

Ronald H. Nash: *Dooyeweerd and the Amsterdam Philosophy*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House. 1962. 109. \$2.50.

In this book Mr. Nash has succeeded in presenting a clear, concise introduction to Dooyeweerd's thought. Whether such an introduction is of great value, especially in the light of Spier's book, *An Introduction to Christian Philosophy*, is the important question. In the first chapter of his book Nash states that he has two purposes in writing. "Several books have already been published in English which serve as introductions to Dooyeweerd's thought. However, he is still largely unheard of in non-Calvinistic circles. It is my hope that this work may introduce him to many new readers as well as interest them in going to Dooyeweerd's own explanations of his philosophy. But perhaps the primary purpose of this writing is the service it may render as a 'bridge' between the already published expositions of Dooyeweerd's thought and what this writer hopes will be more definitive explanations" (p. 19).

In respect to the first purpose, there does not appear to be any obvious reason why this work should reach non-Calvinistic circles any more than Spier's book, except, perhaps, for a more attractive title.

As the writer himself seems to intimate, the primary purpose of the book lies in its being a "bridge" between the already published expositions of Dooyeweerd's thought and what he hopes will be more definitive explanations.

As an introduction to the subject, the work treats in summary form the more basic themes of Dooyeweerd's *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*. This can be seen from some of the chapter headings: "The Relationship Between God and the Law Spheres" (ch. 3), "The Relationship Between the Various Law Spheres" (ch. 4),

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"The Relationship Between Law Spheres and Individual Things" (ch. 5), "The Archimedean Point of Philosophy" (ch. 6), "The Dogma of the Autonomy of Theoretical Thought" (ch. 7), "The 'Heart'" (ch. 8).

The author's basic criticism of Dooyeweerd is that Dooyeweerd's presentation of his system is only in its early stages of development and lacks precision and clarity, especially in respect to formulation. According to Nash, there are "some weaknesses, ambiguities and inconsistencies" in Dooyeweerd's formulations (p. 20). Nash, in presenting these basic themes of Dooyeweerd's thought, constantly seeks to bring out Dooyeweerd's real intentions by trying to state in different terms what he feels Dooyeweerd is seeking to say. The book's greatest value lies in Nash's often successful linguistic analysis. It may be described as a summary of some of Dooyeweerd's basic themes strung together by scattered terminological clarifications.

Nash also suggests certain areas which he thinks should be subjected to more critical investigation. A few of these deserve mention; for example, in discussing the “basis of individuality” Nash suggests that Dooyeweerd has not overcome the Kantian notion of the *Ding an sich*. He also points out the need for an explanation respecting a criterion for distinguishing between modal analogies and anticipations. These are interesting suggestions.

The balance of the criticisms of Dooyeweerd are often given in the form of quotations from articles of William Young and David Freeman. Nash has not dealt thoroughly with the problems involved in Dooyeweerd’s idea of the supra-temporality of religion, the notion of a totality of created meaning and the notion of supra-temporal unity above diversity, which are certainly most problematic in Dooyeweerd’s system. He has not dealt with Dooyeweerd’s critique of the natural and supra-natural, which has been thought dangerous by many Reformed conservative theologians. Although Nash treats at some length Dooyeweerd’s denial of the substantial character of the soul, he fails to place it in the perspective of Dooyeweerd’s denial of the distinction between the natural and supranatural.

This reviewer finds the most serious shortcoming of this book in the fact that Dooyeweerd’s thought is misrepresented at a very important point. Nash fails to distinguish between concept and idea in Dooyeweerd’s thought. Nash speaks about a “concept of God” (p. 44). According to Dooyeweerd a “concept of God” is impossible. Philosophy can only have an idea or limiting concept of the origin of the cosmos. The same distinction applies to the modal aspects in the transcendental direction of

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time. Nash quotes Freeman, ““A concept of the totality of all meaning cannot be obtained without critical self-reflection”“ (p. 92). His agreement with Freeman shows that they both have misunderstood this distinction on this point. Dooyeweerd consistently speaks of the necessity of approaching the totality of meaning through the use of the transcendental idea or limiting concept. His whole epistemology rests on this distinction. The notion of the central ground idea, made up of the triad of ideas, namely origin, unity, and coherence in diversity, is looked at as hypothesis, while concepts are strictly limited to the modal aspects in the foundational direction of time. The idea leads the concept and the concept founds the idea, and all are thus under the direction of the central ground idea.

Nash has not thoroughly entered into Dooyeweerd’s epistemology. Dooyeweerd’s discussion of analogical concepts would have been a good subject for his linguistic analysis. Nash’s failure to deal with epistemology in detail has left untouched the critical area of cosmological intuition. As a summary of Dooyeweerd’s system and its basic themes it is lacking in breadth. I believe that Nash has failed to fulfill his stated purpose in this book.

However, this book can be recommended in spite of its inadequacies as another helpful introduction to Dooyeweerd. On the whole it is concise and true to Dooyeweerd’s thought. Its main value is its occasional clarification of

terms and the fact that it is a more critical introduction to Dooyeweerd's thought than Spier's book.

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<sup>1</sup>Westminster Theological Seminary. 1963; 2002. *Westminster Theological Journal Volume 25* . Westminster Theological Seminary