying that prediction must always be referenced to a given aspect; Examples: economic possibilities, social possibilities, religious possibilities, physical possibilities.

That aspects define distinct kinds of possibility can make **prediction** richer. It can also help us in **planning** by showing us both why some things are untenable and also what unforeseen opportunities there might be.
- ◆ Distinct modes of **functioning**, implying that behaviours, processes and events can be understood in multiple ways; Examples: An shopping (economic) can also be a meeting of friends (social). Functioning can be at societal level as well as individual. See more below.

This helps us understand **complex behaviours**.
- ◆ Distinct kinds of **repercussion** of functioning ('causality'), so for multi-aspectual functioning, expect multiple kinds of repercussion; Examples: Squandering resources undermines sustainability; do so arrogantly can spread an attitude of arrogance.

This helps us understand **complex 'causalities'**.
- ◆ **Subjects and objects.** Things can function in each aspect as subject or object. To be a **subject** (as active agent) is constituted in being subject to the laws of aspects (thus Dooyeweerd integrates the two English meanings of "subject"). A thing functions as **object** when 'used' or 'produced' by a functioning subject: a **subject-object relationship**. For example I am writing, as lingual subject; I use a word processor (lingual object used) to generate sentences and words (lingual objects produced); thus the traditional subject-object relationship. Example: Economic objects can include minerals, trees, whales and humans. Dooyeweerd also speaks of **subject-subject relationships**, which are the basis of two agents interaction, functioning and responding in the same aspect. Examples: wind blows me over (physical subject-subject), two lingual communicants, or a buyer and seller in economics.
- ◆ According to Dooyeweerd, material can function as subject up to the physical aspect, plants to the biotic, animals to the psychical and humans in all, but anything can function as object in all. **Human beings** function as subject in all aspects simultaneously, and may also function as object in some aspects. Therefore, in economics, they are **not** to be reduced to **self-interested rational economic actor** (*homo economicus*).
- ◆ Distinct ways of **knowing**, which may be defined as functioning of a subject that leaves a 'residue' of that functioning within the subject. Examples:
 - » plant bending towards light (biotic knowing where light is);
 - » memory (psychical knowing);
 - » learning how to ride a bicycle or play tennis (psychical: muscular knowing);
 - » knowing concepts and facts (analytical);
 - » skill (formative knowing);
 - » learning by hearing or reading (lingual knowing);
 - » knowing a friend (social);
 - » certainty (pistic knowing).

Some kinds of knowing are tacit, while others are explicit, implying that both tacit and explicit knowledge may be understood within the same philosophic system rather than being treated as two completely different phenomena. This is the basis for philosophical **epistemology**.

Remember, non-absoluteness of aspects urges humility in all claims to know.

There being various kinds of knowing helps us avoid sterile rationalism and to respect things like **intuition**.

- ◆ Various **sciences and disciplines**, fields of study and practice, each focused on one aspect though ideally taking others into account.

3-2.7 In More Detail

Summary: More detail on good, evil, value and ethics, then on functioning and repercussions, then on attitude and mindset.

Some of these need more detailed discussion to serve our Rethink: more on good, evil, value and ethics, especially for chapters 5 and 7, more on functioning and repercussions, especially for chapter 6, on mindset and attitude, throughout, and on aspectual analysis, throughout.

3-2.7.1 More on good, evil, value and ethics

Summary: Good, evil and value are inherent in Dooyeweerd's idea of aspects, not 'bolted on'. They are different for each aspect.

Each aspect enables some unique **Good** to occur, such that functioning well in the aspect (i.e. in line with its laws) brings Good repercussions, and dysfunction in the aspect (evil functioning, against its laws) brings **Harmful** repercussions. (We capitalize Good and Harm when referring to that of aspects, rather than that which depends on context.)

This section provides philosophical grounding especially for Chapter 7, on *Good, Harmful and Useless Economic Activity*. Table t3-2.7.1, is worth perusing now, to gain an idea of the variety of aspectual Good and Evil functioning and Good and Harmful repercussions meaningful in each aspect, because what it says will give background understanding for all chapters. Notice that in the first four aspects there is no Evil nor Harm, only Good; they form a reliable foundation for all else, e.g. energy from the Sun.

Table 3-2.7.1. Good and harmful functioning and repercussions in each aspect (examples)

(Click on table for full size)

<"pix/t3-ghfr.gif">

Aspect	Functioning (F _X)	Dysfunction (D _X)	Repercussions	
			Good (G _X)	Harmful (H _X)
Quantitative	Amount as given		Reliable totals Sequence	
Spatial	Simultaneity Continuity		Continuous extension	
Kinematic	Movement		Dynamism	
Physical	Force, causality		Persistence	
Organic / Biotic	Feeding Reproduction	Starvation Sterility	Vitality Survival	Disease Extinction
Psychic / Sensitive	Interaction	Insensitivity	Alertness Emotional health	Sensory deprivation Addiction
Analytic	Distinction	Conflation	Conceptual clarity	Confusion
Formative	Planning Working, constructing	Laziness, Destroying	Achievement Construction Technology	Lost opportunities Destruction
Lingual	Expressing	Deceiving	Information	Misinformation
Social	Relating, befriending Taking a role	Disdaining, hating Refusing to fit in	Friendship Amplified activity	Working against each other
Economic	Frugality	Squandering	Well-resourced prosperity	Unsustainability Destitution
Aesthetic	Harmonizing Enjoying	Fragmentation	Wholeness Interest, fun, beauty	Fragmentation Boredom
Juridical	Giving due, responsibility	Irresponsibility	Justice Appropriateness	Injustice Inappropriateness
Ethical / Attitudinal	Self-giving love, vulnerability, trust	Selfishness, self-protection	Culture of goodwill	Competitive, harsh culture
Pistic / Faith	Belief, courage, commitment	Idolatry, disloyalty	High morale in society	Loss of meaning, morale

Idolatry: Treating something non-absolute as absolute

To Dooyeweerd, Good functioning in **every aspect** contributes together to what we will call **Multi-aspectual Overall Good**. Just as in an orchestra, every instrument plays its part, so in Multi-aspectual Overall Good, every aspect plays its part. Dysfunction in any aspect undermines this. We expand on this later.

Value arises from Good that is made possible by aspects, each a different kind of Good and hence a different kind of value. For example, health and biodiversity are valuable because of the biotic aspect, communication is valuable because of the lingual aspect, frugality, because of the economic aspect, and so on. Human values like “responsibility, fairness, integrity, dynamism, solidarity and resilience” [Carney 2021, 519] arise primarily from the juridical, aesthetic-pistic, kinematic-formative and social aspects, with resilience being multi-aspectual. Thus Dooyeweerd’s aspects can be helpful in implementing Carney’s [2021] call for a wide range of kinds of value to be recognised in economics, and Chapter 5 discusses how this might be done.

Each situation or thing can now be understood as of **multiple value**, such as a landscape with biotic, social, aesthetic and economic value, and Dooyeweerd’s aspects can be useful in revealing the different values [Gunton et al. 2017] and hence in evaluation, as discussed in Chapter 5.

Dooyeweerd's idea integrates and supports the various paradigms of 'ethics'
[Note: "Ethics"]:

- ◆ Functionalist or instrumental ethics focuses on the repercussions.
- ◆ Deontological ethics focuses on the laws of aspects (sometimes as expressed in humanly created laws).
- ◆ Virtue ethics focuses on the Good that each aspect brings, and often on how people commit to various aspectual kinds of Good.
- ◆ Structural ethics focuses on the laws, repercussions and Good meaningful in the juridical, ethical and pistic aspects, which retrocipatively impact our functioning in earlier aspects.

3-2.7.2 On Functioning and repercussions

Summary: All that occurs is multi-aspectual functioning with repercussions, both good and harmful. This helps us understand and guide economic activity at all levels.

All that occurs is constituted in functioning that is enabled by the laws of each aspect, all simultaneously. We call this **multi-aspectual functioning**. For example, I am living (biotic) and believing (pistic) as I write.

Example: Purchasing something using money, we function in the lingual aspect in two ways (communicating about buying/selling; money as a token of value), we function in the social aspect in two ways (relating during purchase; agreement about the value of purchases), in economic aspect (saving money and goods), the ethical aspect (trust in the value of the money), in the psychical and physical aspects (handling coins or notes, or tapping card), and so on.

[Note: Types of money]

All such functionings occur **simultaneously**, interconnected with each other, depending on each other, and constitute our human activity in its real-life **complexity**. Identifying the relevant aspects makes complexity more tractable. This is what Chapter 6 is about.

Though functioning and repercussions in each aspect can be thought about separately from others, as in that example, we must always be aware of links with all others, especially **inter-aspect dependency** and **no-conflict**. This will prove very important in this Rethink because almost every problem and solution involves such multi-aspectual functioning.

Macroeconomics and **microeconomics** will be understood together in Chapter 6, in that they see economic activity through the lenses of different ranges of aspects, the psychological to lingual and the aesthetic to pistic.

Functioning in any aspect yields **repercussions** in (at least) that aspect. Good functioning in an aspect tends to yield **Good**, while dysfunctioning tends to yield **Harm**. (Here "dysfunction" and "harm" are approximately synonyms for **evil**, with one often describing functioning, the other, the repercussions.) ("Tends to", because most aspectual laws are **non-determinative**.) Table t3-2.5.1 above shows examples of the good and harmful functioning and repercussions meaningful in each aspect. Notice how differently we experience functionings in various aspects differently; in the mathematical aspects functioning feels like having-a-property; in the physical aspect, like causality, in the biotic to social aspects, like volition, in the social to aesthetic aspects like social activity, and in the juridical to pistic sometimes like volition but often like enculturation or constraint.

We may express functioning and repercussions by formulae if we wish (though Dooyeweerd never did):

$$\begin{aligned} Fx &\rightarrow Gx \\ Dx &\rightarrow Hx \end{aligned}$$

$$\text{MAOG} = \text{Total}(G_x) - \text{Total}(H_x).$$

where F_x is **good functioning** in aspect x and D_x is corresponding **dysfunction**, –
 \rightarrow means “tends to”, G_x is **good repercussions**, H_x is harmful repercussions, and
MAOG is the Multi-aspectual Overall Good that actually occurs (see later).
Total() is not mere addition but takes into account inter-aspect impact. Such
formulae are not mathematical but a mathematical metaphor that will help us in
Chapter 7.

Timescale: The full repercussions of functioning that is meaningful in later
aspects take longer to materialise than in the earlier aspects (even though some
repercussions of individual functioning might be immediate). For example, whereas
physical causality operates in picoseconds, it took nearly a century for the belief system that is Soviet
Communism to work out its repercussions and collapse.

Aspectual targets: The functioning in each aspect can target any aspect
(including itself). Example: The lingual functioning of speaking may be about numbers
(quantitative), shapes (spatial), words (lingual), friendships (social), purchases (economic) and
legislation (juridical).

The functioning in any aspect is affected by other aspects, earlier and later.
On earlier aspects there is **foundational dependency**, in that it is enabled and
constrained by the quality of functioning in earlier aspects.

Example: Economic functioning depends on the social functioning of agreeing to exchange
goods and, if money is involved, the broader social agreement about what a unit of currency is
worth. Without agreement, economic functioning becomes more difficult.

There is also **retrocipative impact** by functioning in later aspects.

Example: Economic activity is impacted by functioning in the ethical aspect: trust and
generosity improves it while distrust and meanness and self-protection undermines it.

Example: Economic functioning itself impacts biotic functioning: health and biodiversity.

In this way we can distinguish different kinds of **externalities**, often multiple
and, by understanding the character of foundational and retrocipative dependency
in each pair of aspects, something of the ‘causality’ involved.

A situation may be **both good and bad simultaneously**, good in one aspect
and bad in another (or even good and bad mixed together in one aspect). For
example a cruel person (juridical, ethical dysfunction) can still write good music
(aesthetic).

This means that to **change our functioning** in any aspect we can do so either
(a) directly or (b) by changing functioning in earlier aspects or (c) in later aspects.
To **change economic activity**, we can (a) (obviously) try economics measures like
taxes or incentives. (b) Behavioral economics and advertising employ changes in
earlier aspects, including the psychical and lingual. (c) We will argue in Chapter
6 that we need to change attitude and mindset (ethical, pistic aspects) because
many of today’s problems in the economy and world are rooted in these.

3-2.7.3 The functioning of attitude and mindset

Summary: Two aspects, the ethical and pistic, will be found especially
important in understanding the realities of economics, as the hidden
influences of attitude and mindset.

[Note: Some repetition between here, Chapter 4 and Chapter 6 remains to be dealt with.]

Doooyeweerd’s two last aspects, the **pistic** and **ethical** aspects, have most of their
effect by **retrocipative impact** on the functioning in earlier aspects, including the
economic. This impact is often hidden and so we overlook their importance. We

will encounter them frequently as we discuss economics both as it is practised and in its theories, at all levels, from individuals to nations and even globally.

Functioning in the **ethical aspect** is constituted in the **attitude** we take toward others and all Creation, of self-giving love, generosity, trust and openness to risk, or of self-centredness, selfishness and self-protection. Economic activity is shaped by this, towards generosity and trust, which of course is vital to a well-functioning economy, or towards competitiveness and self-interest. This casts doubt over the validity and efficacy of competitiveness [Note: Competition], and over the validity of the **self-interested rational economic actor** for a healthy economy. The retrocipative impact of ethical (attitudinal) functioning on the function in earlier aspects includes, for example:

- ◆ Juridical: The affluent bend the economic rules to suit themselves ...
- ◆ Economic: ... so they enjoy cheaper energy at the expense of the planet and the poor.
- ◆ Social: Two erstwhile friends running different companies become enemies when one cheats the other.
- ◆ Biotic: Loss of biodiversity from massive forest clearance in order to boost income for farms or international corporations.

Usually, the attitude individuals take follows the attitude that pervades society, but occasionally an individual stands out and takes a different attitude (either trust and openness in a mean, individualistic culture), which then spreads to others. (The courage to take such an attitude is pistic functioning.)

Functioning in the **pistic aspect** is constituted in what we treat as most meaningful, that is in our deepest beliefs, assumptions, presuppositions, expectations, aspirations, identities and commitments, including ideologies and religions. It is the deep functioning of our innermost being, our 'heart' as some call it. It is that by which we justify Harm we do - or which most deeply motivates the kind of Good we do. It is that which makes us inordinately angry or supportive and courageous. It is our 'god', our 'idol', for which we sacrifice much that is good - or it is the True Divine (see below). It operates not only at the individual level but also at the **societal and communal** level, as prevailing beliefs, aspirations and assumptions that is often called "culture". Such cultures prevail across society as a whole, with modified versions in the various **spheres of life** and economic sectors: the societal pistic functioning in farming, in medicine, in politics, in retail, in banking, etc.

Being the terminal aspect, how we function in the pistic aspect affects how we function in all others, for example:

- ◆ Ethical: If we presuppose self-interested, rational economic actor, we become selfish ourselves, and indeed all society is pervaded with selfishness.
- ◆ Juridical: Prevailing beliefs steer legislation.
- ◆ Aesthetic: Prevailing ideology (or religion) stultifies dissent while individual beliefs fosters it.
- ◆ Economic: The self-belief "I am worth it!" makes us purchase more "trinkets and baubles" [Adam Smith].
- ◆ Biotic: Biodiversity loss, because it is more important for us to get burgers cheaper than to save the forest.

Both ethical and pistic functioning (attitude and mindset), operate at both individual and communal or societal levels. Taken together at the societal or communal level, they seem to be largely what is meant by "culture", "power structures" etc. in academic literature and by "heart" in religious circles. These two aspects, with the juridical, are post-aesthetic and therefore usually relate to

‘the whole’, across all society; they may be called the **aspects of societal structure**. [Note: Power Structures] [Note: Culture]

3-2.8 The Economic Aspect

Summary: Economics centres on the economic aspect; what does this imply for how we understand it?

Economics centres on the economic aspect. As a science it focuses on data and concepts meaningful in the economic aspect, its theories relate concepts meaningful in the economic aspect, as a discipline it includes rules that express the normativity of the economic aspect, economic activity is activity in which the economic aspect is important, ‘the economy’ is the societal system in which the economic aspect is most important. And, as we have seen above, good versions of all these take account of all other aspects too, and their links with the economic aspect.

But what does this entail? It entails two main things: understanding what the irreducible, distinct **kernel meaning** of the economic aspect is and is not, and understanding its **links with other aspects**. In Chapter 4 this will lead to **embedding economics** among other spheres of life; in this section we lay the philosophical groundwork for doing that - and much else throughout the Rethink.

3-2.8.1 Kernel Meaning of the Economic Aspect

Summary: The economic aspect makes respect for objects, value, limits, future-orientation and sustainability meaningful.

See <“econ.aspect.html”>separate page for detailed discussion of this.

Dooyeweerd suggests that the kernel meaning of the economic aspect is frugality [NC,II, 66]. He specifically rules out efficiency, which he sees as meaningful in the formative aspect with analogy from the economic [NC,II, 67]. However, as <“econ.aspect.html#s-ddea”> we argue, Dooyeweerd has too unquestioningly accepted the definition of economics by Robbins, and ignores others. And, frugality is a norm rather than meaningfulness. So we develop Dooyeweerd’s idea by asking “What unique kind of Good does the economic aspect introduce that other aspects do not?” This leads us to the idea that the kernel meaning of the economic aspect involves:

- ◆ respect for dignity of objects (which economics refers to as “resource”);
- ◆ value;
- ◆ limits (including scarcity);
- ◆ future-orientation;
- ◆ sustainability.

Without the economic aspect, respect for objects as well as subjects, value, limits, resource and sustainability would have no or very little meaning and even less force. The norm of **frugality** derives from these but, importantly, it applies even without limits. Frugality is good in itself because of respect for the objects and because we never know whether what seems abundant now will become scarce in future.

3-2.8.2 Links with other aspects

Summary: Many concepts in economics can be understood as meaningful in the economic and one or two other aspects.

The economic differs from neighbouring aspects in some fundamental ways. The social aspect makes exchange meaningful but lacks the idea of resource and value. The biotic aspect makes consumption (food) meaningful but, in itself, lacks the idea of self-restraint.

Many of the concepts we use in economics actually gain their meaningful from other aspects either by analogy or by inter-aspect dependency, such as:

- ◆ Consumption - analogy from biotic
- ◆ Growth - analogy from biotic
- ◆ Force - analogy from physical
- ◆ Exchange - social functioning depended on
- ◆ Equilibrium - analogy from physical
- ◆ Money flow - kinematic, both analogy and foundational dependency
- ◆ Production, products - formative functioning, both analogy and foundational dependency
- ◆ Goods, services - analogies from ethical - and also some ethical functioning if aimed at Multi-aspectual Overall Good
- ◆ Investing - an economic concept but with ethical overtones of sacrifice
- ◆ and so on.

What these examples show is that all these concepts so prevalent in economics require **extra “modal qualification”** (as Dooyeweerd called it), i.e. meaningfulness imported in from other aspects, to make them properly meaningful.

Beware: The analogies transported into the economic aspect, such as growth, operate according to the laws of the economic aspect rather than their original aspect, which should never be used as either norms or arguments. Politicians and media pundits err on this when the presuppose economic growth as unmitigated good and make it a goal.

What all this implies is that, for a proper rethink we must **deconstruct economic concepts** to find which aspects make it meaningful and in what ways.

3-2.8.3 What we see via the economics aspect

Summary: Viewing only through the lens of the economic aspect blinds us to issues meaningful in post-economic aspects.

The economic aspect comes after the social but before the aesthetic. What this implies is that issues meaningful in **post-economic aspects** are not meaningful from a narrow economics outlook, so cannot even be seen and thus tend to be **overlooked** or, at best, taken for granted.

So, for example, in *Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith took for granted that the baker etc. would be of generally good will and that “self-love” would not become the hubristic selfishness of the wealthy, which he condemned (an issue meaningful in the ethical aspect). He also tended to assume harmony (aesthetic aspect) of the entire market, referring to it obliquely as an “invisible hand”. It fell to others later, like Keynes, to tackle the macroeconomic issues that emerge from functioning of the economy in the aesthetic aspect. Likewise the juridical aspect in justice issues, the ethical aspect of things like the gift economy, and faith aspect in current recognition of the need to change culture [Trainer 2022].

Such post-economic issues are active and meaningful in the real life of economics right from the start, but become recognised as important only gradually and usually from ad hoc pieces of experience. It is, we believe, preferable to recognise them right from the start, and Dooyeweerd’s suite of aspects can help with this. It can also help us properly take them into account today, all together rather than piecemeal.

The **pre-economic aspects** can however be visible from an economic perspective, even though altered by seeing them through the lens of the economic aspect. For example, economic exchange is social functioning, but in

economics we shut out the social aspects of that exchange such as friendliness and politeness. Money as token of value is lingual functioning, metal coins and paper are physical functioning, but we overlook the realities of communication etc.

Sometimes in practice we are forced to take such realities into account, such as when we find a fake banknote or rudeness stops a sale, or when we boycott an unethical firm (realities meaningful in the lingual, social and juridical or ethical aspects). Sadly, such realities rarely enter economic theories. Economic theories and practice need to be **expanded to take every aspect** into account, both pre- and post-economic aspects. That is what we will be suggesting throughout this rethink.

3-2.9 Conclusion About Dooyeweerd

Summary: Dooyeweerd's philosophy is a good philosophical foundation for rethinking economics, and his suite of aspects offers a useful conceptual tool, comprehensive, flexible and embracive.

Aspects, aspects everywhere

But do we stop to think?

(With apologies to Coleridge)

We have seen the universality and broad applicability of the idea of aspects. This is not surprising because, to Dooyeweerd, these "modalities of meaning" are the very foundation of all that exists and happens. So it is no surprise that we will refer to them throughout our discussions. It is the wide applicability of Dooyeweerd's idea of aspects that allows us to propose a wide-ranging understanding of economics, as presented in Chapters 4-8. Each chapter expresses, not a major known issue in economics, but a fundamental issue in philosophy: existential meaning, value, functioning, the difference between good and evil, and entities, all related to economics - and notice how the idea of entities comes last rather than first as would be the case if guided by most ontologies, because to Dooyeweerd, entity is derivative not fundamental.

- ◆ Chapter 4: Aspects help us think about the meaning and identity of economics, and its multi-aspectual mandate, which goes beyond economic growth, and the pistic aspect alerts us to our problematic mindset towards economics.
- ◆ Chapter 5: Aspects help us differentiate kinds of Value and then understand how they link and may be measured.
- ◆ Chapter 6: Aspects help us understand economic activity in all its richness, and the value of unpaid work.
- ◆ Chapter 7: Aspects help us understand, differentiate and evaluate Good, Harmful and Useless economic activity.
- ◆ Chapter 8: Aspects help us think about entities that are important in econoics, both subjects and objects, for example to reconceive money.

However, before that, we clarify how extant economics ideas and theories are dealt with and the validity of Christian and other religious perspectives.

3-3. Spiritual / Religious Perspectives

Summary: Christian, other religious and spiritual perspectives can offer insights that are usually overlooked in economics theory and practice, but which are important for a full understanding of economics, and especially to motivate and enable deep change rather than just discuss.

(Please note: This section is best understood by readers with Christian or other religious faith, and maybe should be hived off into a separate article. We keep it here because: (a) Other readers may find something of interest. (b) We reject the sacred-secular divide, which separates faith from other aspects of life.)

Not only is religion a problem but it can be a blessing too, offering insights to any field that prove valuable. Since most participants in the RLDG are Christians of a Reformational leaning, it was natural that this would inform our discussions and therefore this Rethink. However, we had to think honestly about why and how insights that we thought came from the Christian faith could and should be included, and it became clear that some of the ideas we assumed were Christian were actually from Judaism and some are common to all religions and even general spirituality. Some people from other religions have participated in the RLDG.

This section is not an exercise in Christian or religious apologetics but of its **application**. We do not believe it is valid to force religion onto economics, but that religion has something important to say. This section outlines in what ways insights from religious perspectives are relevant and important in economics, even secular economics.

Our approach allows for, and recognises, the importance of religious and 'spiritual' perspectives, especially Christian, which most thinking in economics ignores, but which can make several valid contributions that even so-called secular thinkers might accept as reasonable. We use these ideas to serve and bless the discourse, not to dominate nor demand. In aspectual terms, religious traditions have expertise on the pistic and ethical aspects while economics has expertise on the economic, and both aspects are equally important and affect each other.

We recognise the differences among religions, discussing insights from spirituality or religion in general, then insights specifically offered by a Jewish perspective, then those offered by a specifically Christian perspective.

We discuss:

- ◆ why we do not seek a 'Christian' economics;
- ◆ three insights offered by general religious or spirituality perspective;
- ◆ three additional insights offered by the Judaic perspective;
- ◆ three additional insights offered by Christian perspectives.

Most of the following is a summary argument that calls for longer treatment elsewhere - as well as perhaps adding other useful insights, including from Islamic and Eastern perspectives.

3-3.1 A Christian Economics?

Summary: We do not seek a Christian Economics, but rather to bring valuable insights into economics from Christianity and other religions or spirituality.

This Rethink is not seeking nor advocating a Christian Economics over against other types. We do not aim to contrast but to contribute [Note: Contrast], and thus help to fulfil God's promise to Abraham that through him all will be blessed (see later). That includes the realm of economics (or any other field). When all nine contributions are fulfilled, it might be valid to call that a "Christian Economics" but to impose such labels from the start will put off those who are to be blessed.

So we do not seek any framework of theory nor practice derived entirely from Christian as opposed to non-Christian doctrines. (Nor any branch of Christianity, such as Roman Catholicism or Calvinism; several early followers of Dooyeweerd and Kuyper sought a "Calvinist Economics" [Hengstmengel 2012].)

Rather, we are looking at how a Christian perspective, or other religious perspective, can enrich Economics as such, in a way that is proper to both economics and the religious perspective in a multi-aspectual harmony. Any economics that excludes religious ideas is already presupposing something narrower than the full reality it has a duty to explain and guide, and both it and reality suffer thereby. We would expect economics to take Christian and religious values seriously and benefit from them as part of the real life it encounters, but not to be dominated by them.

So, let us look at what kinds of contributions may be made, starting wide with all religions, then narrowing down by stages to Christian ideas.

3-3.2 Using Scripture Verses?

Summary: Instead of using Scripture verses to dictate economic policy or theory, we look for deeper insights from religious / spirituality perspectives.

A very common attempt to bring religious perspectives into economics is to **apply verses** or passages of Scripture or, rather, principles expressed clearly therein.

For example, there is much Jewish scholarship on such issues, stretching back beyond 2000 years, which could offer valuable insights for economics. The mediaeval Roman Catholic church banned Christians from practising usury on the grounds that it was banned in the Jewish law [e.g. Exodus 22:25; Leviticus 25:36-7]. Though this might have served to avoid some of usury's worst excesses, people still wanted to allow it, so they found a loopholes, such as allowing the Jews to practise usury among Christians (which is technically allowed in the Torah). The ramifications of this are many and grievous.

Arguably, the Muslims did better, in erecting a whole system of finance where usury is forbidden to all, known as **Islamic Finance**, and it is widely recognised that this has something useful to say to economics today. But it is doubtful whether the system of Islamic Finance could be adopted globally in a way that addresses all the problems of which economics is a direct or indirect cause.

Another approach is to apply take Scriptural principles to specific problems known to economics. For example Aumann [1985] applied Talmudic thinking coupled with Game Theory to solve the Bankruptcy Problem.

While many Scripture passages do offer useful guidance on certain points of economics, and we will indeed refer to some occasionally, a rethink requires a deeper approach to welcoming insights from religious perspectives. (We use Scripture verses mainly as quotations that express ideas that might otherwise be overlooked.) What we do is to look at broad, generic implications of such perspectives for the very shape of economics and the way we practise or theorize it.

We find nine broad insights that are meaningful to economics and can thus offer useful contributions, three from general religion or spirituality, three from Judaic perspectives and three from Christian.

3-3.3 Religious / Spirituality Perspective 1: Emphasis on Overlooked Values

Summary: Religious and spirituality perspectives draw attention to values that are often overlooked, yet are important, in real economics.

“**Spirituality**” is ill-defined, usually used in the Global North to move away from what is seen as rigid rationalism and materialism, and/or from the perceived

imposition of traditional Christian ideas. We reject such antagonism but look for the positive is spirituality. Spirituality implies something 'higher' than ourselves. Its emphasis is on the "deepest values by which people live" [Sheldrake 2007] and a search for ultimate meaning and purpose in life [Snyder & Lopez 2007]. Might the present interest in spirituality express a deep desire for meaningfulness that transcends us, of which we are not in control, and which is Good? If so, this is the meaningfulness that we discussed earlier with Dooyeweerd.

Religion, though a word disliked by many who call themselves "spiritual", is similar, sharing the idea of deepest values and ultimate meaning, but it is more precise in making explicit what "something higher" is: something Divine, the Origin of all, with some ultimate authority. Though most religions also have doctrines, rules, traditions, etc. we do not include these here because the generic fact that they occur in religion offers few insights, though some specific beliefs that are expressed in these will offer useful insights, as we discuss below.

The first reason religious / spirituality perspectives are relevant to a field like economics is that they draw attention to **values that are often overlooked**. Reference to such values can be helpful to raise questions and open up possibilities that would otherwise be overlooked, to reveal assumptions and presuppositions and thus make economic theory and activity more healthy, especially in the long run.

Several RLDG discussions (discussions <"reith2020/z4.html#xn.values">ZE4, <"reith2020/z5.html#xn.values">ZE5 and <"reith2020/ze6.html">ZE6) were devoted to the role of "Christian values" suggested by Brian Edgar:

- ◆ Grace -- "a subversive value! Giving people more than they deserve";
- ◆ Hope -- "not a guarantee of immunity from harm but a conviction that God is always present";
- ◆ Faith - the means to real depth in relationships of all kinds;
- ◆ Love -- "means to love the unlovely";
- ◆ Justice -- "for all (not 'just-me'). A concept biased in favour of the disadvantaged";
- ◆ Joy -- "impossible to legislate for this but an essential social value";
- ◆ Service -- "meaning is found in service rather than self-centredness";
- ◆ Peace-- "not just the absence of fighting but positive well-being".

Kindness was also discussed. Other sets of Christian values may be found in the list of the fruit of the Holy Spirit [Galatians 5:22-23] and in the Beatitudes [Matthew 5:1-13]. In fact, most of these are not uniquely Christian values, many being found in other religions. (Indeed, readers might like to add lists of value from other religions.) They are not even necessarily religious, but lie deepest in the human breast. What the Gospel of Christ did was to remind cultures of their importance, as Holland [2019] and Scrivener [2024] have argued, so that most have become taken for granted in liberal cultures, not least in Carney [2021]. (In Dooyeweerdian terms, many are meaningful in the post-economic aspects: aesthetic, juridical, ethical and pistic.)

To some extent we can hear whispers of this in **Scholastic** (pre-Adam Smith) economic thinking, where notions of justice ruled economic activity. But we do not look to return there (as some, such as Mueller, seem to do), but to reach forward to a full multi-aspectual economy in which we function well in every aspect. [Note: Scholastic Economics]

All these values are important in life, including economic life, as many recent thinkers are arguing (see Chapter 2). In reality, is it not true that not only the entire world but economies thrive better when guided by such values as peace,

service and justice? Are they not motivators or hidden drivers of economic decisions and outcomes and even theories? Yet traditional economics **ignores them**, even **working against** some of them. Against grace and service, economics encourages competitive self-interest. Against love (of the self-giving kind) and against justice, conventional economics fosters unconcern for others (right wing) or angry reaction (left wing). Against joy, most economics fosters dissatisfaction or anger. Against depth in relationships, economics forces us into monetary transactions. Against peace, economics expects us to compete or strike. Notice how both right- and left-wing economics works against such values.

Religious perspectives, therefore, can remind economics of values long suppressed or overlooked - and this is timely, given recent thinking.

Such values, unfortunately, are rather **nebulous**? How may we bring them into economics theory and practice. Not only did the RLDG find them directly relevant to economics but they addressed this challenge. Relating these values specifically to economics made our discussions of them more concrete and forced us to confront difficult questions (e.g. when conventional conflicts arose). Such values may be made even more precise, systematic and even analysable, by understanding which aspects make them meaningful. The conclusion of RLDG discussions was that such values are not sufficient, on their own, to wholly understand or guide economics, because most emphasise only some of Dooyeweerd's aspects; focusing on kinds of value might still miss some. As one of our participants put it, "a Dooyeweerdian approach enables us to be systematic in recognising the radical implications of the Christian approach" - and approaches from other religions too. Chapter 5 is devoted to discussing how to bring all kinds of value into economics.

3-3.4 Religious / Spirituality Perspective 2: Holistic Viewpoint

Summary: Most religions and general spirituality help us towards holistic, all-inclusive viewpoints.

So religions and spirituality offer economics other values - but will some be accepted and others rejected or ignored? Religion and spirituality add a fundamentally **holistic** outlook, in which all the values interconnect among themselves and with all others already accepted, and hence cannot be picked out at will.

This is because most religions and spiritualities concern themselves with the whole of life, with the pre-theoretical stance rather than the theoretical, which takes all aspects of life into account, in principle. (The popular belief that religion is narrow is a misunderstanding [Note: Are Religions narrow?].) Such holism resonates, of course, with Dooyeweerd's multi-aspectual view.

Therefore by listening to religious perspectives, economics might be led into a more holistic approach, not only beyond the aspects that economics focuses on, but also across all eras, from ancient times, through the Scholastic period, through the fallout from Adam Smith and into the future [Sedlacek 2016]. In particular, religions have long treated the post-economic aspects of reality important (aesthetic, juridical, ethical, pistic), and hence possess a vast, deep fund of knowledge and wisdom born of **long experience** of, and discourse around, them. For example, trust is important to a healthy economy; religions have much expertise to offer about trust - and about mindset and attitude.

3-3.5 Religious / Spirituality Perspective 3: Divine Authority Providing Normative Impetus

Summary: A religious perspective adds a compelling motivation to act. Without it, the theoretical explanations and models found in a scientific field like economics remain sterile.

It is one thing to offer values and urge an holistic outlook but is another thing to act on or apply them. All economic theories and rules, even those derived from Dooyeweerd, find themselves curbed by the rejoinder, "Why should I?" or even "I don't accept your ideas!" We need **normative impetus** to act. This comes from some higher authority, that tells us "These things Matter, whether you like it or not." Normative impetus to act comes from believing Something is **worthy of ultimate commitment**, especially in action that involves some sacrifice or discomfort, such as changing the culture of economics would entail.

This is where weak forms of spirituality take us no further, because their 'higher' authority tends to be within themselves or an extension thereof and they abhor normative authority. They can tend to the arrogance of "We spiritual people demand that you non-spiritual people change." But religion places both "them" and "us" together under an Authority higher than either, an Authority that makes the same normative demands on us all. The Authority must be a **Divine Origin of All** (God), on which all depends and which is self-dependent [Clouser 2005]. When Jesus said, "You cannot serve God and Mammon", he was presupposing this Authority.

Religious commitments **motivate**. (So can ideology and idolatry [Note: Ideology, Idolatry and Religion]). But they might not necessarily motivate towards Good; some can motivate towards Evil and Harm (of which twentieth century Europe offers some major examples). Whether towards Good or Harm depends on what their Ultimate Authority is really like. Idolatry almost always leads to Harm because it absolutizes something not truly divine. Polytheistic religions tend to fracture commitments and hinder Good. In most religions (including Hinduism in its fundamentals) the Divine is One, this becoming more explicit in Judaism and Islam, then even more in Christianity, where the nature of the Divine One is relational (Trinity) and loving. As Holland [2019] and Scrivener [2023] point out, (Judeo-)Christianity has brought unsought-for Good (as well as Harm), so it is worth considering what specific kind of motivation it can offer, which we do below. Similar discussion may be made for other religions.

We now consider more specific contributions from Abrahamic religion (Judaism) and Christianity. From now on, we will mainly use the words "God" or "Creator" instead of the clumsy "the Divine", because their Scriptures do so.

3-3.6 Judaic Perspective 1: Creator and Creation

Summary: The Biblical idea that all is Created by the Divine has many useful implications for economics.

The Bible tells a clear story of **Creation** by the Divine Creator, unwrapped from mystical allusion - which Jews, Christians and Muslims (those of the Abrahamic religions) adhere to. The word Creation is often a synonym for Reality as we can experience it. This seemingly theological idea, together with a bundle of other theological ideas associated with it, has surprisingly many implications for economics (or other fields).

The Jewish Scriptures reveal several things about Creator and Creation. Very briefly: the Creator is the Origin of Creation, which includes both humans and non-humans, invests all Creation with meaningfulness, loves Creation, hence 'respects' Creation, desiring its joy and dignifying it with real agency. Thus Creation includes both actuality and possibility. Possibility is guided by laws that govern and guide Creation's agency, which constitutes actuality. The laws have

been 'designed' by the Creator, Who is not subject to them, but which reflect the Creator's character. The Creator is One (monotheism rather than polytheism), has a plan for Creation, which will be fulfilled over the long term, finds Creation "very good" (working as it should) even though now marred by Evil, and acts within Creation often in surprising ways [Note: Creator and Creation].

If we take economics to be part of the possibility woven into Creation, this has surprisingly many implications for our theorizing and practice. Some we have long taken for granted.

- ◆ Insofar as the fundamental possibility of economics is Created, then it is **no mere human invention** (though the shape it takes now and in the past results from human, social construction) but its fundamentals are 'designed' into the very foundation of Creation by the Creator, according to the Creator's intention. The way economics tends to work well can be discovered. Moreover, our thinking might stray if presuppose the complete irrelevance of the Divine in economics.
- ◆ Because Creation is invested with meaningfulness, it is valid to ask what is the **Meaning of Economics** in Chapter 4.
- ◆ Because of law is it valid to seek generic understanding and express them in **theories, models, rules**, etc. and hence build a body of knowledge such as of economics. (As mentioned earlier, Dooyeweerd called the lawfulness the law-side, the collection of laws of all aspects.)

Some provide foundational support for various components of rethinking economics, some well-known, others more radical, such as:

- ◆ Because Creation is meaningful, **all is important**, even the supposed "externalities" in economics, which should therefore all be explicitly included in economic theory.
- ◆ Because the Creation includes both **humans and non-humans**, economics theory and practice should not consider only the human but nature and planet too.
- ◆ Because we are part of Creation, we are neither above it, to twist it to our own ideas and ends, nor beneath it, to worship or fear it (our role is discussed below). Creation is to be **given due respect by us** and not plundered or wasted; that enables us to understand the inherent meaning-kernel of the economic aspect in Chapter 4
- ◆ Because the Creator sometimes acts within Creation, we can never rule out God occasionally acting within the economy (e.g. in judgement or revivals as discussed later), bursting the boundaries of our theories, models and rules. It usually surprises all our expectations and cannot be predicted. This calls for **humility**. God's activity within Creation is usually in accordance with the lawfulness but occasionally beyond it, so can never be theorized nor predicted, so should usually not be included in theory.
- ◆ Because the Creator loves Creation, we can expect Creation to be diverse, yet coherent, such that its functioning brings harmony and joy.
Interconnected, every part of Creation has a role in helping other parts towards the intended blessing. This precludes the sacred-secular divide, in that all 'secular' is 'sacred' - including economics. Indeed, the diversity we encounter should be critically respected rather than presumed to be either subjective or an illusion.
- ◆ Because of the Creator's Plan we can expect Economics to fit into that Plan and **aim at something** in a non-arbitrary way. This makes it valid to ask

what is the Mandate of Economics in chapter 4, and to see Multi-aspectual Overall Good (below) as its aim. (It also instils some idea of progress - though not as it is currently understood.)

- ◆ The idea of Creator's Plan affects our idea of time. It probably, though does not necessarily, imply linear time. What it does imply is that we must think **long-term** as well as short-term. That the Plan will be fulfilled in the long term gives us long-term **hope** and is part of the what the Bible implies by "the glory of God".

And some provide motivation to persevere in seeking answers.

- ◆ Because God is One, we can presuppose and expect **fundamental harmony** in Creation, which is not so with polytheism [Note: Monotheism]. This can motivate us to question apparent conflicts, such as that presupposed between efficiency and ethics, that between socialist and capitalist economics, those found in apparent paradoxes, and that presupposed between the real and ideal (as discussed earlier), and seek integrating foundations.
- ◆ Because Creation is Good, economics is **fundamentally Good**, intended as part of the possibility of the joy of Creation (even though currently marred by evil). So we are motivated to seek Good deeper than apparent **Evil and Harm** in the way economics operates, and do not have to presuppose self-interest nor injustice nor inefficiency.
- ◆ Because Creation is Good, we are motivated to bring **normativity** right into the heart of economics rather than bolt it on as an afterthought.

Thus we find that several elements of a Judaic idea of Creator and Creation have several important implications both for the way we 'do' economics and the content of our understanding and practise of it.

These ideas flavoured the RLDG discussions. The idea that the Creator has a plan for Creation (including economics) was expressed by references to "God's world", "God's plan" or "God's intention", for instance, in (emphasis added):

"In other words, in *God's original plan*, maybe we could have relied on people acting ethically and juridically, and in all these other ways, where people would be aware of these different aspects and not reducing them, or not looking at everything purely from a monetary standpoint."

It could also help us understand challenges we have to face, which come from the nature of the way Creation was designed to work, as in:

"We do have to move to NB's point, without the information for making a complete decision. That's just inevitable for trying to understand *God's emerging world and our place within it*."

Or we might refer to it to help us question what seems to be widely accepted in economics, as for example in this question about competition:

"The reason I asked is that I see the so-called competitor landscape - the whole idea of competitor - is probably 90% evil, in terms of the way *God intended Creation to work*. There is a right kind of competition I think, but to have competition between nations and competition in business is not what God intended. The only good in competition is ..."

3-3.8 Judaic Perspective 2: The Role of Humankind

Summary: Humankind is to 'shepherd' the rest of Creation with love and care and open up its potential - by science, technology, discourse, policy, etc. Heart attitude is central.

The very start of the Jewish Scriptures (Genesis 1:26-28) shows God giving humans a special role and responsibility, to "image" God, to represent God to, and "rule over", the rest of Creation. For centuries, this has been seen as a right

to consume the rest of Creation to suit our ends, but, in Ezekiel 34, God explicitly condemns that idea, explaining that the “ruling” God expects is that of the good **shepherd** looking after sheep, with love and care [Note: Shepherds].

This role gives humankind a **mandate**, discussed in Chapter 4, to develop the potential that the various laws of Creation offer, in all its spheres - including economics.

Being God’s under-shepherds, as it were, is part of a broader theme of representing God in the world, to bring blessing [Note: Representing God]. Within humanity there has always been “**God’s people**”, who represent God to the rest, early Israel as a culture to other cultures, a “light to the nations” [= = =], and now (genuine) Christians as individuals among individuals as “salt and light” [Matthew 5]. Both can and should contribute to economics (theory and practice), as a - not arrogantly but as servants.

Mandates imply **responsibility**. Though responsibility to God is characteristic of most religions and is fundamental, in the Jewish (and Christian) perspectives this includes responsibility to the rest of Creation because “God has compassion on all he made” (Psalm 145). In the Jewish Scriptures, we find responsibility to the poor, to future generations, to animals, to land, and even to other peoples, and ultimately to their Creator. Responsibility is our dignity more than our duty - especially in economics. Responsibility should be built into economic theories and models as well as rules and practice - maybe not as a mathematical variable but at least as an explicitly stated condition or assumption. (We will sometimes use Dooyeweerd’s aspects to differentiate types of responsibility.)

In the Biblical account, responsibility takes the form of **partnering with God**, rather than just serving God as a soldier would their officer out of fear or duty - and partnering with God to serve and bless rather than as a soldier to dominate and destroy. Partnering with God implies the possibility of God’s blessing on our attempts to rethink economics rather than just scrumming in the melee of ideas - but a possibility to be realized only insofar as we act and think as God rather than with pride, arrogance or self-serving. God partners with us in the temporal process of fulfilling God’s Plan for Creation.

In our special role, partnering with God, we humans do science, technology, discourse, institutions economics, fun, policy, ethics, religion, etc., building bodies of knowledge and experience that help (or hinder) our ‘shepherding’ of the rest of Creation. For economics all are important but let us consider science and policy. As discussed below, the mandate of **science** is to help us gain generalised understanding (theories) of the way Reality works, on which it is reasonably to rely. Hence humans are mandated to develop understanding of the way the economic aspect tends to operate, engage in economics science. The mandate of **policy** is to set up societal structures (especially legislation) that encourage good, and discourse evil, activity in the cultural context then present. The Jewish Torah is an example of this, expressing principles of *tsedeq* (“right relationships among all things in the Created order”) in **laws for their society** that, if followed, would ensure a reasonably healthy lifestyle in their situation, in contrast to, and thus representing God to, the surrounding cultures. The Torah, clarified in its outworkings and its interpretations via the prophets, expresses several principles that contrast with the nations of the time - for example justice and peace rather than hierarchy and warfare, which make sense in Western cultures today.

Example: The Jewish idea of Sabbath is an expression of this that is particularly aimed at economics: a sign that God is more important than economics, combined with a trust in God to supply. In his book *Garden City: Work, Rest and the Art of Being Human*, 2015, John Mark Comer writes, “Sabbath is an expression of faith. Faith that there is a Creator and he’s good.” It is also a sign against the idolatry of economics.

The same basic principles that the Torah expresses and apply today in a different cultural context, but would be expressed in different laws. What is context-specific expression and what is principle is not always clear, but the outworkings of the Torah, recorded in the Histories, and the interpretations of it revealed in the Prophets, help to reveal principles.

As discussed above, it is the Biblical notions of Createdness and Lawfulness that make this possible. But we investigators and policy-makers, being ourselves Created and not Divine, can never expect to understand fully correctly, so science and policy must be humble. Likewise with technology, art, policy, etc. Not only God's actions in Creation, but also Creation itself will keep on surprising us. So our attitude in making policy and applying our understanding must include "trust and obey" but never blindly. Therefore we seek an understanding of economics that can embrace previous valid insights, though with deep critique.

Not all humans are willing to partner with God. Whether we are or not depends on the human **heart**, according to the Jewish (and Christian) Scriptures. "Out of the heart come all the issues of life" [Proverbs 4:23]. That is why, several times in the Jewish (and also Christian) Scriptures, it is clear that God "looks on the heart" rather than on "outward appearance" [1 Samuel 16:7]. The heart is the root of all our thinking, speaking and actions, and even our ways of seeing things (and hence of what we take into account and what we omit while theorizing or seeking to understand, while making policy, developing technology or techniques, while discoursing, in training AI systems, and so on, all in relation to economics).

To partner with the Creator in economics will require a pure heart; obedience can feel challenging and trust, precarious [Note: Trusting God].

The relevance of the Biblical idea of heart to economics is that, increasingly, there are calls for **change of culture** [Trainer, Speth, etc.] - change of something rather deep in society, at the root of the way we think and act. This is almost exactly what the Bible means by heart, especially when applied to societies. However, what culture is, is usually rather vague, so in this Rethink it is discussed at some length, in Chapters 4 and 6, where we align it with functioning in the ethical and pistic aspects, and call it **attitude and mindset**: whether we are self-giving or selfish, and what our ultimate beliefs and commitments are [Note: Human Heart]. Briefly: Heart operates at both individual and communal / societal levels. The individual attitude and mindset spreads to others to become the pervading attitude and prevailing mindset, which in turn tends to steer that of all but the most courageous individuals.

This contributes to the content of economic theories and models and its practice, and the idea of mindset and attitude (heart, culture) will occur throughout most discussion in Part II.

3-3.8 Jewish Perspective 3: Sin and Repentance

Summary: The Jewish perspective offers the freedom-giving idea of sin and possibility of repentance.

Most economics theory formally ignores evil, presupposing all economic activity as Good, as to-be-aspired-to. Where it does not, it often treats problems as arising from 'them' (people, governments, structures, etc.) and that 'we' are basically alright: goodies versus baddies. So its solution is to change 'them' or change the structures of society.

The Jewish Scriptures reverse this, finding the root of all problems and harm in *ourselves*, that **all of us equally are sinners**, *we* with *them* - no more goodies

versus baddies. That is why, in this Rethink, we embrace all ideas in principle (see below).

According to the Jewish Scriptures, we humans, **turned away from partnership with God**, wanting instead to use Creation to serve our own interests, whatever we deem them to be. God warned that to the extent that we did so, Creation would work against us (Genesis 3 mentions some, Hosea 4:2-3 others). That is the situation we find ourselves in today.

The solution is **repentance**. Such a view mortifies our pride but it also frees us and gives us hope. It frees us from dividing the world into goodies versus baddies, from having to side with capitalist versus socialist, Orthodox versus Heterodox, etc. because all are evil in some way. Yet all contain some good, because all humans image God, even though that image is now filthy. The possibility of repentance offers a way out, and therefore some hope. Let us look in more detail.

3-3.8.1 Sin

Summary: The idea of sin is that Harm is not inherent in Creation but arises from evil human functioning.

All we do, including our economic activity, is tainted with what the Bible calls **sin**. It takes many forms - cruelty, arrogance, deceit, injustice, greed, violence, sexual promiscuity, etc. - and results in many kinds of Harm (c.f. Dooyeweerd's aspects). Sedlacek [2011] expands on this in *The Economics of Good and Evil*, showing how it was thus since the time before Gilgamesh right through to the present day.

According to the Jewish scriptures, evil is not inherent in Creation but arises from the human heart [Note: Heart]. God expects us to "do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God" [Micah 6:8], of which the latter two are inner heart (attitude, mindset). Those of such a heart will tend to do Good in their economics (theory, practice) and in the whole of reality, but those who are unmerciful and arrogant and who commit to idols, such as of GDP growth, we will tend to do Harm.

But since since the heart of most people is "desperately wicked", "deceitful", "stubborn" and "stiffnecked" [Jeremiah 17:9; Jeremiah 5:23; Proverbs 29:1; Exodus 32:9], we tend towards evil and harm - and this can help explain why economics has become such a problem. The explanation must go far beyond economic and even simple behavioural rationalities and would greatly benefit from taking human sin into account. It is human sin that prevents the real from being the ideal. (We discuss the need to separate Harmful from Good economic activity in Chapter 7, and do so presupposing human sin in all its aspects.)

Sin can be rectified, however, by repentance.

3-3.8.2 Individual and structural sin

Summary: Corrupt heart and sinful, harmful activity occur at both individual and structural (societal) level, each reinforcing the other.

The heart of both individuals and society can be sinful, and the result is widespread harm, often massive. Figure f3-3.6.3 indicates how this happens, with heart and behaviour linked, at both individual and societal levels. There are two dynamics in play, whereby sinful heart and behaviour massively reduces and jeopardises the Multi-aspectual Overall Good we aim for (see below).

One is that sinful heart in **individuals** (selfish, suspicious, cynical, idolatrous, cowardly mindset and attitude) generates individual pieces of harm (e.g. some

greenhouse gases from my driving; my eating more than I need impairs my health), which are multiplied across society by the number of people doing them, to yield massive widespread harm (e.g. climate change, obesity epidemics). The other is that individual mindset and attitude spreads and becomes **communal / societal** pervading attitude and prevailing mindset, and societal structures like legislation and policy come to express them. If these express selfishness and idolatry they destroy the Creation, both human and nature together [see Hosea 4:2-3] by encouraging evil and discouraging good. This includes what happens in economics, both micro and macro level together, and the destruction is of the environment in particular, but also of human health, relationships, and structures, etc.

<img src = "pix/f3-heart.gif" alt = "The dynamics of heart, sinful activity and harm at both individual and societal levels 1200,600" width = 400 height = 200

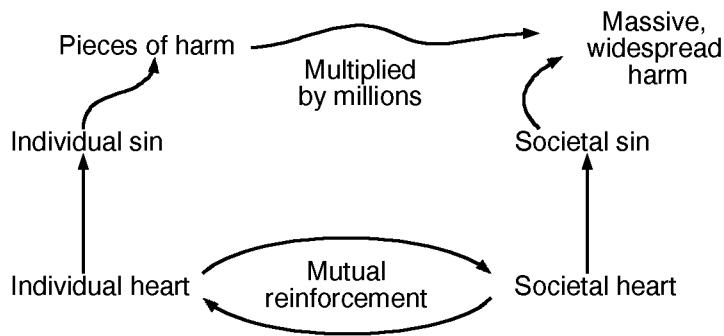


Figure f3-3.6.3 The dynamics of heart, sinful activity and harm at both individual and societal levels

The tricky thing is that the heart is helpless to amend itself. On one hand, societal mindset and attitude tend to channel individual mindset and attitude, which reinforce the societal - a vicious circle. To escape this requires people who have strong commitment to Good with courage to act against prevailing pressures. On the other hand, most attempts to counter sin and harm ignore the corruption of the heart; the corrupt (self-centred, idolatrous) heart will never allow steps to alter itself. Except for repentance, which begins to acknowledge this.

3-3.8.3 Repentance

Summary: Repentance is "I am / we are wrong and choose to change" and is of the heart. Economics needs to repent.

Sinful actions and the harm they do might be curbed temporarily by legislation, education, economic incentives or social norms, and most Western governments turn to these as the solution to problems. However, the Jewish Scriptures show they are all ultimately ineffective in the long term, because there is the deeper level of the heart. The Jewish Scriptures, taken as a whole, show that even with very good law, and even though God acted among them to bless, protect, save and correct, even God's people eventually turned away, because of a stubborn heart. We can see similar in practice throughout most cultures, and hence we need to recognise the important difference between Good and Harmful economic activity - which we do in Chapter 7.

The answer to heart sin is not law, nor economic incentives, nor education and so on, but **repentance**. Repentance is turning around 180 degrees back towards God in both attitude and mindset - which then results in wanting to live with God in God's ways and in changed behaviours. Repentance is admitting

honestly and deeply, "I was and am wrong", "We were wrong and need to change" - a change in attitude from self first to others first, a change in mindset from idolizing prosperity, reputation, convenience, etc. to commitment to God and God's plan and ways. Full repentance is **change of heart**, also called "conrite heart" [Psalm 51:17; Isaiah 57:15], recognising the problem lies in 'me', in 'us', whether or not there might also be problems in others or structural problems too. Repentance means we no longer try to defend ourselves, no longer try to manipulate circumstances to protect ourselves, and being willing to change our view, outlook and behaviou.

According to Jewish (and Christian) Scriptures, it is repentance that can bring about what Trainer [2022] and others call **culture change** (see Chapter 4). Reason, education, legislation and incentives might play a part, but only after deep and widespread repentance, never instead of it, because repentance shapes how these are carried out. Repentance needs to happen at both individual and societal levels, but usually starts with courageous individuals.

Applying this very briefly to **economics**, business, finance, etc., **governments need to repent** of their idolatry of economic growth. Business and other organisations need to repent of self-seeking competition. And we **individual consumers need to repent** of our over-consumption (see Chapter 7). At all levels we must repent of vested interests. And then policies and laws will no longer have so many loopholes, information will be more truthful, and behaviour will become more healthy, so economic activity will do less Harm and more Good.

Indeed, it may be said that the whole field of **economics needs to repent**. Economics - and all involved therein - needs to admit it has led us astray and must allow itself to be reformed. Only then can the problems that concern recent thinkers be truly and sustainably tackled. And it may be that, if Jewish perspectives are correct, God will hear will and restrain some of the damaging repercussions of its past wrongs.

This is probably what motivated the RLDG to seek a radical Rethink.

Current economic theory finds it hard to understand this, probably because of its presuppositions either of self-interest or of redistribution as the ultimate driver, and its narrow reductionism to the economic aspect. So it deprives itself of the greatest power in all Creation, the power of the conrite heart.

3-3.8.4 Some grounds for hope

Summary: Repentance makes hope possible in principle, including in economics and environment.

Even though many Judaisms and Christianities have given the impression that repentance is negative, it is in fact freeing and positive, giving hope, for the following reason. Recognising that we are sinful beings who need to repent presupposes something in us deeper than the sin: the meaningfulness and mandate humans were given by God. True repentance (and not just change of surface behaviour) is what opens the way to be free of that sin and let the deeper grow - and God to act in healing.

The Jewish Scriptures portray God as not only prompting us to repent but also **responding to repentance** and contrition with forgiveness and with some rectification or curing of at least some of the harm we caused. This occurs at both individual level (e.g. David) [II Samuel] and national level (e.g. Nineveh [Jonah]).

It may be, therefore, that if we governments, businesses and individuals repent of our idolatry of money and selfishness, then not only will things go better in future, but also God might prevent or divert some of the harmful

repercussions of the evil we have done in the past - even perhaps those of the climate and biodiversity crises (Chapter 9).

This possibility of hope applies even for economics and environment. It is this possibility of hope that lies at the root of RLDG thought and motivates us to seek until we find a new Reframing of Economics.

3-3.8.5 Towards Repentance ?

Summary: Major crises are often God's warnings, calling us to wake up and repent.

What gets us to repent? Very seldom can reason do so, nor education, nor psychology, nor even economic incentives. The Jewish Scriptures reveal that God sometimes acts, to encourage or stimulate repentance. (Most religion has unfortunately seen this only as punishment, whereas God intends it more as a wake-up call to repentance and healing.) At the individual level, such as with David, prophets brought word from God that sharpened up an already guilty conscience. At the societal level, God sometimes allowed national **crises**, to make us take notice together. Mark Carney drew our attention to the Credit, Covid and Climate crises, and since then we have had war in Ukraine and the Middle East (Conflict crisis) and what might be called the Cost of Living Crisis.

Should we see these as **warnings** for us to wake up and repent **today**? Repent as culture and nations? Repent as governments? Repent as affluent individuals (considering our Ecological Footprint)? Did not God warn the peoples of Israel and Judah many times before using the power of Assyria and Babylon to take them away? [Note: Warnings]

But if we proudly maintain we are basically alright, needing no repentance, and try to put a few incentives in place, we will do so half-heartedly and face a future of increasing Harm, which we and the whole Earth can never sustainably escape.

Sadly, it seems that too seldom do people and nations repent. The mutually reinforcing dynamics shown in Figure f3-3.6.3 makes repentance very difficult. The Jewish Scriptures speak of a Messiah who would come to enact God's just and peaceful rule within Creation, with hints that it would involve hearts being changed at their very root (e.g. Jeremiah 31). Christians believe that the Messiah has come, in the person of Jesus Christ, and that hearts are actually changed.

3-3.9 Christian Perspective 1: Change of Heart

Summary: A Christian perspective offers a way of inner transformation to change the heart of people; salvation through Jesus Christ and the work of the Spirit of God.

The Judaic perspective recognises repentance and forgiveness, but it seems to be only **temporary**, in need of continual renewal via annual sacrifices, rituals or festivals, because the heart is not changed. But there are prophecies in Jewish Scriptures that God's law will be written on people's or the nation's hearts [e.g. Jeremiah 31:31-34].

Christians see that as **fulfilled in Jesus Christ**, whose death was a sacrifice to make us acceptable to God (forgiveness, "justification"), and enables the Spirit of God to dwell in us. The **Spirit of God**, the Holy Spirit, changes our hearts, i.e. our mindset and attitudes, with the result that the Creation will then be treated aright [Note: **Three Dimensions of Salvation**]. This acceptability to God is once-for-all, for the lifetime of those who accept this, and does not need continual renewal [Hebrews 10]. The change of heart is usually a process, likened to fruit growing (Galatians 5:22-23) where the fruit ("love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,

goodness, faithfulness, gentleless, self-control") is an inner mindset and attitude, i.e. heart. Our very way of seeing things, would be transformed [Romans 12:2], so that people, without coercion, would *want* to live as God would wish, of their own inner desire, inclination and volition (c.f. Philippians 2:13). The Creation that now becomes treated better includes the animals and plants but also the various human structures including the economy and economics as a whole.

This is what fulfils the promise that repentance offers, at both individual and societal levels together. It guarantees that repentance will work; so (insofar as it is true) we can be courageous.

For the past 400 years, at least in European and American cultures, change of heart has been as the response and responsibility of **individuals**, usually attending religious conversion. (This might have been appropriate then to re-emphasise the dignity of the individual within the previous culture where the ordinary person had been of little account, but the individual has become a bit of an idol today.) Individual change of heart is vitally important because such individuals stand out for Good of various kinds even at the risk of personal loss, ridicule or persecution (thus fulfilling the norm of the ethical and pistic aspects), and often act as examples which others follow - and they do so not out of relishing publicity or the pride of "being different" but out of genuine submission to God. Examples: Francis of Assissi (once soldier), John Newton (once captain of slave ship). .

However, such people are usually a tiny minority. God wants whole societies changed, including their mindset and attitude. So heart change it also applies to **communities, societies and cultures** as change in the prevailing beliefs, commitments, aspirations, etc. It is needed in spheres of life like economics as a whole; these too are also meant to be transformed. It is through the agency of changed individuals that this occurs, as we discuss next.

3-3.10 Christian Perspective 2: Transforming Spheres of Life, Societies and Cultures

Summary: A Christian perspective offers the hope of transforming spheres of life, including economics.

[Could be shortened.]

Perhaps because most Christians have seen transformation of the heart only in spiritual terms, most have done little to **transform spheres** of human life like economics in the way God intends. What has been attempted (such as the commendable Jubilee movement at the Year 2000 to release debts of impoverished countries) might be little more than nibbling around the edges. This Rethink envisions a much deeper and fuller transformation of the heart of economics, with clear focus on attitude and mindset, in which things like debt-release would be a natural, ongoing implication rather than an occasional exception.

The salvation of Creation requires radical, critical engagement, going to the very roots. Sadly, because so many presuppose a sacred-secular divide, the attitude of many Christians has been either acquiescent or antagonistic, without hope of transformation. Ultimately full transformation occurs only after the Parousia, when the Earth and Heavens will be renewed by their Creator, but before then this life is a practice-ground for the fuller life to come and can be a foretaste of it [Note: Parousia and Overlap]. God's people are agents of healing. God invites all humans to participate. The RLDG wants to participate in 'healing' economics; a methodological approach is suggested below.

Abraham Kuyper was a Christian thinker and writer who became Prime Minister of the Netherlands in the early 1900s. His famous idea of **sphere**

sovereignty is that each sphere of society - family, business, school, church, etc. is "sovereign in its own sphere" and should never be dominated by other spheres, in the way that they had been for centuries. (This inspired Dooyeweerd's idea of aspects.) He held that Christ claims authority not only over the spiritual side of life but over "every square inch" of every sphere - leading to societal transformation. Though this unfortunately has led some Christians into triumphalism and domination theories (e.g. Reconstructionism), Kuyper wanted something more gentle.

Three ways of transforming societies, cultures and spheres of life have occurred: changing legislation, gradual diffusion and revival, of which Kuyper might have recognised only the first.

1. Changing legislation. Government (kings or parliaments) change legislation, which affects the way we live. This seems the obvious way to change spheres of life, being visible and widely discussed, and Augustine suggested that it might curb evil for a time. In democracies, party manifestos express intended changes. Though changing legislation might change people's behaviour rather than people's heart, with all the problems of it listed above, if enough legislators are people with changed heart, then they might be able to be effective for a time - especially if they communicate their vision well and take everyone with them. But that has rarely occurred in history and where it has (e.g. after wars), it soon gets corrupted. Being able to impose legislation, even if well-meaning, can lead to enormous evil, such as perpetrated by the Roman Catholic church during the Middle Ages. It is at the mercy of the whims of either kings and dictators, or the fashions of the populace, it does not suit all cohorts of people, and does not change the heart of people.

2. Gradual diffusion. Change of heart in individuals not only changes what they think, say and do, but also serves an attractive example to others and often changes what they think, say and do, too. This change can gradually spread to yet others and, after a time, a whole community, which experiences some 'healing', with consequences for the natural world around it, for spheres of life like economics, for its legislation and theories and humanity's bodies of knowledge and philosophical outlook, and even for the prevailing mindset and pervading attitude. i.e. some change of heart of the whole society or community.

Example: It was Michael Faraday's Christian beliefs that opened his mind to the possibility of magnetism as a force acting at a distance rather than particles. Since nobody restricts the use, knowledge or study of magnetism to Christians, neither need we restrict the ideas in this section to Christians or religious people.

Example, It has been argued that the rise of science was made possible by a Christian perspective, because the rest of Creation was no longer seen as something to either fear or worship, but as a fellow-creature with us, to be loved, cared for and got to know.

This may be what Jesus' metaphors of his followers being **salt and light** refer to. In particular, their willingness to sacrifice - as Jesus did [Note: Jesus' Poverty] - makes them intuitively attractive.

Moreover, this can attract other individuals to Christ and allowing the Holy Spirit access to their hearts, who then can become seeds of change. **It spreads.** All this is, in Jesus' terminology, the coming of the the Kingdom of Heaven / God on Earth. Such diffusion is not dramatic, but slow and gradual. Jesus likened it to how a tiny seed becomes a massive bush in which birds reside, and to the process of the seed growing without humans understanding how. The problem is: this is too slow for us impatient people, and we cannot see it, measure it nor control it, so the first way tempts us. It can also be too slow when there is a climate emergency, as today. But God has a third method, which can be faster.

3. **Revivals.** Throughout history, there have been a few instances of faster transformations of society or spheres, where so many people came to Christ and were filled with the Holy Spirit that evils of their society became much reduced in a short time.

For example the 1904 Welsh Revival resulted in major reduction in drunkenness, crime and wife-beating and, since men no longer wasted their wages on alcohol, and contributed more to their families, poverty was ameliorated - and this effect occurred within months, not years or decades.

That shows what *can* happen when people repent and God acts on a large scale. Though in this life it is only partial, it is a foretaste and practice, and God invites us to participate, and **real societal healing** does occur, including across the entire sphere that is economics.

Sadly, for much of the past 1500 years most Christians have **only partially** allowed the Holy Spirit to change their hearts, and we have clung on to evil, harmful attitudes and idols. We have refused to forgive. We have refused to be humble and let people take advantage of us as Jesus urged us to. We in affluent cultures have clung on to our wealth and conveniences [Note: Giving]. Such so-called Christianity has seemed more of a problem than a solution - as many secular thinkers are keen to point out.

Moreover, though most revivals have made big differences to communal or even societal culture, some have not gone as deep as they could. The East African Revival of the 1920s and 1930s, which did so much good across the world, failed to tackle some **structural issues** especially among the ruling elite and this (according to the General Secretary of the Rwanda Mission in the 1980s) was the reason why only 60 years later genocide broke out.

We need revival that challenges and changes at both the individual and structural / societal levels. This is why the RLDG combines both and is exploring this more radical kind of rethink of economics. Dooyeweerd's suite of aspects helps us do so because it encompasses both individual and societal aspects.

A **combination** of revival, diffusion and consequent legislation change is, as far as we can see, the **only way** the change of culture and "spiritual transformation" that Ted Trainer and Gus Speth call for *can* happen. History gives us a track record that shows it **can happen**, if we in all levels of economy and society repent and allow the Spirit of God access to our hearts. That gives grounds for hope, even for the transformation of economics!

3-3.11 Christian Perspective 3: Fuller Grounds for Hope

Summary: Grounds for hope are in God's action when we respond fully to God's call.

"What is impossible for man is possible with God." Luke 18:27.

Could it occur today? According to the Christian (and Jewish) Scriptures, there is no hope of that in humanity alone, because of our corrupt heart and inability to cure it ourselves, but there is hope when God is allowed in.

While full heart-change across all peoples must wait for the Parousia, we may foretaste it these days, if we respond to what God wills. We obtain a foretaste of the future full working with God, we practise partnering with God for Good in trust and proactive obedience, and we build on the foundation that is Christ with "gold, silver and precious stones" that will survive through the fire rather than "hay and stubble" [I Corinthians 3].

Genuine revivals do occur and are effective in transforming society for a time. But they cannot be manufactured by human planning or effort, being God's

prerogative. One RLDG participant remarked, "Who knows when the Holy Spirit is working in anyone's heart? Nobody here." But that is no excuse for sitting back passively. It seems to have been in times of spiritual darkness that the people of God cry out to God and are ready to repent and allow the heart change.

That is the kind of hope that a Christian perspective brings, a hope that depends not on human effort or mistaken presuppositions of human goodness or evil, but on a God Who is self-sacrificing and willing. That hope fulfils both the Torah and the Gospel of Christ, both now and in the New Heavens and Earth.

God is by no means unwilling or reluctant for it to occur; God wants us human beings as active participants who take responsibility and action, not just commanded soldiers and is open to our cry. We just need to take it very seriously, sacrificing ("losing", Luke 9:24) for it - even our entire lives if necessary.

Will we respond to that challenge, or will we allow our affluence to choke it so that we bear no fruit (the third type of soil)? Is today as it was in the time of Jesus that "the fields are white already to harvest"? Is it our *kairos*? Human-centred ways of working are failing, and have led to the ecological footprint of affluent cultures being three or even five whole Earths, and God's Earth is being destroyed by our lifestyles, and economics in all its forms is responsible in major ways. Young people today are terrified of the future and have little hope - yet since most young people in post-Christian cultures know little about Christ they are no longer rebelling against Christianity in the way they used to. We should "plead with the lord of the harvest to send out workers."

3-3.12 Concluding Remarks about Religions Perspectives

Summary: Religious perspectives can contribute to economics theory and practice in at least nine ways, all of which need to be taken into account in a major Rethink.

For these nine reasons, there is a role for **religious perspectives in economics**. Three come from a perspective common to most religions and general spirituality:

- ◆ Values that economics usually overlooks but are important;
- ◆ An holistic approach, relating to the whole of life;
- ◆ A compelling normativity that impels us from mere debate into action.

Three come from the Judaic or Abrahamic perspective:

- ◆ The diversity and coherence of Reality, the value of economics and the world and respect that is due to all;
- ◆ The validity of economics science, policy, technology, etc. and the importance of the human heart (mindset and attitude) in all this;
- ◆ Problems as sin, not just problem-solving techniques, and solution as repentance.

Three come from a Christian perspective:

- ◆ The possibility of change of heart, change of culture ...
- ◆ ... at societal as well as individual levels;
- ◆ Hope that something effective is possible in principle.

In each of these several implications for, and contributions to, economics have been identified, some for economics theory, some for economics practice and some for the activity in rethinking economics. It is because of the third that we are audaciously exploring a more fundamental Rethink of economics than is customary in recent thinking, whether secular or religious. It is because of the first and second that we take the unusual step of interweaving these religious

ideas into our thinking in economics, rather than treating them as an optional, separate bloc. Sometimes reference to religious ideas is explicit, often indicated by parentheses "(x ... x)" (so that those who wish to ignore religious insights may skip over them), but mostly reference is implicit, being felt intuitively rather than blatantly visible to rationality, such as the wide range of values and the reality of sin and evil and the need for repentance.

Before proceeding with our main discussion, in Part II, Chapters 4 to 8, we discuss an approach to engaging with extant ideas, especially those that differ from ours, and introduce a notion that will run through all our discussions, Multi-aspectual Overall Good.

3-4. Engaging With and Embracing All Ideas

Summary: In rethinking economics we try to engage fruitfully with, and embrace, all ideas, regardless of source. To do this, we need to understand how ideas arise.

"The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed, the world is ruled by little else." [Keynes 1936].

Ideas are important. But, taken as a whole, the field of economics seems divisive and antagonistic (as are many fields today), with camps set up around seemingly opposed ideas: capitalist v socialist, left v right, heterodox v orthodox, developmental v Western, social v environmental, growth v de-growth, etc. Often, new ideas define themselves as against something that went before.

Our approach is **embracive**. We assume that every idea contains at least some valid insight that is essential for a complete understanding of economics. We see something of an embracive approach in *Doughnut Economics*, trying to embrace both social and environmental, both growth and de-growth, but there are more issues than these, and many insights not included. Embracing resonates with the previous sections in that (a) in real-life economics, we find all ideas functioning, (b) we find that each idea offers insight in various aspects, (c) our religious perspective is towards peace-making.

Embracing does not mean acquiescing to ideas, nor even accepting them unquestioningly. Our embracing is **critical**. But what does it mean to be critical? It is not deriding other ideas, but rather probing each to find out in what ways it is valid and in what ways not and discern valid original motivations of the idea and maybe suggest how they may be fulfilled or the idea enriched.

Not only do we embrace disparate ideas but we also try to understand how they fit together, given they are all meaningful and valuable in different ways and interact with each other. So we also seek **integration**.

To do this, we need both an overall methodological approach to guide us in engaging with ideas fruitfully. Our methodological approach is *LACE*, outlined in the next section, and our understanding of ideas comes from Dooyeweerd's penetrating investigation of theoretical thinking, by which ideas emerge and become visible.

3-4.1 A Methodology For Engaging With Ideas: LACE

Summary: In order to engage sensitively with extant ideas, whether recent or conventional, we Listen, Affirm, Critique, Enrich (LACE).

In any Rethink of economics (or any field), extant ideas and practices need to be critiqued and refined or replaced. Comprehensive rethinks should question not only the **truth** of extant theories and the **rightness** of practices but also their

meaningfulness in a multi-aspectual world. We neither acquiesce to extant ideas or practices nor are antagonistic to them, but rather see them (including our own) as impaired insight, asking which aspects make them meaningful and how the norms of those aspects would judge them. So far we have been able to situate ideas we have encountered from all sources and benefit from each.

Our methodology is to **Listen, Affirm, Critique and Enrich (LACE)**, The following summarises the <<http://christianthinking.space/academic/lace-intro.html>> Introduction to LACE.

LACE is difficult to do from within a dualistic ground-motive, because the mutual antipathy between its poles prevents genuine listening to those of the 'other side', and what is meaningful to them cannot be affirmed. Critique is reduced to negative rejection. Enrichment might be seen as an attempt to bring together something of both poles but cannot be sustained because it presupposes the gulf they are trying to bridge [Eriksson 2003]. LACE requires moving, even slightly, to a pluralistic ground-motive, such as Dooyeweerd espoused.

Listening involves trying to hear what is really meaningful to each idea, at a level deeper than the words used (which often trigger reactions against or for). With concepts in economics, such as money, productivity, jobs, poverty, value(s), Doughnut, etc., we ask two main questions:

"In which aspects is this primarily meaningful?" and
"Why is this an important concept?"

With theories, we ask similar questions, "Which aspects does this theory take into account (and which does it ignore)?" and "What makes this theory important?" With paradigms, such as Trickle-down economics or Degrowth, we ask "What does this paradigm presuppose as meaningful (which aspects) (and what does it overlook)?" With paradoxes in economics, such as that of Thrift, we ask "Does this paradox conflate two or more aspects?" In asking which aspects make something meaningful, we take account not only of those that are explicit, but also of those that are hidden yet important.

Affirming involves discerning what is valid in the practice, concepts, theory, paradigm, etc. To do this, we take account of the multi-aspectual human activity that generates them, especially hidden attitudes and motives. Hidden agendas, for example, might lead to unduly elevating the importance of an aspect, and so that part of the theory or practice should be deemed invalid but there is another part that is value and should be affirmed. For example, we affirm the wish for a quantitative measure of overall Good that is behind GDP, but we disaffirm the idolatry of growth and the idolatry of GDP - and then critique and enrich that; see <["gdp.html"](#)> Rethinking GDP.

Critiquing often involves uncovering presuppositions. To do this, we find three questions helpful:

- ◆ "Is this driven by a dualistic ground-motive?"
- ◆ "Which aspects are being overlooked here, thus restricting information or rationalities?"
- ◆ "Is the difference between good and harm being ignored here?"

For example, at first sight, every aspect except the economic and quantitative are ignored in GDP. Governments' motive in using GDP would seem to be driven by idolatry of the economic and selfish rivalry with others even though justified by job-creation etc. This incites Harmful activity.

Enriching often involves bringing in aspects that have been overlooked, but are important. For example, we redefine GDP as the sum of net value (Good - Harm) in every aspect not just the economic.

3-4.2 Three Types of Theoretical Thinking

It is wise to understand the nature of theoretical thinking and its limitations because we are dealing here with theoretical ideas and models and also it is the foundation of all practical analysis.

Most ideas arise from theoretical thinking. In everyday life our thinking takes on a **pre-theoretical** stance, in which we engage with what is around us without thinking abstractly. When we adopt a **theoretical** stance, our thinking becomes more abstract and we, as it were, 'stand apart' from what we are thinking about. There are three levels of theoretical thinking:

- ◆ practical analysis,
- ◆ scientific theory-formation, and
- ◆ philosophical reflection.

LACE can be applied to all three, but with different emphases. Each emphasises a different element of theoretical thought [Note: Dooyeweerd's understanding of theoretical thought], and Dooyeweerd made a penetrating investigation of them:

- ◆ abstracting what is meaningful in chosen aspects to obtain data,
- ◆ applying rationalities, which differ in each aspect, and
- ◆ appealing to an "origin of meaning" when we want to make broader critique, especially of paradigms under which theories are formed and judged.

In fact, all three occur in each type of thought but are given emphasis in one. Each constitutes what Dooyeweerd called a "transcendental problem", which is fundamental and inescapable in all ideas.

Let us look at each in some detail, both because we will engage in them throughout the Rethink, and also because some readers might find them useful beyond it in their own dealing with ideas.

3-4.3 Practical Analysis

Summary: Analysis involves abstracting from the real, and aspectual analysis can help avoid some of its pitfalls.

Analysis involves noticing and separating out some issues or properties that are relevant to us, then thinking about them, usually ignoring all others that would otherwise confuse the analysis. In normal analysis, especially formal analysis, we make **prior decisions** about what is meaningful and meaningless, that is, we focus on one or a few aspects. In economics, this has traditionally been the economic and quantitative aspects but recent thinking (c.f. Chapter 2) has brought in various aspects, the juridical, the biotic, psychical, aesthetic, and others. The prior decisions about what is included are influenced by theories, paradigms and/or worldviews thinkers adhere to.

===== maybe have table here showing aspects that make the ideas outlined in Chapter 2 meaningful.

Even so, many aspects are still overlooked, and there is little integration of these recent views. By contrast, **aspectual analysis** makes **no prior decisions** about what is meaningful but accepts all kinds of meaning, which helps integration and avoids overlooking issues.

3-4.4 Aspectual Analysis

Summary: Aspectual analysis involves Dooyeweerd's suite of aspects to identify how each element of a situation or text is meaningful, and it overcomes some problems frequently encountered in analysis.

Aspectual analysis treats everything as meaningful and only then, once we have surveyed the diverse landscape of meaningfulness, might we decide that certain

aspects are more meaningful to us than others. It can be used in analysing both actual situations and texts (reports, articles, books, papers, videos, interview transcripts, etc.). For each element of a situation (e.g. an action) or a text (usually a phrase) we ask:

“Which aspects make this meaningful?

In what ways?

And is this good or dysfunctional?”

“Meaningful” to the actors in a situation, more than the observers, and the speakers/writers of text, more than the hearers/readers. There is some reason why this happened rather than did not or was said/written rather than was not, and that this rather than something else happened or was said/written. We take wider context into account, not only what was said, written or done but why it was, what motivated it.

By explicit use of Dooyeweerd’s aspects in analysis we can notice, separate out and think about things more clearly, with less observer bias. Aspectual analysis can help us to reduce confusion, avoid overlooking, understand more deeply and bring ideas together.

Three examples. First, aspectual analysis of a **real-life situation**, in which we identify the aspects that make each factor meaningful as a concern. Each aspect is abbreviated in square brackets, with a symbol before it to denote good (+), evil/harmful (-), or just meaningful (=).

When analysing why a company failed, we obviously focus on resources and money [=eco], especially looking for waste and inefficiencies [-eco] but, because of inter-aspect dependencies and impact, other factors are also important, such as attitude [=eth] and mindset [=pis] of the senior management and of the employees, and things like relationships between management and employees [=soc], communication within the organisation and with customers and suppliers [=lnq], health [=bio], such as a pandemic [-bio]. Such things affect the economic factors.

Though that is a simplified example, it shows how such aspectual analysis immediately draws attention to the ‘externalities’ of economic activity. We can then give due regard to each, reducing confusion and, by considering inter-aspect relationships, we can begin to investigate and understand why each factor was important.

Second, **aspectual analysis of a text**, from Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*:

“In almost every other race of animals [=psy] each individual [=psy], when it is grown up to maturity [+bio], is entirely independent [=psy], and in its natural state [+bio] has occasion for the assistance [+soc] of no other living creature [=bio]. But man has almost constant occasion for the help of his brethren [+soc], and it is in vain for him to expect [=pis] it from their benevolence only [+eth]. He will be more likely to prevail [=fmv] if he can interest [=lnq] their self-love in his favour [-eth], and show them [=lnq] that it is for their own advantage [-eth] to do for him what he requires of them [=fmv]. ... Give me that which I want, and you shall have this which you want [=eco], is the meaning of every such offer [=lnq]; and it is in this manner that we obtain [=eco] from one another [+soc] the far greater part of those good offices which we stand in need of [+eco]. It is not from the benevolence [+eth] of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect [=pis] our dinner [+eco], but from their regard to their own interest [-eth][=eco].”

(Notice that while most aspects are of the situation described, a few, such as “we expect” are of the reader and writer who are discussing the situation. Always be aware of such a distinction.)

Such aspectual analysis helps us ensure that, while taking the text’s main thrust, we can ensure attendant factors are not forgotten. These extra aspects can reveal assumptions made that might later need questioning. Though the economic aspect is the core one, its dependence on the social aspect is highlighted too, which means that if social relationships have broken down (“I won’t go back there, because they were rude to me!”) then the author’s theory

might fall. That the ethical aspect is strongly stated ("It is not ...", "it is in vain ...", etc.) suggests that the author was reacting against something meaningful in this aspect (benevolence) and, because reactions are often too black-and-white (maybe in order to increase force of argument), we might see this as pointing to what it might later be fruitful to critique (for example, what is the real role of benevolence in an economy?).

A third example is aspectual analysis of a what is **said in everyday life**, in this case a slogan:

"Charity begins at home"

This is usually intended to ensure that someone who is giving away stuff [+eth] does not neglect their family [-jur], [-soc]. But if the utterance is motivated by selfishness, to perpetuate an affluent family's wealth, then this is ethical dysfunction [-eth], which should be clearly revealed.

So **aspectual analysis is a versatile tool** for helping us understand actual situations, academic and other texts and things said in real-life economics. It helps us uncover meanings that might otherwise go unnoticed, separate them out to reduce confusion and complexity, highlight over-emphasis, relate factors to obtain deeper and richer understanding, and maybe reduce observer bias. "With such analysis," remarked one RLDG participant [ze26], "we can pinpoint the specific meaning of something, then communicate it, in a way that is reasonably reproducible and defensible, because the aspectual meanings transcend all parties."

Because aspectual analysis is a useful tool in many fields, and can be in economics, a brief outline of how aspectual analysis may be carried out is available in a <"asp.anal.html">separate document, and also in Chapter 11 of Basden [2020] and in Basden [2023]

In the chapters that follow, we will often present the results of such analysis (such as aspects oft overlooked) without going through detailed descriptions of analyses done.

The text after each of the three examples above contains some reasoning with and about the aspectual data, and all analysis anticipates it. Such reasoning, however, becomes central in the second kind of theoretical thought, scientific theory-formation, so we look at it in the next section.

3-4.5 Scientific Theory-Formation

Summary: Scientific theory-formation requires appropriate reasoning from data. Each aspect offers an irreducibly distinct kind of rationality, all of which must be considered. Paradigms express meaningfulness of selected aspects.

In science (whether in mathematical, natural, human or social science) it is inductive reasoning with data obtained by methods above by which we can generate new theories and models to be eventually added to humanity's bodies of theoretical knowledge). Each basic science focuses on a different core aspect, which determines what data we collect and what kind of reasoning it is appropriate to employ.

For good inductive reasoning, we must employ an appropriate kind of rationality, of which there are many [Winch 1958]; [Habermas 1986]. Each aspect defines a **distinct kind of rationality** (a different way of "It makes sense" or "It does not make sense"), which cannot be reduced to, nor implied from, any of the others, so we must be careful to employ rationalities of relevant aspects.

An example of inappropriate rationality is to assume that value of various kinds may be added together, whereas in fact they interact in complex ways.

In economics, obviously the **rationality of the economic aspect**, to do with resources and especially frugality, is key. Quantitative rationality is appropriate when value can appropriately be added together, but there are many kinds of value, such as of biodiversity, landscape, art or faith, for which adding is inappropriate. For those, different kinds of rationality must be brought into play and not reduced to quantitative amounts but considered qualitatively. (This is where Dasgupta [2021] might go wrong in his suggestions for bringing biodiversity into economics; we must take biotic functioning and rationality into account on its own terms - even in the Treasury.)

Understanding irreducible aspectual rationalities helps us deal better with **externalities**, as Chapter 5 outlines. That means that economic theories and models must include not just economic and quantitative rationality but also rationalities of each and every aspect, in principle. As an example, we suggest how this may be done with < "gdp.html" > GDP. By doing this, economic theories become robust and more expressive of how everything really operates. Wrong or missing rationalities undermine a theory. The following table suggests approximate rationalities for most aspects:

Table 3-4.5.1 Rationalities of the various aspects (examples). =====

This can help us better understand the presence and importance of the various **paradigms of economics**. It is paradigms that govern how and which theories are formulated, and each brings in something of a different aspect. For example (simplified view):

- ◆ Neo-classical economics: economic usually with quantitative;
- ◆ Marxist economics: economic with juridical;
- ◆ Socialist economics: economic with social and some juridical;
- ◆ Gift economics: economic with ethical;
- ◆ Happiness economics: economic with aesthetic;
- ◆ Behavioral economics: economic with psychical and formative;
- ◆ Environmental economics: economic with biotic;
- ◆ *Doughnut economics*: economic and quantitative with biotic, social, juridical, and pistic in seeing ourselves as "21st century economists";
- ◆ and so on.

New ideas emerge when the field feels that some whole swathe of meaningfulness (aspect) is being ignored by existing ideas. This motivates what Kuhn called a **paradigm shift** [Note: Paradigms], such as from neo-classical to one of the others. Whereas good new paradigms embrace the old as a special case, such as Einsteinian physics (based on kinematic aspect) did with Newtonian (based on spatial aspect), in economics and other social sciences many paradigms reject and oppose previous ones (such as capitalist versus socialist economics), for reasons discussed in the next section. We try to embrace.

Seeing paradigms in economics as linked to aspects gives this Rethink two advantages. One is that it allows us to **distance ourselves from paradigm wars**, because aspects allow us to understand them in relation to each other, as each contributing valid insights in various aspects. The other is that we can **probe deeply** by asking which aspects motivated the emergence of paradigms; *why* did Smith and Keynes to develop the ideas they did? See our discussion of < "smith.html" > Adam Smith.

Rationality, strictly, applies within an aspect but in everyday experience and in interdisciplinary research and discourse, we also reason across aspects. Cross-aspect reasoning usually involves intuitively understanding the **inter-aspect relationships**.

- ◆ Inter-aspect **dependency** helps us analyse what is happening. For example, Adam Smiths baker sells bread for "own" economic reasons, but if this is done with friendliness (social functioning), sales are likely to be better (foundational dependency).
- ◆ Inter-aspect **impact** helps us understand how functioning in post-economic aspects affects economic activity. For example, cheating (juridical dysfunction) reduces willingness to trade in future.
- ◆ Aspectual **order** helps us understand which kinds of impact are hidden when we confine ourselves to viewing all through the lens of the economic aspect.
- ◆ Inter-aspect **non-conflict** helps us question presuppositions. For example, Smith's "invisible hand" presupposes that each aspect 'wants' to bring some Good even if we function badly in other aspects.
- ◆ Inter-aspect **analogy** helps us understand misunderstandings and can alert thinkers to new possibilities. For example, though economic growth does not operate by the laws of biology, the biotically meaningful idea of maturity stimulated Goudzwaard to suggest that affluent economies should stop growing and instead 'blossom' and 'bear fruit'.

Being aware of these inter-aspect relationships can make **interdisciplinary** research, argument and discourse more fruitful - which will be important in this Rethink - more systematic.

After theories have been proposed by scientific research, they are disseminated, so that they can be critiqued. They can be critiqued in terms of data collection and reasoning, but a deeper critique is invited, of entire paradigms - such of each of those in economics above. But on what grounds may this occur? This brings us to the third level, philosophical reflection.

3-5.6 Philosophical Reflection

Summary: Philosophy reflects on the whole range of meaningfulness that makes all theories, analyses and even everyday life important. It is what enables us to understand paradigms and worldviews, and their emergence.

To understand movements in thought requires philosophical reflection. In science, they occur by paradigm shifts; in society, they occur by shifts in worldview. On what basis may paradigms and worldviews be found wanting, and on what basis do new paradigms or worldviews emerge?

Both paradigms and worldviews are expressions of **what is deemed meaningful**, and we can understand that by thinking in terms of aspects [Basden & Joneidy 2019]. To say a paradigm is flawed is to say that what it assumes to be meaningful is not sufficient, and other aspects (kinds of meaningfulness) need to be considered. Einstein's physics centres on the kinematic aspect; Newton's only on the spatial.

Economics has been dominated by the paradigm of the **self-interested, rational economic actor** and the worldview of consumerism, in which the only thing meaningful to include in economic theories or practical analysis or decisions is economic rationality shaped by the ethical dysfunction of selfishness. Things like justice, ecology or aesthetics are explicitly excluded from consideration. So it

is no surprise that alternative paradigms and worldviews have arisen that bring in such aspects (developmental, environmental, happiness economics, etc.).

But, “sufficient” compared with what? How and from where might the discourse in the field find other aspects? Dooyeweerd’s answer is from an **“origin of meaning”**. Dooyeweerd showed that Western thought has been dominated by four such origins of meaning over the past 2,500 years, which he called **ground-motives**, the Greek ground-motive of Form-Matter, the Scholastic ground-motive of Nature-Grace (Nature-Supernature, Secular-Sacred), the Humanistic ground-motive of Nature-Freedom, and the Biblical ground-motive of Creation-Fall-Redemption [Note: Ground-motives]. A ground-motive is a “spiritual driving force that acts as the absolutely central mainspring of human society” in that it “not only places an indelible stamp on the culture, science, and social structure of a given period but determines profoundly one’s whole world view” [Dooyeweerd 1979, 9]. Ground-motives are presuppositions about the nature of reality, and especially the totality of meaningfulness, ‘telling’ us which aspects there are . (In the above example, we took the economic, ethical, juridical, biotic, aesthetic as available aspects.)

The trouble is that movement of thought in economics and related fields over the past few centuries in have been dominated by **dualistic** ground-motives, and so it has swung between opposite pole of the prevailing ground-motive.

For example, Scholastics like Aquinas over-emphasised the sacred pole, treating economics as a secular mechanism that should be guided almost wholly by a duty of benevolence; they did not investigate the nature of economics as such. Adam Smith did. Influenced by his friend David Hume, who wanted the secular to dominate, Adam Smith removed two of four pillars of Scholastic economics [Mueller 2022] to establish what appeared a totally secular account (except for ambiguous ideas of “Providence”). Today, the warfare between neo-liberal and socialist economics may be seen as expressing the currently prevailing Humanist ground-motive of Nature-Freedom. Other expressions of the Nature-Freedom polar opposition include objective v. subjective, essentialist v. constructivist, modern v. postmodern, positivist v. interpretivist, management by control v. management by freeing employees.

In effect, the three dualistic ground-motives offer two and only two aspects as the totality of meaningfulness from which new paradigms and worldviews arise. Eriksson [2003] shows that even attempts to bridge the Nature and Freedom gulf fail, because they presuppose the very gulf they try to bridge.

To see thought-movements in terms of ground-motives gives a broad-brush view but if we look more closely, we find the reality is more complex - for example, Marxism and Capitalism both claim to free people but both control, and Basden [1999] has argued that aspects offer a better understanding of movements of thought, illustrating this from factions in the Green Movement, which ‘talk past’ each other because each emphasises a different aspect (deep ecology emphasises the biotic, communitarianism the social, environmental justice the juridical and spiritual geens the pistic). Likewise in economics, as in the earlier list. Ground-motives can explain why thought in a field has become fragmented; aspects give a basis for bringing it together.

The Biblical ground-motive is pluralistic, offering multiple aspects, and we may see Dooyeweerd’s suite of aspects as a result of his adopting that ground-motive. Its pluralism ‘allowed’ him to consider a plurality of aspects. (Those who do not like the idea of a Biblical ground-motive may use his aspects, as mentioned about magnetism earlier.)

In this way, by identifying which aspects make them meaningful, insights from all views may be embraced and incorporated into the Rethink of Economics, even those which, according to dualistic ground-motives, seem opposed to each other.

3-4.7 Why our thinking in economics is not neutral

Summary: Analysis, theory-formation and philosophical reflection can never be neutral because of three fundamental characteristics of theoretical thinking.

Until a few decades ago most assumed that theoretical thinking is neutral and can lead us to truth, but many have now argued that it is not - among them Kuhn, Habermas, Foucault and Dooyeweerd. Dooyeweerd preceded them and, because he came from a different direction, he went deeper. While their ideas emerged from the movement of thought directed by the Nature-Freedom ground-motive, Dooyeweerd's ground-motive enabled him to explore the nature of theoretical thought more fundamentally, via both immanent and transcendental critiques. See the Note on Theoretical Thought for brief explanation and Basden [2020], chapter 5,6 for fuller.

From the latter, Dooyeweerd found three fundamental "transcendental problems", each of which is a reason that theoretical thought can never be neutral, which align with its three types, analysis, scientific theory-formation and philosophical reflection, and which have already been mentioned:

- ◆ TP1, we abstract from the multi-aspectual functioning of reality by focusing on one or a few core aspects to generate concepts meaningful in them and ignore all others. It is our choice which aspects to focus on, and it determines the concepts we abstract and thus the outcome of analysis. In economics, the downplaying of 'externalities' is a symptom of this.
- ◆ TP2, the rationality we apply to the concepts abstracted are those of selected aspects. Our selection determines the outcome, and we are in danger of applying inappropriate aspects. In economics restricting our reasoning and explanations to costs and benefits means we miss much - which is why many other types of economics have emerged.
- ◆ TP3, critique of our paradigms and worldviews that dictate choice of aspects in the above must necessarily be done by reference to a presupposed "origin of meaning", usually the prevailing ground-motive. Dualistic ground-motives have misled philosophical reflection because they cut reality in two, suppressing the disfavoured half. In economics their malign influence is seen in the divisiveness in the field, especially into two opposing camps largely left- and right-leaning.

Thus there are three inescapable contributors to non-neutrality of theoretical thinking - to our analyses, theories and philosophical reflections. Instead of them being treated as truths, we should see them as fallible beliefs. Concepts from analysis express just one aspect of a situation and not others. Theories are beliefs about the way reality tends to operate generally, upon which it is reasonable to rely for a time. Philosophy yields fallible beliefs about the nature of reality.

Therefore in all our thinking, in our engaging with other ideas, and in formulating our own, we should be humble and always aware of our own fallibility. That does not mean to avoid passionate critique; it means that even this should be done with **mercy and humility** in case we are wrong. That, we hope, is the attitude that pervades all our writing in this Rethink. The phrase "insofar as xxx is correct" is often used. (x Christians and those of many other religions will resonate with this. x) Dooyeweerd himself expressed this attitude in emphasising that even his suite of aspects should never be seen as final truth [Note: Dooyeweerd's Humility].

3-4.8 For Academics: Are We Imposing an Overarching Framework?

Summary: Dooyeweerd's suite of aspects is no overarching framework, but gives freedom to generate frameworks.

The impression might have been given that, with Dooyeweerd, we are imposing a metanarrative or an overarching framework. We are not, because Dooyeweerd operates as a deeper level. Those who see overarching frameworks as problematic cite various totalizing worldviews as examples, such as materialism. Dooyeweerd would also critique overarching frameworks of this type.

Dooyeweerd's aspects do not give an overarching framework, for three reasons. 1. Aspects underlie all attempts to generate frameworks, which involves human choice and social agreement of which aspects are meaningful, and aspects do not themselves dictate which to choose. 2. Dooyeweerd's suite of aspects is no final truth [Note: Dooyeweerd's Humility]. 3. The choice of which aspects thinkers construct frameworks is strongly influenced by their ground-motive.

So, the integration and embraciveness we seek occurs at a deeper level.

3-4.9 Conclusion of Embracing and Engaging

Conventionally, since economics seems to be divided into two main camps at war with each other - approximately right- and left-wing economics - much is ignored by both camps. This is a shame. This Rethink 'embraces' insights from both camps, in principle, but does so critically. This section has outlined the approach to engaging with all ranges of ideas, *LACE*: Listen sensitively, Affirm content and motivations that are valid, Critique expose presuppositions that are then to be questioned and perhaps modified, and Enrich rather than replace, especially with an eye on what motivated the emergence of the ideas.

To do this we need to understand the nature and limits of ideas, as products of taking a theoretical stance, which is manifested in at least three ways: in practical analysis, in scientific theory-formation and in philosophical reflection, all of which have limits. Dooyeweerd's deep critique of theoretical thought has been called upon to understand their limits, especially why each is non-neutral, and why appeal to products of pre-theoretical thinking are still of value in a Rethink like this.

It is challenging to engage with ideas in this way but so far it has proven possible, as set out in the main chapters. The reader must judge.

3-5. Multi-aspectual Overall Good

Summary: The notion of Multi-aspectual Overall Good brings together the fragments of what many recent thinkers have drawn attention to.

"God saw all that he had made and it was very good" [Genesis 1:31]

What should economics aim to achieve? An examination of the economics literature, whether historical, conventional or recent, reveals that many presuppose some kind of Good, some ultimate desirable state of affairs, towards which they believe that economic activity can and 'should' contribute. It manifests itself in various wordings in various thinkers, such as:

- ◆ Adam Smith: "the necessities and conveniences of life" (first sentence of *The Wealth of Nations*);
- ◆ Frank Ramsden: "Bliss";

- ◆ John Maynard Keynes: “the good life”; “lead us out of the tunnel of economic necessity into the daylight” [2010/1930, 133], “economic and social justice ... the individual - his freedom of choice, his faith, his mind and its expression, his enterprise and his property” [1982/1939, 500], etc.;
- ◆ Karl Marx: a communist society;
- ◆ Friedrich Hayek: the Great Society;
- ◆ E.F. Schumacher: sustainability;
- ◆ Kate Raworth: Keeping above Social Floor and below Ecological Ceiling;
- ◆ and so on.

Such versions of Good are presupposed in that very seldom does the author explain or justify why economics should produce such things, nor how it does. It is taken for granted as ‘obvious’ to author and reader alike. It is the everyday intuition that things could be better, a background presupposition. If mentioned at all, such Good is amorphous and non-specific.

In this Rethink we need something more explicit and clear even if not precise, in three ways especially. 1. This Good is **overall**, taking everything into account, not just humans, and relating to all spheres of society in addition to economics. 2. It is also overall in terms of time, looking to the **future**, taking into account the Good or Harmful impacts of what we do not on future generations. (x In Christian and some other perspectives it is eschatological, aiming for fulfilment of the Creator’s Plan for this temporal epoch. x) 3. It is **multi-aspectual**: Good in every aspect in harmony (rather than Good in one aspect at the expense of others).

For these reasons we call it **Multi-aspectual Overall Good** (or occasionally, Overall Multi-aspectual Good, or Multi-aspectual Good, or Overall Good), and will do so throughout this Rethink. (Capitals are used for Multi-aspectual Overall Good to show it is one, not one of many.)

To help the reader understand the breadth of what we mean by Multi-aspectual Overall Good, consider the following (rather extreme, romanticized) picture: living things are healthy, in a dynamic, thriving ecology, with humans caring for them, coming to understand them. In all human functioning, there is creativeness and innovation that does no harm, communication is always clear and truthful, people come to agreement and cooperate, arts, sport and leisure flourish for joy rather than competitiveness, all is done with justice, generosity and love, with no wastefulness, and no idolatry or hidden agendas, but true worship. Even such things as eating to keep alive contributes to Multi-aspectual Good, but ensuring that others have enough food contributes even more because of the generosity that may be added.

That might fit traditional ideas of heaven. But all people have, in their hearts, some idea of this, calling it various names: “flourishing”, “*shalom*”, “*salaam*”, “*eudaimonia*”, “blessing”, “prosperity”, “sustainability”, “joy”, “wellbeing”, possibly “*xingfu*”, and so on. Multi-aspectual Overall Good, being full and diverse, goes beyond what is visible to economics. Unlike some of those terms, Multi-aspectual Overall Good is **not restricted** to human flourishing, but refers too to the non-human Creation (x and, to religious people especially Jews and Christians, that it brings the Creator joy x).

The idea of Overall Good makes explicit the **normative stance** of economics theory and practice, which always accompanies the explanatory or descriptive stance offered by science.

Multi-aspectual Good is reduced by **Harm**, which is the repercussion of dysfunctioning in any aspects. Harm includes things like climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss, bodily and mental illness, even pandemics, addiction, disinformation, war, injustice, war, lack of dignity - negative repercussions in any aspect in which they are meaningful. Until Chapter 7, when we discuss Good, Harmful and Useless economic activity “Multi-aspectual Overall Good” will refer to net Good, in which Harm subtracts and detracts from it.

This differs from the Greek and Scholastic idea of perfections and that all change, necessarily departing therefrom, must be evil and resisted. To Dooyeweerd, the Good in each aspect has latitude, so that good change is possible.

We discuss Multi-aspectual Overall Good further in Chapter 4, where we will suggest that the mandate of economics is to contribute towards it.

3-6. Conclusion

Summary: These five perspectives allow us to tackle a wide range of undertakings that make up economics.

This Rethink is guided by five perspectives:

- ◆ A pre-theoretical way of thinking, in which we respect everyday experience and intuition as well as theories and rules of economics;
- ◆ Dooyeweerd as philosophical foundation, especially his idea of aspects, by which we understand the reality of economics and the wider whole of which it is part;
- ◆ Christian and other Religious perspectives, relevant in nine ways, such as uncovering oft-forgotten issues providing impetus for change of approach, and offering a deep solution and hope;
- ◆ Engaging with and embracing all kinds of ideas, whether left or right, orthodox or heterodox, using the LACE approach;
- ◆ Multi-aspectual Overall Good as an explicit overall aim of economics.

How they influence the way we tackle the dozen undertakings that constitute economics [Note: Economics] is as follows.

The realm of **practice**, i.e. economic activities, is treated as multi-aspectual functioning, usually with a pre-theoretical stance, and in which the economic aspect is important. It has repercussions meaningful in each aspect, all of which are important (Chapter 6). Awareness of aspectual law and inter-aspect dependencies is used to evaluate, judge and guide practice, especially with differentiation of Harmful from Good economic activity (Chapter 7).

The **repercussions** of economic activity on the wider world, both good (e.g. better health) or harmful (climate change, obesity, increased depression, selfishness or rootlessness), are seen as repercussions of functioning in various aspects. Whereas much economics theory and much practice tries to reduce these to quantitative economic terms (e.g. costs-benefit analysis), we recognise each aspect in its own right and also all together as contributing to, or detracting from, Multi-aspectual Overall Good. An explicit model of functioning and repercussions in all aspects is found in Chapter 6.

Metrics in economics are traditionally quantitative measures that express amounts of economic value. In Chapter 5, we extend that by calling for metrics of value in other aspects. Value is inherent in each aspect because of its inherent normativity. In many aspects, and in many situations, quantitative evaluations are inappropriate, and we encourage the use of qualitative evaluations, based on an understanding of aspectual functioning and inter-aspect dependency.

The **science** of economics is multi-aspectual functioning led by the analytical aspect, targeting the economic, to yield generic understanding of the way the economic aspect tends to operate, expressed as theories. Traditionally economic theories contain only concepts meaningful in the economic aspect (sometimes with the addition of anonymous "externalities"). This Rethink recognises the

interplay of aspects in all economic activity and critiques theories and models by reference to the impact on and from activity meaningful in other aspects. It enriches theories by incorporating other aspects (Chapter 6). Most economic theory focuses on positive economic activity, presupposing it is all good, and ignores negative (harmful) activity, but we differentiate the harmful from the good (Chapter 7), which are different in each aspect.

The professional **discipline** of economics, with its governing rules and its institutions, covering both science and practice, is multi-aspectual functioning led by the economic aspect along with the juridical because a discipline has a strong idea of what should and should not occur. This rethink would critique the rules - written and unwritten - that the professions of economics generate, and the motivation and attitude behind this generation. Corruption is a dysfunction in the ethical and pistic aspects.

The activity of **teaching** economics is multi-aspectual human functioning led by the lingual and formative aspects (conveying knowledge and training in skills) and often the analytical aspect (distinguishing of relevant concepts), but also depending on, and influenced by, other aspects. Our rethink would especially question **what is taught and when**, introducing every aspect into course content alongside that which is meaningful in the economic aspect, even from the start (Economics 101).

The system that is **the economy** is a macroeconomic reification of the collection of individual multi-aspectual economics activities, and is of concern to governments. This rethink questions not only the rules that constrain and enable it to operate in particular ways, but the global- and macro-level damage (and good) it does in every aspect of reality, especially in society's pervading attitude and prevailing mindset that drives it to this damage (or good).

How theories and paradigms **influence** practice and how practice influences those is seen in terms of functioning in various aspects. The holding of a paradigm or worldview and the commitment to a theory are both pistic functioning, at both individual and societal level. In Chapter 6 we discuss the two-way impact between economic functioning and that in all other aspects.

Attitudes and mindsets (often called "culture", "worldview", etc.) towards economics are immensely powerful in their effects, though usually hidden. In most economics theory and practice, they are ignored or presupposed, but we make them explicit by referring to functioning in the ethical and pistic aspects. For example, it allows us to consider explicitly what motivated economists to develop the ideas they do, and what really motivates economic practice. The importance of mindset and attitude is one reason why it is helpful to make use of insights from religious perspectives.

So the **field** of economics, which combines the above. In Chapter 4, this rethink poses the question, "What is the meaning and mandate of economics?" and highlights the isolationist and idolatrous mindset that economists and those who use economics (politicians and media pundits, and even the public) have towards economics, which explains why it is so difficult to heed Mark Carney's call to bring all human values into economics. Chapter 2 briefly surveyed some recent ideas in the field.

Our discussion of economics covers all these. All are judged according to their contribution of Multi-aspectual Overall Good, which is understood via Dooyeweerd's aspects. The following chapters rethinks economics as a whole, value, economic activity, good and harm, and entities in economics.

Created: 27 March 2023 from xnr2, xnr1 and a couple of notes.

Last updated: 28 March 2023 added everyday experience, and bits from xnr2. 29 March 2023 bit fr xnr2. 31 March 2023 Purposes of the 3 perspectives. 1 April 2023 more on edx; brought in Dooyeweerd from xnr1, and began rw its intro. 7 April 2023 Multi-aspectual Good brought here from r4. 10 April 2023 hdg for tctt. 11 April 2023 not dominate. 13 April 2023 bits. 24 April 2023 began edit; edx. 26 April 2023 edits. 27 April 2023 rlg, jewish. 28 April 2023 bundle of values; xn persp; tidied Dooyeweerd. 29 April 2023 what aspects enable. 1 May 2023 various. Did all the characteristics and enabling of aspects and what it means for us, and tidied up. 3 May 2023

Theoretical thought as separate section. 5 May 2023 edx; linked §3-4 with §3-5; summaries; tidied =====, ##. 8 May 2023 "enlightened"; "draft". 13 May 2023 >IG. 20 May 2023 *Gegenstand* more. 26 May 2023 Rlg for meaningfulness, motivation. 29 May 2023 hdgs. 3 June 2023 shorter ch intro. 5 June 2023 hdgs. 10 June 2023 example of m-a fning. 19 June 2023 repentance for past; how to change ec fning by asp. 14 July 2023 p-atgt. 10 September 2023 sin r.t. goodies v baddies. 19 September 2023 ren t3. 21 September 2023 Enormous Jewish; Concl of Rlg. 26 September 2023 rw Aspects. 14 October 2023 new intro to Real/Ideal. 16 October 2023 quote. 9 November 2023 transcendence; rw Rlg. 10 November 2023 hdg. 11 November 2023 list of Multi-aspectual Good. 15 December 2023 rw intro to Dooyeweerd; added § Embracing, renumbered sections. 16 December 2023 asp anal. 20 December 2023 RWE, rw. 3 January 2024 OG: Great Soc; Table of analogy, depcy. 4 January 2024 mspl meaningfulness. 19 January 2024 renamed Overall Good as Multi-aspectual Good; its importance. 27 January 2024 rlg persp 1,2. 2 February 2024 Rlg 3: holism. 9 February 2024 MAOG. 14 February 2024 Xingfu. 22 February 2024 heading number corrections; new summary. 20 March 2024 completely replaced §3-4, perspectives on theory [it has been saved to fp3: as "old-3-4-Ectheor-to240320.pt6] with 12 topics in economics. 21 March 2024 rw that a bit. 26 March 2024 LACE explained; MAJOR change: section §3-4 now merged with §3-7, and all renumbered. 29 March 2024 notes to ; MAOG rw. 1 April 2024 meaningfulness fundamental rw. 15 April 2024 MAOG rw. 22 April 2024 humans. 24 April 2024 NotXnEcon rw and smy. 20 May 2024 new intro. 24 May 2024 corr FN.

1 June 2024 starting big edit: §3-4.4.4 from r4. 17 June 2024 began big edit. 18 June 2024 re-edit 3-1. 19 June 2024 re-edit §3-1 (a)(b)(c); §3-2 embr (d); §3-3 start (e).

22 June 2024 moved to Clip; continued re-edit, to Dooyeweerd's aspects. 24 June 2024 reedit r3-3; bringing what it does for ecx with characteristics. 26 June 2024 (a) finished §3-4.3 characteristics; (b) §3-4.4 start. 27 June 2024 functioning; attitude after fning; being absorbed earlier. 28 June 2024 att,mind: cult, structures. 28 June 2024 rid remainder of Enabling. 29 June 2024 good, evil, value; theoretical thought. 6 July 2024 change spheres 3 ways; §4 edit begun; holism first. 8 July 2024 rlg values; normative impetus. 11 July 2024 new section The Economic Aspect. 12 July 2024 ec links; J1 Creation section; Role humans. 15 July 2024 edit J1 creation, J2 humans; j3 sin, rep, hope. 16 July 2024 C1, salvation. 17 July 2024 transforming societies. 17 July 2024 hope (a); finished rlg (b); engaging (c); MAOG (d),(e) -- printed. 22 July 2024 editing from start again. 23 July 2024 more, to asps. 24 July 2024 more ed; characteristics of asps. 25 July 2024 asp enable (a), good, val (b). 26 July 2024 Fnning (a)(b). 30 July 2024 att,mdset; brought in walk notes. 31 July 2024 aspectual anal (a), sci (c). 1 August 2024 accumulating (a) done most (b) done thth (c). 3 August 2024 edit §4, rlg persp. 5 August 2024 sin, repce. 6 August 2024 some xn ed (a), maog (b), existence (A) (c).

7 August 2024 merging Embracing with Thinking and LACE. 9 August 2024 Deut 8:2. 14 August 2024 aspectual anal. 16 August 2024 aspect-guided iv. 17 August 2024 Scientific t-f; rlg intro bit rw. 19 August 2024 aspanal again; split off asp.anal. 21 August 2024 New philosophical refl. 22 August 2024 notOverarching (a); read sci th-form (b); phl ref (c). 23 August 2024 yet another philref (a); ed, and rid older (b). 24 August 2024 ed aa. 26 August 2024 non-beut; LACE moved (a); reading thro (b); checked sci,phl (c); not overarch (d). 28 August 2024 embr intro. 28 August 2024 maog shortened and sent to R4 (a); 12 topics ed and moved to concl (b). 29 August 2024 begun ===== (a),(b),(c); hdg nums (d)(e); some scraps, some === (f) (g), corrs (h) --- P, pdf, upload. 30 August 2024 6 persp corr to 5!; 3-3 H2! 31 August 2024 several small changes indicated on paper but had not been made. 4 September 2024 Chps 4-8 around philosophical issues; "without the ec asp ...". 5 September 2024 asp groups. 9 September 2024 normative stance. 16 September 2024 rw rlg to include spirituality and emph Christ. 18 September 2024 saved r3-3 to older/r3-3-240916, then began to rw Rlg. 21 September 2024 more. 23 September 2024 more r3-3, creation. 24 September 2024 finished creation (a); added section of verses (b). 26 September 2024 humans (a) sin rep (b), done Judaic (c). 30 September 2024 role human yet again! (a)(b)(c). 1 October 2024 sin (a); repentance; some xn (b); end r3-3 (c) ---- uploaded and printed. 2 October 2024 sacrifice. 3 October 2024 new chapter title; God's people; no hope in humanity; heart helpless; rlg prob and blessing; link to pdf.