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## Herman Dooyeweerd

### I. BIOGRAPHY

Herman Dooyeweerd, born in the Netherlands at Amsterdam on October 7, 1894, is professor of the Philosophy of Law at the Free University of Amsterdam. His home background blended two strains of the Reformed tradition; his father was a follower of Dr. Abraham Kuyper, the eminent theologian-statesman and founder of the Free University, while his mother was rooted in the searching school of Puritan-like piety associated with the separation movement (*afscheid-ting*) and with the independent theologian and pastor of Elberfeld Dr. H. F. Kohlbrügge. The Kuyperian strain is most prominent in Dooyeweerd's work, though his emphasis on self-knowledge is akin to one of the aspects of Kohlbrügge's teaching.

During his undergraduate days at the Free University, Dooyeweerd's interests were largely directed to the aesthetic aspect of life, although he also felt the attraction exerted by the lectures of Professors D. P. D. Fabius, Anema, and Herman Bavinck. In 1917, under the supervision of Fabius, he defended a doctoral dissertation on the cabinet in Dutch Law.

In 1922, Dooyeweerd accepted the post of Adjunct Director to the recently established Abraham Kuyper Foundation with the intention of devoting himself to systematic study of the foundations of the Neo-Calvinist life-and-world view in its application to law, economics, and politics. In this capacity he was the editor of *Nederland*

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### Herman Dooyeweerd

*en Oranje*, a popular organ of the Anti-Revolutionary Party and the founder of a new organ with the title *Anti-Revolutionaire Staatkunde*, in which he published an important series of articles on the conflict over Christian politics (1924-27). The subtitle of this series contains the term *wetsidee* ("idea of law"), which was to become the keyword of his later philosophy.

In 1926, Dooyeweerd published an article on Calvinism versus Neo-Kantianism in the *Tijdschrift voor Wijsbegeerte*, in which he issued a warning not only against those who accepted Neo-Kantianism as the definitive result of the entire development of philosophical thought, but also against those Calvinists who were attempting to adapt Neo-Kantianism to a Christian life-and-world view.

The year 1926 also marks Dooyeweerd's appointment as professor of the Philosophy of Law, Encyclopedia of Jurisprudence, and Old Fatherland Law at the Free University. His inaugural address dealt with the significance of the idea of law, in the sense of the universal structures of order in the cosmos, for the science and philosophy of jurisprudence. Together with his brother-in-law, Dr. D. H. Th. Vol-lenhoven, professor of Philosophy at the Free University, Dooyeweerd continued the development of his philosophical system until his major work on *The Philosophy of The Cosmonomic Idea* in three volumes was ripe for publication (1935-36).

Dooyeweerd's thought develops themes stressed by Abraham Kuyper, especially those of sphere-sovereignty and the heart of man, while it is severely negative toward Scholastic elements in Kuyper's theology. The fundamental significance of the characteristic structures of the aspects of experience occurred to Dooyeweerd during a walk in the dunes along the Dutch coast and is the central conception of his inaugural address. Later he included in his vision of knowledge and reality the important transcendental critique of theoretical thought, the idea of cosmic time, the theory of structures of individuality and their interplacements, and the distinction between naive experience and the theoretical attitude, as well as other themes. Modern philosophy is subjected to the transcendental critique in the first volume of the systematic trilogy (published in a four-volume revised translation as *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, 1953-1958), while Greek philosophy through Plato is dealt with in the first volume, the only published one, of another trilogy on Reformation and Scholasticism in Philosophy (1949). Portions of the unpublished volume on Scholasticism have appeared as articles in the quarterly *Philosophia Reformata*, organ of the Society for Calvinistic Philosophy, of which Dooyeweerd is the chief editor. In addition to numerous articles, lectures, and shorter books, Dooyeweerd has published his extensive lectures on

the Encyclopedia of Jurisprudence (1946) and an excellently written series of addresses delivered during his North American tour in 1959, entitled *In the Twilight of Western Thought*.

The philosophy of the cosmomic idea met with supporters and opponents both within and outside of Reformed circles. The original editorial board of *Philosophia Reformata* included Dr. J. Bohatec, the eminent Calvin scholar in Vienna, and Dr. H. G. Stoker of Potchefstroom, South Africa. The name of Dr. C. Van Til of Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, was added to the list in the second issue. Opposition to the views of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven was voiced by Dr. Valentinus Hepp, professor of Dogmatics at the Free University, who in a series of brochures entitled *Dreigende Deformatie* (Threatening Deformation — 1936-37) dealt with the theological issues relating to the soul, the two natures of Christ, and common grace. Hepp's diagnosis charged the new philosophy and related trends in theology with biblicism and a misguided progressivism issuing in positions conflicting with Reformed doctrine. Dooyeweerd's antipathy to "Scholasticism" in historic Reformed as well as Roman Catholic theology must be understood in relation to this unhappy controversy within his own church and university.

From outside of Reformed circles the charge has commonly been brought that what Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven were doing was not philosophy but theology. On the other hand, Dooyeweerd's work has received sympathetic recognition in some Roman Catholic and non-Christian circles. Dr. Michael J. Marlet, S. J., published his *Grundlinien der Calvinistischen "Philosophie der Gesetzidee" als Christlicher Transzendentalphilosophie* in 1954 with an accompanying preface by Dooyeweerd, in which he speaks of his original intention to give an "ecumenical Christian" foundation to the philosophy of the cosmomic idea and of his explicit removal of the term "Calvinistic" philosophy from the English edition of his first trilogy, although he still regards his work as a fruit of the Calvinistic Reformation. The volume of essays, *Perspectief*, celebrating the twenty-fifth year of the Society for Calvinistic Philosophy, contains an article by Dr. C. E. Langemeijer on the significance of Dooyeweerd for the philosophy of non-ecclesiastical quarters, one by Dr. J. J. Louet Feisser on the contribution of the philosophy of the cosmomic idea to the renewal of philosophical insight, and one by Professor Marlet on philosophy of the cosmomic idea and Thomistic thought. Louet Feisser's contribution includes a discussion of the agreement of Dooyeweerd with the Dutch personalist philosopher Ph. Kohnstamm as well as with Professor A. J. de Sopper, both of whom, although non-Calvinists, came to express their sympathy with his philosophy. Another striking

instance of recognition of Dooyeweerd's work may be mentioned. Dr. J. P. van Mullen, a modernist and Neo-Kantian philosopher, had sharply disqualified Dooyeweerd's line of thought, but in the course of time revised this judgment drastically and acknowledged the influence exercised by this Reformed philosophy on his later thought.

Since 1948 Dooyeweerd has been a member of the Royal Dutch Academy of the Sciences. He has extended his influence beyond the Netherlands by lecturing in South Africa, France, and North America.

## II. EXPOSITION

The philosophical structure erected by Dooyeweerd in his systematic trilogy and numerous other writings is extremely complex and consequently does not lend itself to concise exposition. The system may be divided into five parts as follows: (1) the transcendental critique of theoretical thought, in which the foundations of philosophy are laid; (2) the general theory of the spheres of law, in which the outlines of a cosmology or account of the coherence of the aspects of creation are sketched; (3) epistemology, developed in the light of the cosmomic idea; (4) the theory of structures of individuality and human society; and (5) the basic theme of philosophical anthropology, discussing the place of man in the cosmos. The concluding theme is reserved for exhaustive treatment in the unpublished final volume of the trilogy on Reformation and Scholasticism. Dooyeweerd has given some indications of the lines along which he has been thinking on this important topic.<sup>1</sup>

The present discussion is restricted to a consideration of topics having particular interest for theology and of the theological implications that have been drawn, especially those drawn by Dooyeweerd himself. Since the transcendental critique of theoretical thought has come to occupy an increasingly prominent place in Dooyeweerd's thought,<sup>2</sup> consideration will be given to relevant aspects of this critique, especially the doctrine of the antithetic *Gegenstand*-relation as characterizing the attitude of theoretical thought, and the theory of the basic religious motives of theoretical and particularly of philosophical thought. Then topics will be selected from the general theory of the

<sup>1</sup> See in particular the lecture "What Is Man?" in *In the Twilight of Western Thought* (1960), and the discussion in Vol. III, pp. 781ff. of *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* (1953), but especially the anthropological theses *Correspondentie-Bladen* (Dec., 1942) and the article on the task of a philosophical anthropology in *Philosophia Reformata*, 1961.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the space devoted to the sharpened version of the critique in the English translation of Vol. I of the systematic trilogy and in *In the Twilight of Western Thought*, the subtitle of which is "Studies in the Pretended Autonomy of Philosophical Thought."

spheres of law, which provide the background required for an understanding of Dooyeweerd's views as to the nature of theology and its relation to philosophy and the other sciences. Epistemology will receive some attention in connection with the *Gegenstand*-relation, while the theory of individuality, and in particular Dooyeweerd's denial of the metaphysical conception of substance, will be found to have not only anthropological but also far-reaching theological consequences. Our choice of the limited topic of the theological aspects of Dooyeweerd's philosophy should thus not prove a hindrance to an understanding of his system as a coherent whole, but rather provide a thread like that of Ariadne for direction through the labyrinth to its very heart.

#### PHILOSOPHICAL PRINCIPLES OR FOUNDATIONS

##### *The Transcendental Critique of Theoretical Thought*

The term "transcendental critique" is initially forbidding to the reader who prefers ordinary language to an artificially technical terminology. Americans may also associate the word "transcendental" with the Transcendentalist movement in nineteenth-century New England. Notwithstanding the danger of misunderstanding, the term does perform a useful function, although perhaps an unintended one. It points unmistakably to Kant's critical or transcendental philosophy as the background of Dooyeweerd's analysis. No doubt Dooyeweerd would insist on the differences between his transcendental critique and that of Kant. Kant raised only such questions as: "How is Pure Mathematics possible?" "How is Natural Science possible?" "How is Metaphysics possible?" But Dooyeweerd asks "How is Theoretical Thought as such possible?" Even if Dooyeweerd is justified in making this distinction between the problem of his transcendental critique and that of Kant's, the distinction itself implies a fundamental agreement, namely, both Kant and Dooyeweerd raise a transcendental question, in the sense of a question having the form "Under what conditions is X possible?" where "X" may stand for some branch of inquiry, for knowledge in general or for Dooyeweerd's "theoretical thought." In the transcendental critique, then, Dooyeweerd does raise questions of the sort that Kant had previously asked, even though Dooyeweerd's question has a characteristic twist which is absent from those raised by the sage of Königsberg.

The twist just mentioned consists in Dooyeweerd's intention to call into question the "pretended autonomy of philosophical thought." By "autonomy," Dooyeweerd may be taken to mean a form of self-sufficiency or independence, expressing itself in relation to religion and divine revelation. "Autonomy" in the sense of independence of

experience in general, the *a priori* in a Rationalist or Kantian sense, is not referred to expressly, although this type of autonomy is no doubt included in Dooyeweerd's view along with that shared by empiricist philosophies that approach human experience without reference to divine revelation. Dooyeweerd recognizes distinct forms of the assumption of the autonomy of human reason in ancient, medieval, and modern philosophy. "As soon as we seek to penetrate to the root of these fundamentally different conceptions, we are confronted with a fundamental difference in presuppositions which surpasses the boundaries of theoretical thought."<sup>3</sup>

The fact that some form of the postulate of autonomy has been uncritically adopted by the greater number of philosophers in the present as well as in the past accounts for the break-down of communication among conflicting philosophical movements. "A debate between philosophical trends, which are fundamentally opposed to each other, usually results in a reasoning at cross-purposes, because they are not able to find a way to penetrate to each other's true starting-points. The latter seem to be masked by the dogma concerning the autonomy of philosophical thought."<sup>4</sup> The attempt of logical positivism to provide criteria of meaning, as by the verification principle, has not helped.

##### *The Attitude of Theoretical Thought and the Antithetic Gegenstand-Relation*

The transcendental critique for Dooyeweerd is a transcendental critique of theoretical thought. What does "theoretical thought" signify? Theoretical thought, for Dooyeweerd, is distinguished sharply from naive everyday experience, and thus from the functioning of thought on that pre-scientific level. Theoretical thought is scientific thought in a Continental rather than Anglo-American usage of "scientific." Mathematics, the natural sciences, the so-called social sciences, the normative disciplines, theology, and philosophy are alike considered as sciences, and the attitude of thought as it functions in these disciplines is termed "theoretical." How is this attitude of thought characterized as distinguished from that of naive experience? This question is answered in terms of the antithetic *Gegenstand*-relation.

In naive experience, the ordinary man has an integral, immediate contact with reality in its structures of individual things and concrete events. The formation of concepts on the naive level is not directed toward the distinguishable aspects of things and events, but to the things and events themselves. The logical aspect of the given is

<sup>3</sup> *In the Twilight of Western Thought* (1960), pp. 2f.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

experienced as an implicit component of that reality. Naive experience is characterized by "the subject-object relation," in which "objective functions and qualities are unreflectingly ascribed to things . . . within modal aspects in which it is not possible for them to appear as subjects."<sup>5</sup> Thus water is experienced as necessary for life, a bird's nest is a typical object of life, and a rose, which neither feels, thinks nor appreciates beauty, has objective qualities of sensory color and odor, objective logical characteristics, and objective beauty.

Sharply contrasted with the subject-object relation of naive experience is the antithetical *Gegenstand*-relation of theoretical thought. Although the German word *Gegenstand* is commonly translated "object" in philosophical literature, Dooyeweerd detects a confusion running through much modern epistemology in the identification of the object of naive experience with the *Gegenstand* of theoretical inquiry. Discussions of "naive realism" are commonly based on the mistaken supposition that the attitude of naive experience is a crude theory of reality, sometimes confused with a "copy theory." By a *Gegenstand* Dooyeweerd means a field of inquiry for theoretical thought, obtained by abstraction from the concrete given reality of naive experience. This *Gegenstand* is viewed as standing in a relation of opposition to the logical aspect of the act of thought. The act of thought has a concrete character, while the logical aspect and the opposed non-logical aspect or *Gegenstand* are abstract. Thus the *Gegenstand* is formed by a mental operation of abstraction from the data provided by immediate experience. Logical objectivity, however, is denied to be a being that is merely intended in the logical aspect of a subjective concept. "Temporal reality itself has a logical object-side."<sup>6</sup>

The antithetical structure of the theoretical attitude of thought is asserted to have a purely intentional character. This gives the impression of being a doctrine of a nominalistic tenor. (The *Gegenstand* may be roughly identified with the universals of Scholastic philosophy, although represented as a theoretical abstraction to which nothing corresponds in reality.) In a rather obscure manner, the *Gegenstand* is said to offer resistance to the attempt to grasp it in a logical concept. From this resistance the theoretical problem originates. Theoretical problems include such notoriously difficult questions as: What is a number? What is space? What is motion? What is life? What is feeling? What is thought? and What is faith? Number, space, motion, life, feeling, thought and faith are examples of what Dooyeweerd calls "modal aspects" and represent the type of *Gegenstand* (with the puzzling exception of thought itself, which is referred to in a footnote

<sup>5</sup> *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, I (1935), p. 42.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 389.

to a statement on page 40 of Volume I of the *New Critique*) in terms of which theoretical thought is defined.

The notion of the *Gegenstand*-relation, introduced in the first part of the transcendental critique, is clarified by the fuller exposition in the second chapter of the *New Critique* devoted to the epistemological problem. Brief introductory comments are made as to the *Gegenstand* as viewed by phenomenologists and also by Kant. Then in discussing the question, "Is it possible to speak of the *Gegenstand* of knowledge?" Dooyeweerd denies that the *Gegenstand* is opposed to the subject of knowledge, even if this subject is reduced to the "I think" of the "transcendental consciousness." Nor could the *Gegenstand* be opposed to our cognitive selfhood without making epistemology impossible. The correlate to the *Gegenstand* must be found within the diversity of modal aspects, not in the I-ness which is the heart of man. Dooyeweerd attempts to explain the difficult notion of "resistance" as follows: "The resistance as such is due to an antithetical opposing act, which is essentially a theoretical act of setting apart the several aspects of the cosmic meaning-systasis. This setting apart is only possible by means of analysis. For this reason the analytical modality must show a very special and indissoluble correlation with the '*Gegenstand*.'" The term "systasis" is used to distinguish the natural coherence of the modal aspects of reality from the theoretical attitude implied in the word "synthesis." Likewise the analytical subject-object relation is said to have a merely enstatic character, since naive thought has no "opposite" to its logical function and does not perform any synthesis of logical and non-logical aspects.

The notion of the *Gegenstand* may be interpreted in the light of the history of the rationalist tradition in Western philosophy. Parmenides was the first to insist that to think must be to think of something. The discovery of the intentionality of thought by Parmenides was of epoch-making significance. Plato developed this conception in speaking of the Idea that is apprehended by pure theoretical thought. Aristotle and the medieval Scholastics have continued this tradition in their discussion of the problem of universals. In Kant, a twist was given by the "Copernican revolution" in epistemology, which makes the *Gegenstand* revolve about the thinker rather than the thinking mind about the *Gegenstand*. For Kant the *Gegenstand* or object of thought is produced by the mind, formed by the application of its own categories to the material of experience. Dooyeweerd is addressing himself to the perennial problem of the metaphysical status of universal concepts, in the peculiarly acute form it has assumed as a result of the influence of Kant. The problem of

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 467f.

interpretation, to which our assessment will address itself, can be formulated thus: does Dooyeweerd view the *Gegenstand*-relation fundamentally in realistic or in nominalistic terms? Is the *Gegenstand* already implicitly given in the structure of the world and simply abstracted from it? Or is it the product of abstraction in such a way as to be actually a construction of the human mind?

#### *The Conditions of the Possibility of Theoretical Thought*

What makes theoretical thought possible? This question, characteristically transcendental in its form, receives a threefold answer in the *New Critique*. First, the antithetic-relation is the issue of an abstraction from the continuity of the coherence of the modal aspects in cosmic time. In the second place, theoretical thought requires a synthesis of the logical and the non-logical aspects, which presupposes a unified selfhood that transcends these aspects and thus transcends time itself. Finally, the concentric direction of the selfhood is itself possible only by reason of its relation to its Origin, the Origin of all meaning, which a Christian philosophy will recognize in God, the Sovereign Creator of the Cosmos. Every philosophical system is based on the answers given to these three basic transcendental questions relating to the world, the self, and God respectively. The questions relate to non-theoretical factors in the nature of things. The philosopher's choice of a position in relation to these factors determines the cosmomic idea, or idea of law (*weisidee*), in which the theoretical answer to the basic transcendental questions is formulated. This idea gives direction to further systematic constructions. The decisive factors for the foundation of philosophical theories are thus non-theoretical. Since the self and its relation to the Origin are presupposed in any philosophical theory, the non-theoretical foundations of philosophy are determined by factors that may be spoken of as religious in character. The word "religious" is employed not in a restricted sense associated with specific acts of worship, creedal formulation, or ecclesiastical organization, but in a wide sense referring to the relation of man, and through him of the cosmos, to God, the Origin of meaning. The selfhood of man, understood in biblical terms as the heart out of which proceed all the issues of life (Prov. 4:23), is viewed as the religious root of human existence, in which an attitude of apostasy from God or of renewal in Christ prevails. Among the issues proceeding from this apostate or renewed heart is theoretical thought and, in particular, philosophy.

#### *The Basic Religious Motives in the History of Philosophy*

Dooyeweerd represents the development of philosophy in Western civilization as the expression of four basic religious motives. For a

religious motive to influence philosophy "it must give rise to a common belief within the faith-aspect of our experience" and "it must gain a socio-cultural power within the historical aspect of human society."<sup>8</sup> Religious motives thus have a central communal character and often exercise their influence unconsciously. Ancient philosophy was dominated by the form-matter motive. Christianity expresses the radical biblical motive of creation, fall, and redemption. Scholasticism combines the Greek and Christian motives in the synthesis motive of nature and grace. Modern humanistic philosophy exhibits the motive of nature and freedom.

The Greek, Scholastic, and Humanistic motives possess a dialectical character in that each of these is composed of two central motive powers in polar opposition to one another. In ancient and modern philosophy, the religious absolutization of particular aspects of experience inevitably calls forth their correlates. "In other words, any idol that has been created by the absolutization of a modal aspect evokes its counter-idol."<sup>9</sup> While theoretical antitheses can be resolved by theoretical synthesis, there is no synthesis that can solve the antitheses resident in basic religious motives. Dooyeweerd may be said to be prescribing a dissolution rather than a solution of the problems arising from the tensions between form and matter, nature and grace, nature and freedom in ancient, medieval and modern philosophy respectively.

The contrast between form and matter which was explicitly formulated by Aristotle as the theme of his predecessors as well as of his own philosophy is traced by Dooyeweerd to its religious origins in the opposition between the pre-Homeric religion of life and death and the later cultural religion of the Olympian gods, the religion of form, measure, and harmony. The form-matter motive determined the Greek view of nature, which from the outset ruled out the biblical idea of creation. The dominant metaphysical opposition between being and becoming in Greek philosophy must be understood as the expression of this religious motive.

The radical central biblical motive is the "theme of creation, fall into sin, and redemption by Jesus Christ as the incarnate Word of God, in the communion of the Holy Spirit."<sup>10</sup> This basic motive is distinguished from ecclesiastical creeds that refer to it and from human theological formulation in general. Psalm 139:1-12 is quoted by Dooyeweerd as a striking instance of the integral character of the scriptural creation motive. Biblical revelation reveals man to himself,

<sup>8</sup> *In the Twilight of Western Thought* (1960), p. 34.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

as bearing the image of God in his heart as the integral radical unity of all structures and functions of temporal reality. The revelation of the fall is indissolubly associated with that of the creation. Sin in its radical scriptural sense can play no role in the dialectical basic motives, because it can be apprehended only in the genuine self-knowledge that issues from the Word-revelation. The fall concerns the integral center, the heart or soul, of man. Sin, however, is not an independent principle of origin, as opposed to God the Creator. There is no ultimate dualism in the created cosmos. The Divine Word by which all things were created became flesh in Christ Jesus, and has accomplished a radical redemption, the regeneration of man and in him of all the created temporal cosmos, which was concentrated religiously in man. In the same creative Word, God upholds the fallen cosmos by common grace, until in the last judgment redeemed creation will be freed from sin and will shine in perfection, while even in Satan and his kingdom the justice of God will shine as the affirmation of the Creator's absolute sovereignty.

This scriptural motive was threatened on all sides in the Hellenistic world. The battle against Gnosticism was waged and the Nicene dogma established. The apologists and the Alexandrian School, however, adapted from Philo's Jewish synthesis-philosophy the logos-speculation. Among the orthodox Church Fathers, philosophical thought reached its high point in the thought of Augustine. The insight that the Word of God is the only firm ground of truth led Augustine to reject the autonomy of theoretical thought. Yet this gain proved to be slight, when philosophy was restricted to a theological framework as the handmaid of theology. Neo-Platonic and Stoic influences in Augustine's thought mark the beginning of Scholastic accommodation of Greek thought to Christian doctrine. Biblical emphases in Augustinian theology are seen in his anti-Manichean insistence on the creative sovereignty of God and his anti-Pelagian accentuation of the radical character of the fall, as well as his interpretation of history in the *De Civitate Dei* as the conflict between the earthly city and the City of God.

The attempt to bridge the gap between Greek, and in particular Aristotelian, philosophy and the biblical religious motive gave rise to the Scholastic synthesis-motive of nature and grace, attaining its most perfect expression in the philosophical and theological achievement of Thomas Aquinas. Philosophy is distinguished sharply from theology by being regarded as the work of the autonomous natural reason. Dogmatic theology is assigned to the supernatural sphere of grace and is derived from revelation, though not contrary to reason. The Thomistic synthesis of the motives of nature and grace found

clear expression in the adage: *Gratia naturam non tollit, sed perficit* ("Grace does not cancel nature, but perfects it").

Nominalism in late medieval thought represented an antithetic form of the nature-grace motive, in which any point of connection between the natural and the supernatural sphere was denied. Thus the process of the secularization of philosophy began.

The fourth basic religious motive is that of modern humanism, the theme of which is nature and freedom. The religious character of this motive has been disguised under the influence of the dogma of autonomy. Dooyeweerd gives the following account of the origin of the modern freedom motive: "The freedom-motive originates in a religion of humanity into which the biblical basic-motive had been completely transformed. The *renascimento* device of the Italian Renaissance meant a real rebirth of man into a new, creative and entirely new, personality. This personality was thought of as absolute in itself and was considered to be the only ruler of its own destiny and that of the world."<sup>11</sup> The new view of nature conceived it as the macro-cosmic counterpart of the new, religious personality-ideal. In nature reside infinite possibilities for the creative power of man. The dialectical tension between the motives of nature and freedom in modern philosophy receives its sharpest formulation in the philosophy of Kant, in which nature is viewed as reality in the grip of the deterministic ideal of science while freedom prevails in the sphere of practical reason to which the primacy is ascribed. On the contemporary scene, logical positivism and existentialism represent the opposed poles of the nature-freedom motive and testify to a fundamental crisis of humanistic philosophy.

#### *Metaphysical Foundations*

Dooyeweerd does not use the term "metaphysics" with approval. He carries on a sustained attack against what he labels "speculative metaphysics" in all of the forms it has exhibited in the history of philosophy. The transcendental critique, for Dooyeweerd no less than for Kant, has the effect, if not the intention as well, of cutting off at the root every theory that professes to transcend the limit of time and to unfold the mysteries of a realm beyond possible human experience in this world.

Despite the avowed opposition to traditional metaphysics, the philosophy of the cosmomic idea has what may be called a pronounced metaphysical character in the sense of fundamental principles as to the nature of reality, the order of the world, the nature of the human self, and the relation of world and self to the ultimate origin of all

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

created reality. In a more specific sense, it is a metaphysical system, since cosmology is developed as a prerequisite for epistemology. The transcendental critique, which is the gate to all further divisions of this philosophy, is not identified with epistemology, although the kinship of these two branches of the system is unmistakable.

#### Meaning and Law

Philosophy is defined as theoretical thought directed to the totality of the meaning of our cosmos. Meaning is said to be the mode of being of created reality. No created thing is self-sufficient; each one points beyond itself to others and above to the Origin of all. Dooyeweerd has evidently resolved to use the word "meaning" (*zin*) in an unusual and even novel sense. Yet the use of this term appears to suggest that he is attempting to resolve problems that have bothered other philosophers who have engaged in the analysis of meaning, especially Husserl and other phenomenologists. Dooyeweerd has not devoted much attention to the analytic philosophy that predominates in the English-speaking world. Occasional references to logical positivism, however, do occur in his work.

Dooyeweerd's paradoxical statements about meaning do not appear to resemble propositions of semantics, although some of them do lend themselves to translation into statements about the use of language. Among other things, the thesis that linguistic expressions have reference only in a context would be understood as a basic tenet of a linguistic version of this doctrine. A difficulty would arise, however, in the attempt to discover a semantic counterpart to the irreducibly ontological assertion that reality does not have meaning, but *is* meaning.<sup>12</sup> The doctrine of meaning in the philosophy of the cosmonomic idea must be admitted to be metaphysical in a sense in which traditional doctrines of substance are called metaphysical. It involves general propositions about everything that can be said to be. "Meaning" for this philosophical perspective is the all-encompassing category of reality. God alone as the Origin of meaning does not fall under it.

A second basic category is that of law. By law (*wet*) is meant a principle of order or structure to which individually existing things are subjected. "Law" and "subject" are indissolubly correlated with each other. Law is said metaphorically to be the boundary between God, the sovereign Lawgiver, and the Cosmos. God is not subject to the law. "Meaning" and "subject to law" thus appear to be equivalent expressions. Dooyeweerd insists on the subject-law correlation as necessary, if the dialectical tension between rationalistic and irrationalistic views of reality is to be avoided. Rationalism attempts to reduce the subject

<sup>12</sup> *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, I (1955), 96f.

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side of reality to the law-side and leaves no room for individuality, while irrationalism seeks to derive from the subject the rule of its behavior, which thereby loses its general character and becomes a reflection of the individuality of the subjects.<sup>13</sup>

Dooyeweerd's emphasis on an order of law in the universe indicates an affinity between his view and that of classical doctrines of natural law. Reflections on the theme of natural law played a significant role in the formative stages of Dooyeweerd's philosophical development.<sup>14</sup> Dooyeweerd, although critical of the Augustinian doctrine of the eternal law and the Thomist theory of natural law, is no less insistent than the classical tradition that the norms of human behavior are integrated in a total order of the world which is independent of the mind and will of man.

#### Cosmic Time and the Modal Aspects

Time might also be regarded as a universal category of empirical reality in the philosophy of the cosmonomic idea. Cosmic time is defined as an indissoluble correlation of order and duration in distinction from all its special modal aspects. Man transcends cosmic time only in the religious center of his existence. The cosmonomic (law) side of time is the order of succession or simultaneity, while the factual (subject) side is the duration which differs with various individualities. Modal and individuality structures of temporal reality are alike structures of cosmic time. In naive experience "we have an immediate integral experience of cosmic time in the uninterrupted coherence of all its modal aspects, inclusive of the normative ones, and in concentric relatedness to the selfhood."<sup>15</sup> In the experience of looking at one's watch and discovering that one is "too late," the integral character of the naive consciousness of time is exemplified.

Dooyeweerd employs the symbol of refraction of light through a prism in his elucidation of the relationship between cosmic time and the modal aspects. Cosmic time is a prism through which the supra-temporal totality of meaning of our cosmos is broken up into its temporal modal aspects of meaning. The modal aspects are not derived from one another, even as the colors of the spectrum do not owe their origin to one another. "Each modal aspect is sovereign in

<sup>13</sup> See Dooyeweerd's reply to Professor Van Peursen in *Philosophia Reformata*, 1960, especially pp. 107ff.

<sup>14</sup> See Albers' *Het Natuurrecht volgens de Wijzegeerte der Weisdees* (1955), especially chapter 1, on the development of Dooyeweerd's conception of natural law.

<sup>15</sup> *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, I (1955), 33.

its own sphere, and each aspect in its modal structure reflects the fullness of meaning in its own modality."<sup>16</sup>

In the theoretical attitude the modal aspects of time are explicitly distinguished. In Dooyeweerd's most mature formulation, there are fifteen of these aspects, arranged in the following serial order: number, space, motion, energy, organic life, psychical feeling, logical analysis, history, language, social intercourse, economic saving, aesthetic harmony, legal retribution, moral love, and religious faith. The aspects are modal in the sense of reference to the universal "how" of the aspects of reality, not the concrete "what" of things and events. Dooyeweerd refuses to infer from his doctrine of the theoretical antithesis in the *Gegenstand*-relation that the modal aspects are products of theoretical abstraction. They are rather transcendental conditions of every concrete subjective human experience. We cannot along a theoretical way abstract from time what is not according to its nature contained in time. The modal aspects are not theoretical abstractions, but the setting of them apart is the result of a theoretical analysis necessary for philosophy from a critical point of view.<sup>17</sup>

A startling consequence of the theory of cosmic time is that the logical aspect of thought is temporal in character. By this Dooyeweerd does not mean to assert simply that it takes time, sometimes at least, to arrive at a logical conclusion. He flatly asserts: "The logical order of simultaneity and of prius and posterius is as much a modal aspect of the integral order of time as the physical. It has meaning only within the cosmic time-order in the coherence of all its modal aspects. Therefore it is meaningless to set the *logical prius* and *posterius* in opposition to the *temporal* before and after, as if the former had no authentic meaning as time-aspect."<sup>18</sup> Dooyeweerd appears to be maintaining two theses in asserting the temporality of logic in this paragraph: (1) the logical aspect occupies a place in the sequence of the modal aspects of reality, and this sequence is a temporal one; (2) logical order is itself a mode of temporal sequence or simultaneity. The "therefore" of the concluding sentence indicates that the second thesis is grounded in the first. How this is the case is not indicated, although it would appear that the first thesis presupposes the truth of the second, in that it treats a serial order of a logical or mathematical type as a temporal order. At this juncture a curious feature of the philosophical system exhibits itself. The transcendental critique is represented as the only entrance to the other subdivisions of the philosophy. Yet the explanation of the antithetic *Gegenstand*-relation

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>17</sup> *Philosophia Reformata*, 1960, pp. 136, 138.

<sup>18</sup> *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, I (1953), 30.

presupposes the truth of the cosmological doctrine that the logical aspect is one aspect among others in a temporal series of modal aspects of reality. Dooyeweerd may have recognized this phenomenon in his insertion of a preliminary discussion of cosmic time in the prolegomena of the *New Critique* prior to the development of the sharpened transcendental critique of theoretical thought.

A few words may be in order at this point as to the place of analogy in Dooyeweerd's thought. Analogy is a technical term for a moment or element in a modal aspect that points back to an earlier aspect in the series. Thus, logical space is an analogical moment in the logical aspect, by which reference is made to the original meaning of space. Analogy is not to be dismissed as metaphor, nor is it to be interpreted in terms of the metaphysical tradition and its doctrine of *analogia entis* (analogy of being). One could label Dooyeweerd's doctrine as that of *analogia temporis* (analogy of time). A full discussion may be found in Dooyeweerd's article on the doctrine of analogy in Thomistic philosophy and in the philosophy of the cosmonomic idea.<sup>19</sup> In the next section, some examples of analogy in theological concepts will be given.

#### THEOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE REFORMED PHILOSOPHY

Dooyeweerd is not a professional theologian, and he emphatically denies that he is engaged in theology in the construction of a Christian philosophy. His philosophical method and doctrines, however, have important consequences for theology, to which our attention must now be directed. In *The Twilight of Western Thought*, he states: "Theology is above all in need of a radical critique of theoretical thought which, because of its biblical starting-point, is able to show the intrinsic influence of the religious basic motives both upon philosophy and theology. This is the first service which the new Reformed philosophy can render its theological sister.<sup>20</sup> We may consider, then, the place assigned to theology in the system of the cosmonomic idea and the relationship between philosophy and theology in the new Reformed philosophy. Consideration of special theological issues will follow this general discussion.

#### *The Place of Theology in the System of the Sciences*

Theology is included among the special sciences (*vakwetenschap*). Each special science has as its *Gegenstand*, or field of inquiry, one of the abstracted modal aspects of temporal reality. The field of

<sup>19</sup> *Philosophia Reformata*, 1942, pp. 47-55; cf. also 1948, pp. 26-31, 49-58, and 1952, pp. 151-184.

<sup>20</sup> In *The Twilight of Western Thought* (1960), p. 156.



inquiry for theology is the aspect of faith, the boundary aspect of cosmic time. Revelation as such, even Word-revelation as such in its concreteness, is denied to be the theoretical object of theological thought. The central basic motive of Holy Scripture is non-theoretical in character. Of it Dooyeweerd asserts: "So long as this central meaning of the Word-revelation is at issue we are beyond the scientific problems both of theology and of philosophy. Its acceptance or rejection is a matter of life and death to us, and not a question of theoretical reflection. In this sense the central motive of Holy Scripture is the common supra-scientific starting point of a really biblical theology and of a really Christian philosophy. It is the key of knowledge of which Jesus spoke in His discussion with the scribes and lawyers. It is the religious presupposition of any theoretical thought which may rightly claim a biblical foundation. But, as such, it can never become the theoretical object of theology; no more than God and the human I can become such an object."<sup>21</sup>

It seems strange that the central biblical themes of creation, fall, and redemption should be denied to be the field of inquiry of systematic theology. What other subject matter is there for this venerable discipline? Dooyeweerd's answer is that the object of dogmatic theology is nothing but the Divine Word-revelation as it presents itself within the modal aspect of faith.<sup>22</sup> The Word of God in its full and actual reality is distinguished from its restricted sense as the object of theological thought. Dogmatic theology engages in theoretical reflection on creation, fall into sin, and redemption only so far as their revelation is related to the faith aspect of our temporal experience and forms the content of creedal formulas. The distinction made here is not perfectly clear. It is undoubtedly true that Christians need not be scholarly theologians to experience the work of saving grace in their hearts. But what sense does it make to say that "there must be a difference in principle between creation, fall, and redemption in their central sense as the key to knowledge, and in their sense as articles of faith, which may be made into the object of theological thought"?<sup>23</sup> Dooyeweerd states the sound principle that orthodox theology is no guarantee of central spiritual knowledge. From this he concludes, without indicating the missing premise of the enthymeme: "Therefore, the scholastic term *sacra theologia* testifies to an unbiblical over-estimation of theology."<sup>24</sup> Another consequence is in the direction of minimizing the importance of theological controversy and of providing an ecumen-

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

ical basis of the Church. The spiritual basic motive is depicted as the judge of every ecclesiastical doctrine and the central basic principle of a continual reformation of the Church's doctrine.

Theology as a special science has philosophical foundations, which are in turn dependent on the central religious motive of theoretical thought. The faith-aspect which delimits the theoretical object of theology displays an intrinsic coherence with all the other modal aspects. The faith-aspect presents a certain central moment of meaning as its irreducible kernel as well as a series of analogical moments the meaning of which is determined by the modal kernel of the faith-aspect. This analogical structure of the faith-aspect obliges theology to employ analogical concepts. "That is to say, these concepts are also used by the other special sciences, but in a different modal sense; nevertheless, there is an inner coherence between these different modal meanings. Such theological concepts of an analogical character are, for instance, those of time, number, space, movement, force and causality, life, emotion, distinction, power, symbol, signification and interpretation, justice, guilt, imputation and punishment, love, etc."<sup>25</sup> If by the isolation of the analogy of punitive justice, the latter is opposed to the love of God, the theological conception of justice passes over into a pseudo-judicial view and the truth of faith is falsified. An economic analogy occurs in the expression "redeeming the time." The symbolic analogy is evident in the fact that the interpretation of Scripture is not purely philosophical, or even merely historical, but is essentially pistical, that is, characterized by the faith-aspect, because in Scripture the Holy Spirit signifies symbolically the divine truth in faith.

Not only the first fourteen modal aspects, but time also is qualified by its relation to the faith-aspect. In the faith-aspect time exhibits a pistical meaning which is immediately related to the central religious meaning of the divine revelation. Sacred history can be understood only in the order and duration of the faith-aspect in which it has an eschatological perspective. The days of creation are also to be understood only in faith-time. By conceiving of them in the physical aspect of time, theology involved itself in the dilemma of conceiving them astronomically as 24-hour days or as geological periods. Application of this alternative to God's resting on the seventh day results in blasphemy. The Decalogue exegeses the days of creation as signifying God's will that the believing Jew should refer his six workdays to the six divine creative works and the Sabbath day to the eternal sabbatic rest of God the Creator. The exegetical dilemma, so branded by Dooyeweerd as Scholastic, originated from a fundamental disregard of the faith-aspect of the temporal order. Dooyeweerd dissociates him-

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

self also from the allegorical interpretation originating in Philo of Alexandria and accepted by Origen and Augustine, as well as from its revival in the framework hypothesis of N. H. Ridderbos. He denies that the temporal meaning of the creation account may be reduced to a merely literary mode of representation, although he finds this view far preferable to the astronomical or geological interpretation.

#### *Philosophy and Theology*

Dooyeweerd aims at a Christian philosophy of a non-theological character. He opposes this aim to the two principal types of classical Christian thought, the Augustinian and the Thomist. While Augustine rightly denied the autonomy of human reason, he refused to accept pagan philosophy as an autonomous science, he identified Christian theology with true Christian philosophy. By thus allowing a discussion of philosophical questions only within a theological context, he opened the way for a penetration of Christian theology by Greek philosophical ideas. On this view theology is understood both in the non-theoretical sense of the true knowledge of God and ourselves (*Deum et animam scire*) and as the "theoretical explanation of the articles of faith in their scientific confrontation with the texts of Holy Writ and with heretical views."<sup>26</sup> Dooyeweerd ascribes the whole conception of theology as the queen of the sciences and philosophy as its handmaid to a Greek origin, interpreting a passage of Aristotle's *Metaphysics B* as meaning that the metaphysical doctrine of God has the control and guidance over all other sciences, which, as its slaves, may not contradict its truths. This identification of dogmatic theology with Christian philosophy on the one hand and with the holy doctrine of the Church on the other remained characteristic of the Augustinian tradition in Scholasticism.

A new view was introduced in the *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas. The same fundamental ambiguity remains in the use of the terms "theology" and "*sacra doctrina*." But, in opposition to Augustinianism, Thomism sharply distinguishes dogmatic theology (*sacra doctrina*) from philosophy, even from philosophical or natural theology which depends on the light of reason alone. Dooyeweerd describes the Thomistic philosophy as "the Aristotelian system at some points elaborated in an original way and mixed with Augustinian, Neo-Platonic, and Stoic ideas."<sup>27</sup> Christian theology, on the other hand, has a supernatural character, deriving its knowledge from divine revelation, and not needing the aid of philosophy, although, according to the Encycli-

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

#### *Herman Dooyeweerd*

cal *Aeterni Patris* of Pope Leo XIII, requiring philosophy to give it the character and spirit of a science.

Dooyeweerd accepts the Augustinian denial of the autonomy of human reason and the Thomist insistence on the distinction between philosophy and theology, thus proposing the idea of a Christian philosophy distinct from theology. His solution of the historic problem of the relationship between philosophy and theology proceeds from the principle that true knowledge of God and self-knowledge are fundamentally non-theoretical, derived from the operation of God's Word and Spirit in the heart. Thus the central principle of knowledge is the same for dogmatic theology and for Christian philosophy.

#### *Special Theological Consequences*

If theology requires a philosophical foundation and that not in a merely formal sense of the instrumental use of logic in theology, the question arises: what changes will be required of classical Reformed theology if it is subjected to the transcendental critique proposed by Dooyeweerd? Although Dooyeweerd disclaims theology as his field of work, he has from time to time indicated certain theological consequences of his philosophical principles. Aside from *obiter dicta* on creation, predestination, Christology, and other topics of theological importance, four major lines of modification of historic Christian theology as required by the new Reformed philosophy may be mentioned: (a) the repudiation of natural theology; (b) the reinterpretation of the doctrine of common grace; (c) the reformulation of the conception of the human soul; and (d) the implications of the rejection of the metaphysical concept of substance. Some questions may also be raised concerning Dooyeweerd's view of Holy Scripture.

#### *The Repudiation of Natural Theology*

The attack upon the nature-grace motive applies to classical "Reformed" scholasticism as well as to Roman Catholic theology. An immediate consequence of this polemic is the repudiation of natural theology in general and of the proofs of the existence of God in particular. Since metaphysics as a rational science with a subject matter transcending time is eliminated by the transcendental critique, natural theology as a branch of metaphysics is rendered impossible. The five ways developed by Aquinas for the demonstration of the existence of God are rejected as tacitly presupposing an idea of the Origin instead of providing a genuine proof. The entire enterprise of natural theology is condemned as resting upon the assumption of the autonomy of human reason in the natural sphere. The two-level theory of nature as the preamble of grace by which it is perfected is thus rejected, as

is also the parallel construction of the doctrine of common grace to be mentioned in the next section.

Dooyeweerd does not deny the plain teaching of Romans 1 that there is a revelation of God in nature, sufficient to render the heathen without excuse. In his reply to Van Peursen, he even refers to it as "general Word-revelation," but explains it, not as meaning that God's voice resounds in apostate religion, but rather that the truth of the general Word-revelation is in these religions held down in unrighteousness and perverted. In general revelation Dooyeweerd finds no grounds for a natural religion or a natural theology. In this matter he is in agreement with many contemporary theologians, but not with the overwhelming majority of Reformed divines from the seventeenth up to the early twentieth century.

#### *The Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of Common Grace*

Closely related to the question of natural knowledge of God is that of common grace, a divine restraining of the operations and effects of sin that comes short of regeneration. This doctrine, intimated by Calvin and discussed by the Puritans in relation to the experience of conversion, was reinterpreted by Dr. Abraham Kuyper as a cultural concept by which, in relative independence of the work of saving grace, the commendable elements of secular culture received a relative justification. Dooyeweerd adopts the Kuyperian view of common grace in its essential character as an explanation of the conservation of the fallen cosmos, but seeks to guard against the interpretation that common grace provides an autonomous territory for human thought and action.

In his reply to Van Peursen,<sup>28</sup> Dooyeweerd denies that his statements about common grace amount to a theological conception. He professes to have spoken only "from the central biblical basic motive and so far as philosophical investigation was concerned in it." "I was thereby compelled," he writes, "to choose a position against a dualistic conception which seeks to avoid the radical and integral grasp of the central motive of the divine Word-revelation by conceiving the relation between special and common grace in the sense of the scholastic basic motive of nature and grace." This choice of a position, he insists, is of a central religious character and may not be called a "theological conception." The assertion that common grace is to be understood only in terms of the divine grace in Christ Jesus is nothing but the central witness of Scripture that only in Christ Jesus can God look on fallen mankind in grace.

<sup>28</sup> *Philosophia Reformata*, 1960, pp. 147f.

#### *The Reformulation of the Conception of the Human Soul*

The crux of Dooyeweerd's attack on Scholasticism is to be found in his critique of the commonly accepted distinction of body and soul, and especially of the creationist view of the origin of the soul.<sup>29</sup> Dooyeweerd sets his view of the heart of man as the religious root of human nature in sharp opposition to the doctrine of the rational soul formulated in the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle and baptized by Augustine and Aquinas, defended by Voetius against Cartesian innovations, and incorporated in the terminology of the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms.

There are several converging sources for Dooyeweerd's view of the heart and for his rejection of the classical doctrine of the soul. For his positive doctrine he appeals both to the central biblical motive and to special texts, such as Eccles. 3:11, which he exegetes as meaning that in the heart man transcends time. The doctrine appears to have been developed in confrontation with the views of Kant and Husserl on the transcendental ego. Against the classical realist doctrine, whether Platonic or Aristotelian, he argues that the view of the soul as a substance distinct from the body is the result of the hypostatization of the logical and ethical functions or modal aspects, which is the consequence of erroneously supposing that there is something in the structure of reality answering to the *Gegenstand*-relation. Against traditional dichotomy the argument is also repeatedly insisted on that this view originated from the form-matter motive and is an integral part of the nature-grace motive. A special argument against creationism is that it leads to an antinomy in theology, in that it cannot explain the transmission of Original Sin without making God the author of sin or resorting to untenable dodges. An underlying necessity for the rejection of dichotomy is the rejection of the metaphysical concept of substance.

#### *The Implications of the Rejection of the Metaphysical Concept of Substance.*

Reinterpretation of the idea of the human selfhood is by no means the only or potentially the most serious consequence of the rejection by Dooyeweerd of the metaphysical concept of substance. The concept enters not only into classical theological formulation as to the nature of man, but also into the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity and the person of Christ. Dooyeweerd has not drawn any explicit consequen-

<sup>29</sup> Brevity in the present account of so cardinal a topic may be justified by reference to fuller discussions in my book *Towards a Reformed Philosophy* (1952), pp. 107-112, 141-144, and my article "The Doctrine of Man in the Amsterdam Philosophy" (see bibliography).

ces in this area, although Vollenhoven published an article on the question of the impersonal (ἀνπροσωπικὸς) human nature of Christ<sup>30</sup> which gave rise to controversy.<sup>31</sup> Consequences of a drastic nature would appear to follow from the rejection of the concept of substance incorporated not only in the Westminster standards but in the Nicene and Chalcedonian Creeds. The controversy as to whether the Son is of the same substance as the Father would appear to be meaningless, if the concept of substance is unacceptable for Christian thought. The same would apply to discussions concerning the divine and human natures of Christ, for "nature" is in this context synonymous with "substance." Dooyeweerd would no doubt emphatically deny any intention to overthrow the foundations of historic Christian dogma and such an intention is not to be suggested as any part of his motivation. But the question of the consequences of his denial of substance cannot be avoided in even a brief survey of his importance for theology. It would seem that the anti-metaphysical doctrine — one is tempted to say "metaphysics" — of the new philosophy requires at the least a radical reformulation, if not reformation, of the trinitarian and christological dogma accepted by all branches of historic Christianity.

Some misgivings have been expressed by conservative American theologians as to Dooyeweerd's attitude toward biblical authority and the doctrine of inspiration. Dooyeweerd's publications provide insufficient evidence for a judgment as to his view of the inspiration of Scripture. He does speak of the "infallibility of God's Word"<sup>32</sup> and elsewhere contrasts the Word of God with the confession of the Church into which errors may enter. Yet it is not to be inferred that Dooyeweerd identifies the Word of God with the language of the Bible. His extremely vague way of speaking about the divine Word-revelation is calculated to raise doubts as to his acceptance of the doctrine of plenary and verbal inspiration as formulated by the scholastic Reformed divines of the seventeenth century. Even if this suspicion should prove to be well founded, it would not warrant the charge that Dooyeweerd denies that the Scriptures are inspired of God. On p. 144 of *In the Twilight of Western Thought*, Dooyeweerd approaches an explicit statement of his view of biblical inspiration. He uses the expression "incarnation of the Word-revelation in the Holy Scriptures" and speaks of the Scriptures as "a collection of books written by different men in the course of ages, be it through divine inspiration, yet related to all the modal aspects of our temporal horizon

<sup>30</sup> *Philosophia Reformata*, 1940, pp. 65-79.

<sup>31</sup> See V. Hepp, *Dreigende Deformatie*, III, and H. Steen, *Philosophia Reformata*, chapter 16.

<sup>32</sup> *In the Twilight of Western Thought* (1960), p. 115.

of experience." He then adds: "It is, however, only under the modal aspect of faith that we can experience that this Word-revelation in the Scriptures has been inspired by the Holy Spirit." Dooyeweerd has avoided any detailed pronouncements as to the nature and extent of the inspiration of Scripture, a subject he would no doubt assign to the province of dogmatic theology. His interest, as we have seen, lies in the basic religious motive of Holy Scripture in its relevance to the foundations of theoretical thought.

### III. EVALUATION

The importance of Dooyeweerd's contribution to Christian thought can scarcely be overestimated. He has forged a powerful weapon in his transcendental critique of theoretical thought, by which the strongholds of unbelief may be assailed at their very foundations. He has given a penetrating detailed analysis of the development of Western philosophy in which the methods of the *New Critique* demonstrate their fruitfulness. He has provided a *de facto* refutation of the allegation that there has never been a Christian philosophy by producing a full-scale specimen. The massiveness of the systematic construction is matched by the relentless insistence that every thought must be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. One should not on this account conclude that Dooyeweerd regards himself as having attained perfection in the realm of Christian philosophy. He is aware of the working of sin even in thought that is oriented to the religious motive of Holy Scripture. His reply to Van Peursen's criticisms concludes with an admission of awareness that the radical transcendental critique of philosophical thought, necessary as it is, is in the full sense of the word a risky undertaking, subject to human fallibility in the attempt to probe a philosophical line of thought to its central driving force. The following critical discussion, therefore, is not calculated to weaken the distinctive Christian witness of the new Reformed philosophy, but rather to indicate a lack of clarity in that witness in certain of its teachings and the necessity of maintaining the continuity of historic Christian teaching, especially in the form of the classical Reformed confessions.

### PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS

#### *The Transcendental Critique of Theoretical Thought*

The transcendental critique is not only the gate by which access is gained to the remaining divisions of the new philosophy. It may justly lay claim to the position of the most valuable contribution made by Dooyeweerd to philosophical thought as such as well as to the Christian

cause. Although Dooyeweerd does not speak of apologetics in connection with his thought and would no doubt repudiate most of what is usually counted as belonging to this discipline, it remains true that the transcendental critique is an extremely powerful weapon for the defence of the Christian faith. To the charge that Christians are irrational and prejudiced in giving faith to an alleged revelation, it replies in a way that puts the infidel critic on the defensive. The autonomy of human reason has been assumed in a dogmatic manner and the hidden religious motives of non-Christian thinkers are unmasked. New lines for the development of apologetic argument are thus indicated by the transcendental critique.

The transcendental critique is not only an apologetic weapon but also a contribution to philosophy. In fact, its value as a weapon is entirely dependent on its validity as an argument. Its contribution consists in raising certain penetrating questions and in proposing provocative answers to them. The question of the distinguishing character of theoretical thought is one that strikes at the very heart of vital philosophical issues. In the stress on the fundamental role of self-knowledge in its inseparable association with knowledge of God, the reverberation of the opening words of Calvin's *Institutio* is heard in generalized tones resounding to the furthest precincts of science.

Yet the transcendental critique as proposed and formulated by Dooyeweerd should be considered as a program to be undertaken rather than as an achievement to be accepted in its finality. There are unclear formulations, gaps in the reasoning, and at least the appearance of vicious circularity in the procedure. These defects in the logic of the transcendental critique concern, first of all, the obscure notion of the antithetic *Gegenstand*-relation, secondly, the steps of argument by which the conditions of the possibility of theoretical thought are demonstrated, and, finally, the notion of a basic religious motive and the way it functions in the foundations of theoretical thought.

#### *The Obscurity of the Gegenstand-relation*

An initial difficulty concerns the choice of the German word *Gegenstand* to refer to a theoretical object. The word is, as Van Peursen has remarked, "loaded" with connotations derived from neo-Kantianism, although Dooyeweerd is insistent and emphatic in his disavowal of association with Kantian or neo-Kantian doctrines. Dooyeweerd undoubtedly denies the neo-Kantian view of a relation between the transcendental logical subject of thought and "objective reality." But the language in which he expresses this denial uses terms such as *Gegenstand*, which are practically unintelligible apart from reference to

their use in German philosophy. Can such language be used to refute a doctrine that is formulated in it, without the risk of accepting, no doubt unconsciously, some of the assumptions made by the doctrine in question?

Aside from initial difficulties, which may last over a period of several years, in the effort to understand just what Dooyeweerd means by a *Gegenstand* and the antithetic relation which holds between the *Gegenstand* and the logical aspect of thought, a central ambiguity remains relating to the perennial antithesis of nominalism and realism. Does Dooyeweerd view the theoretical object as a human construction or as an integral factor in the real world? Some statements suggest the first, while others seem to point to the latter answer. On the one hand, Dooyeweerd speaks of the purely intentional, that is, mental character of the antithetic structure of theoretical thought and denies the existence of anything in reality that corresponds to the *Gegenstand*-relation. This denial of any correspondence between the *Gegenstand*-relation and a state of affairs in the real world provides a ground for the rejection of the classical doctrines of the soul as a substance distinct from the material body. On the other hand, Dooyeweerd speaks of the *Gegenstand* as an abstracted modal aspect and categorically denies that the modal aspects are produced by abstraction. His fundamental conception of the cosmic order of law likewise militates strongly against the nominalistic interpretation of the *Gegenstand*-relation.

The obscurity in question could be pointed up in the form of an inconsistent triad of propositions, apparently asserted in the transcendental critique. These propositions are easily shown to imply a formal contradiction.

1. No modal aspect is the product of theoretical abstraction.
2. Every *Gegenstand* is a product of theoretical abstraction.
3. Some modal aspect is a *Gegenstand*.

If the first proposition is rejected, nominalism is accepted. If the second is rejected, realism, including the metaphysics of substance, cannot be rejected. The third proposition appears to be an obvious consequence of the statement that the *Gegenstand* of theoretical thought is an abstracted modal aspect. Unless some misunderstanding of the basis of the transcendental critique is involved, the doctrine of the *Gegenstand*-relation must be rejected as self-contradictory. The difficulty of the supposition that as acute a philosopher as Dooyeweerd has based his system on a self-contradiction of so simple a character leads to the conclusion that some clarification of the notion of the *Gegenstand*-relation is imperative. If the notion is not self-

contradictory, at least it is extremely unclear and can hardly bear the weight of the far-reaching consequences for logic, metaphysics, anthropology, and theology that Dooyeweerd derives from it. This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that difficulties in the notion of the *Gegenstand*-relation have been pointed out not only by Prof. Van Peursen, but also by Prof. Van Riessen, himself a fellow worker in the Reformed philosophy, and by F. Kuiper in the 1962 issue of *Philosophia Reformata*.

#### Gaps in the Transcendental Critique

Only a few hints can be given in this article as to lacunae in the transcendental arguments relating to the order of cosmic time, the supra-temporal concentration point in the selfhood of man, and the ultimate Origin in terms of which the religious concentration in the selfhood must be understood. If the antithetic *Gegenstand*-relation is found unacceptable, the problem of theoretical synthesis may be dismissed as a pseudo-problem. At least the notion of synthesis no less than that of antithesis requires clarification. How does Dooyeweerd's doctrine of synthesis differ from the Kantian critique? The gaping abyss in the argument, however, concerns the step to the selfhood, the transcendental heart of man as the starting point that is required for theoretical synthesis to be possible. Dooyeweerd's observations about the "isms" in philosophy arising from the attempt to find the Archimedean point of theoretical thought in a modal aspect and his cogent critique of the Kantian and phenomenological theories of the transcendental ego do not necessitate the truth of his own doctrine as to the human self, even in a formal sense without the specific Christian content of the doctrine in the Reformed philosophy. Finally, if proofs of the existence of God are disqualified, the introduction of references to the Origin of meaning must be a pure assumption or act of faith, and not the conclusion of a transcendental deduction. Perhaps the method adopted by Dooyeweerd in the *Critique* is hypothetical rather than purely deductive. As a strictly deductive argument, it involves a series of fallacies, namely, affirmations of the consequent. If, however, all that is said is: "Suppose the order of cosmic time, suppose a transcendent selfhood directed to the Origin of meaning; then theoretical thought can be understood in terms of the *Gegenstand*-relation, of theoretical synthesis of the logical and non-logical aspects, and of a basic religious motive," then the brilliance of this hypothesis must be admired, but its acceptance or modification must rest on further considerations to be brought to light by its consequences.

#### Circularity of the Critique and the Notion of a Religious Motive

In two respects a charge of circularity may be brought against the *New Critique*. First, its formulation requires reference to cosmological and anthropological as well as epistemological doctrines developed in later sections of the philosophy which are represented as dependent on the transcendental critique. The theory of cosmic time, a doctrine of the relation of the logical to non-logical aspects, the distinction between the heart of man and the bodily functions are required by the critique and at the same time justified by it. Possibly a careful reformulation of the philosophy of the cosmomic idea would eliminate this formal circularity that mars its method. Such a restatement would certainly provide a clarity which is greatly to be desired.

A more basic issue as to circularity enters the critique with the introduction of the notion of a religious motive. The transcendental critique is presented for acceptance by all philosophers who are willing to examine the foundations on which theoretical thought rests. Yet the failure to develop a transcendental critique or to accept it when it has been developed is ascribed to the influence of the dogma of the autonomy of theoretical thought. This dogma is seen to be an expression of an apostate religious motive. Must one then accept the biblical motive in order to be capable of accepting the transcendental critique which issues in the exhibition of the religious motives that dominate theoretical thought? Dooyeweerd's explicit answer<sup>33</sup> is that "what is stringently proved . . . is the thesis, that the concentric direction of thought in its self-reflection cannot originate from the theoretical attitude of thought itself, and that it can issue only from the ego as a supra-theoretic individual centre of human existence." The transcendental critique up to this point remains strictly within the theoretical sphere and lays bare structural states of affairs which no critical thinker can ignore. Yet this does not mean that the transcendental critique is unprejudiced. If it were, this fact would refute its own conclusions. Dooyeweerd breaks through the vicious circle by three considerations: (1) the supra-theoretical presuppositions of the critique free theoretical thought from dogmatic "axioms"; (2) the contents of the supra-theoretical presuppositions, not the very necessity of them, can be questionable; and (3) the supra-theoretical character of the starting-point of theoretical thought is demonstrable, but its central religious character cannot be proved theoretically, because this insight belongs to self-knowledge which transcends the theoretical attitude.

Even if the transcendental critique has been vindicated from the

<sup>33</sup> In *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, I (1953), 56.

charge of circularity, problems remain as to the nature of a basic religious motive and its influence on theoretical thought. Possibly "motif" would be preferable to "motive," but "ground-motive" was used as a translation of "grondmotief" in the *New Critique* and Dooyeweerd himself has used "basic motive" in his *In the Twilight of Western Thought*. A basic religious motive is described, if not defined, as "the central spiritual motive power of our thinking and acting" and is asserted to be "operative in the ego as the center of our temporal horizon of experience." As a communal motive it lies at the foundation of a community of thought. The last statement indicates that a religious motive is not simply an individual psychological factor, not even one deeply rooted in the unconscious levels of the psyche. The notion of a communal motive, transcending but expressed in the motivation of individual minds, is not free from obscurity. An attempt might be made to elucidate it as a disposition widespread in a certain community or culture to think in terms of a certain framework of categories and concepts. An element of mysticism cleaving to Dooyeweerd's way of speaking about religious motives is eliminated by this dispositional formulation. One can no longer speak of a mysterious influence exerted by such a motive, but simply of a pervasive tendency in the philosophical systems of certain groups of thinkers. Understood in these reduced proportions, the basic religious motives in the history of Western thought prove to be illuminating, though subject to criticism in terms of their accuracy and adequacy in providing a unified view of masses of intellectual cultural phenomena.

One general criticism can be suggested: is it possible to do justice to such enormous masses of material as are exhibited in ancient medieval, and modern philosophy by applying such simple formulations as the form-matter, nature-grace, and nature-freedom motives? And is it possible to do justice to the full content of Christianity by reference to Creation, Fall, and Redemption? Why not refer to the "self-contained ontological Trinity" as Dr. Cornelius Van Til does, or as a Calvinistic thinker to "the whole counsel of God" with accentuation on eternal predestination and divine providence? How is the motive to be extracted from the full system in which it expresses itself? Dooyeweerd argues frequently from the basic motives to particular philosophical and, in spite of his protestations, even theological consequences. Are such inferences conclusive, or do they merely present an appearance of argument to support positions held on other grounds? To condemn a philosophical thesis by alleging it to be an expression of an apostate religious motive is hardly an adequate procedure of immanent criticism, nor is an appeal to the basic motive of Scripture

a convincing method of establishing what looks like a theological view, say, on the topic of common grace. Dooyeweerd's difficult distinction between the non-theoretical motive of Holy Scripture and the theoretical object of scientific theology has been set forth in the exposition above.

Dooyeweerd himself has avoided superficiality in the application of his thesis as to the dualistic motives by insisting on the "royal road of immanent criticism" and by pursuing this road with great care in his elaborate discussions of ancient and modern philosophies in both of his trilogies.

*Metaphysical Foundations: Meaning, Law, Time, Modal Aspects, Analogy*

A critique of the metaphysical constructions of the new philosophy is impossible within the limits of the present paper. A few brief observations will have to suffice.

1. The word "meaning" is used in a peculiar sense by Dooyeweerd to formulate a metaphysical doctrine as to the nature of reality.
2. The doctrine of law as the boundary between God and the cosmos is intended to cut off metaphysical speculation about that which transcends time. This suggests the question, how there can be states of affairs independent of human subjectivity, if absolute truths transcending time are denied.
3. The theory of cosmic time is a large-scale metaphysical construction worthy of detailed analysis. Here the only question to be raised is that of the justification of the claim that logic is temporal. Is this a consequence or is it a presupposition of the *Gegenstand*-relation? Whichever it is, it appears to be a critical dogma that stands or falls with that of the *Gegenstand*-relation.
4. Is the theory of the modal aspects a faithful account of states of affairs in reality? Or is it a speculative construction that misconstrues reality by confusion of types of categories? Do history and language belong to the same type of category? Does either of these fall under a common proximate genus with number or space? Man speaks, but there is no verb usable in a parallel way with "speaks" for man's functioning in spheres of number, space, or history. Such simple linguistic observations suggest that the notion of a "modal aspect" or "temporal function" conceals a set of category mistakes. If so, much of the theory of the law-spheres collapses, and with it the doctrine of analogy based on this theory.

#### THEOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

An evaluation of Dooyeweerd's views about theology in its relation to philosophy ought not to forget that these views were forged in