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# THE GREAT TURNING POINT: RELIGION AND RATIONALITY IN DOOYEWEERD'S TRANSCENDENTAL CRITIQUE

Lambert Zuidervaart

Hugo Meynell objects to the apparent fideism and anti-foundationalism of Herman Dooyeweerd's philosophy. In response, my essay explicates the historical setting and logical structure to Dooyeweerd's "transcendental critique of theoretical thought." His transcendental critique seeks to uncover the "religious root" of philosophy and of other academic disciplines. Given Dooyeweerd's notion of religion and his account of theoretical thought, I show that Meynell's criticisms are misplaced. Yet they point toward fundamental problems in Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique. Some problems pertain to the logic of Dooyeweerd's argument, and others to his notion of religion. I explain these problems and indicate how they should be addressed.

*The great turning point in my thought was ... the discovery of the religious root of thought itself. This shed a new light on the [continual] failure of all attempts, including my own, to bring about an inner synthesis between the Christian faith and a philosophy rooted in faith in the self-sufficiency of human reason.*

—Herman Dooyeweerd<sup>1</sup>

Faith and philosophy, two central themes for the Society of Christian Philosophers, drove the life work of Herman Dooyeweerd. Writing from Amsterdam in 1935, Dooyeweerd announces that his massive reconceptualization of Western philosophy has not come without intense spiritual struggle. "Originally," he says, "I was strongly under the influence first of the Neo-Kantian philosophy, later on of Husserl's phenomenology" (NC 1:v, WW 1:v).<sup>2</sup> Then a great intellectual conversion occurred. The passage surrounding the epigraph above suggests that both continuity and discontinuity characterize the turn Dooyeweerd's thought took. On the one hand, Dooyeweerd continues the search for transcendental conditions that make thought itself possible. He claims to have radicalized this search in a way that neither Kant nor Husserl could have allowed. Yet the search itself is a fundamentally Kantian enterprise. On the other hand, Dooyeweerd breaks with the commitment to rational autonomy that sustains transcendental philosophy from Kant through Husserl. He has discovered, he says, that thought itself has a "religious root," that human reason lacks "self-sufficiency," and that philosophical claims to the contrary sprout from a type of "faith" to which Christian faith cannot be successfully grafted. The source of his



discovery is a new appreciation of “the central significance of the ‘heart,’ repeatedly proclaimed by Holy Scripture to be the religious root of human existence” (NC 1:v, WW 1:v-vi).

Many of the issues raised by Dooyeweerd’s critics go back to his innovative and complex articulations of this discovery. Early on the most vocal critics were Dutch theologians who perceived a threat to traditional Calvinism. They faulted Dooyeweerd and his close colleague D. H. Th. Vollenhoven for employing either insufficient or unorthodox theology in their philosophy. They especially objected to a philosophical anthropology whose emphasis on the heart radically recast the distinction between body and soul.<sup>3</sup> When Dooyeweerd’s writings began to circulate in the English-speaking world,<sup>4</sup> the dynamics of these criticisms, although not the precise details, recurred among fundamentalist Presbyterians<sup>5</sup> and intellectualist Kuyperians<sup>6</sup> at American colleges and seminaries.

Catholic scholars in Europe also raised penetrating questions. The first of these was H. Robbers S.J., a Thomist professor of philosophy at the Catholic University of Nijmegen who reviewed all three volumes of *De wijsbegeerte der wetsidee*.<sup>7</sup> Dooyeweerd responded in detail, and an extended discussion ensued over thirty years. The relations between nature and grace, between reason and revelation, and between Creator and creature were the central topics in their debates. In the 1950s M.F.J. Marlet S.J., a younger Thomist philosopher, began his own dialogue, with a dissertation published in German for which Dooyeweerd wrote an enthusiastic foreword.<sup>8</sup> Marlet demonstrates much greater affinity with Dooyeweerd’s thought than does Robbers, and he tries to rescue Thomas Aquinas from Dooyeweerd’s criticisms by giving Aquinas a more personalist interpretation. While seeking to accommodate Dooyeweerd’s emphasis on the religious roots of philosophy and the fundamental dependence of creation on God, Marlet retains the classic Thomist formulation of nature and grace and the notion of “being” as encompassing both Creator and creature. In response, Dooyeweerd questions the accuracy of Marlet’s reading of Aquinas. Dooyeweerd also rejects any metaphysical concept of being that includes both God and creatures, as well as any Aristotelian concept of substance that disguises creatures’ dependence on God.<sup>9</sup>

The most thorough discussions of Dooyeweerd’s “discovery,” and its implications for philosophy and culture, have come from other reformational philosophers.<sup>10</sup> These range from debates between Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven concerning the nature of the human heart to criticisms from Dooyeweerd’s younger colleagues and students directed at his accounts of transcendental criticism, “theoretical thought,” and the relation between faith and religion.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the first dissertations written in English about Dooyeweerd regard faith-oriented transcendental critique as both the generative core to his project and a crucial source of unresolved problems.<sup>12</sup>

It is not surprising, then, that similar themes surface in Hugo Meynell’s “transcendental Thomist appraisal” of Dooyeweerd’s philosophy. Because so much has already been written on these themes, however, and because many readers of this journal are unfamiliar with Dooyeweerd’s own writings, it is not obvious how a reformational philosopher should respond to Meynell’s appraisal. Also, in answering a wide range of different critics,

Dooyeweerd significantly changed his approach to transcendental critique. So one has ample potential for communicative disaster. Perhaps I should begin with the contours and changes to Dooyeweerd's own conception. Then I shall defend Dooyeweerd from several of Professor Meynell's criticisms. Since his criticisms also call attention to problems in Dooyeweerd's conception, however, I shall conclude by identifying these problems and indicating how they should be addressed.

### 1. Two Conceptions

Most Dooyeweerd scholars agree that he had more than one conception of what he calls "the transcendental critique of theoretical thought." They disagree about the number, content, and significance of those conceptions. They also face a peculiar complication: Dooyeweerd's *New Critique* adds significant new material to the already lengthy "Prolegomena" that began the first volume of *De wijsbegeerte der wetsidee*. Moreover, the English version recasts the material in the Dutch original, and neither clearly distinguishes nor smoothly joins the new material and the old. A first-time reader lacking access to the Dutch original or to the relevant secondary literature would not easily detect that Dooyeweerd had changed his mind about the scope and motivation of his own project.<sup>13</sup> Exacerbating the problem is the fact that the two popularized versions of Dooyeweerd philosophy in English draw on different phases in his project. Whereas J. M. Spier's *Introduction*, which Meynell cites, stems from a book published in 1938 and based on *De wijsbegeerte der wetsidee* (1935-36)<sup>14</sup>, L. Kalsbeek's *Contours*, which Meynell does not cite, derives from a book published in 1970 and based on *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* (1953-58) and other of Dooyeweerd's later writings.<sup>15</sup>

John Kraay suggests that Dooyeweerd had three different conceptions of the relation between faith and philosophy, and *New Critique* contains two of them.<sup>16</sup> The first of the three, dating from around 1926, gives primacy to the "life-and-world view" of the philosopher's religious community. On this conception the idea of God's universal law is both the core and the "organon" of a Calvinist worldview, to which Dooyeweerd's own philosophy will give expression. The second conception, most prominent in WW and other writings from the 1930s, gives primacy to the transcendent "Archimedean point" that every philosopher must find. The Archimedean point is the "fixed point" that enables a philosopher to form "the idea of the totality of meaning [*zin-totaliteit*]" (NC 1:8, WW 1:10). On this point depends every philosophy's "law-idea" or "cosmomic idea" (*wetsidee*), which is always a "transcendental ground-idea" (*wijsgeerige grondidee*). The Archimedean point chosen by Dooyeweerd's own philosophy resides in "the root, reborn in Christ, of the human race, in which we participate via [the religious, time-transcending root of our individual personality,] our reborn selfhood" (NC 1:99, WW 1:64).<sup>17</sup> Dooyeweerd worked out his third conception in the 1940s. He consolidated it, interestingly enough, in *Transcendental Problems of Philosophic Thought* (1948), his first book in English. Here primacy goes to "ground-motives" as the dynamic spiritual forces that drive not only philosophy but culture as a whole. "Worldview" and

“Archimedean point” no longer play a central role in Dooyeweerd’s mature conception of the relation between faith and philosophy. He argues instead that every philosophy must employ three “transcendental ideas”—ideas about origin, unity, and coherence—whose direction is set by the dominant religious ground-motive in a culture or subculture. According to Kraay, it is only with this third conception that Dooyeweerd formulates a “transcendental critique” in the proper sense. Now transcendental critique replaces the “law-idea” or “cosmomic idea” as the key to Dooyeweerd’s philosophy.<sup>18</sup>

Whatever the precise historical details, it is clear that Dooyeweerd has more than one conception of the relation between faith and philosophy. Indeed, the “Prolegomena” to *New Critique* (NC 1:1-165; cf. WW 1:3-135) presents two different ways in which to carry out a transcendental critique.<sup>19</sup> The first way hinges on Dooyeweerd’s Archimedean point conception.<sup>20</sup> It argues from ontological claims about creation, epistemological claims about the nature of everyday experience and theoretical thought, and metaphilosophical claims about philosophy itself to the conclusion that every philosophy requires an “Archimedean point” whose origin cannot itself be solely theoretical or philosophical. Rather, every philosophy’s Archimedean point presupposes a “choice of position” with respect to the “Archè,” the origin of everything, including philosophy and philosophers themselves (NC 1:11-12, WW 1:13-15). This choice can only be made by the entire human being in his or her heart. As such the choice, like the Archè, is religious, not merely theoretical or philosophical. In this fundamental sense religion makes philosophy possible, regardless of the details of a particular philosopher’s work.<sup>21</sup>

Fully worked out, however, an argument along these lines seems to presuppose what it wishes to conclude. In addition, it neither explains nor promotes the possibility of philosophical dialogue across religious boundaries. Strictly speaking, it is more a transcendent critique than a transcendental one. Although Dooyeweerd had responses to such criticisms, dissatisfaction with his argument led him to develop what the *New Critique* labels as a “second way.” From here on I shall understand this second way as “Dooyeweerd’s transcendental critique.”<sup>22</sup> Certainly it is most in keeping with his own description of a transcendental critique of theoretical thought as “a critical inquiry (respecting no single so-called theoretical axiom) into the *universally valid conditions which alone make theoretical thought possible, and which are required by the immanent structure of this thought itself*” (NC 1:37).<sup>23</sup>

## 2. Dooyeweerd’s Transcendental Critique

What are the universally valid conditions that make theoretical thought possible? Essentially, says Dooyeweerd, there are three. They can be indicated by asking three transcendental questions. First, what makes it possible for theorists to engage in abstraction from ordinary experience and from the structures of creation, which people ordinarily experience in a holistic fashion?<sup>24</sup> Dooyeweerd’s answer lies in the notion of a “*Gegenstand-relation*” that is peculiar to theoretical thought and is distinct from an ordinary subject/object relation.<sup>25</sup> His answer goes roughly like this: The only way for scientists and philosophers to proceed is to develop careful logical definitions and explanations of what they study. To do this, they must

exclude many sorts of phenomena from their field of investigation, even though the phenomena themselves resist such exclusion. When theorists carry out the theoretical process properly, the result is an intentional abstraction that neither directly "corresponds" to "reality as such" nor arbitrarily imposes a mental construct on the subject matter.<sup>26</sup> In Dooyeweerd's own vocabulary, it is unavoidable that, in the act of theorizing, the logical and nonlogical aspects of thought (and of creation) stand in opposition, even though people ordinarily experience no such opposition outside theoretical endeavors.

This gives rise to a second transcendental question: What makes it possible for theorists to achieve a synthesis between those aspects of experience and of creation which must stand in opposition when theorizing occurs?<sup>27</sup> Dooyeweerd's answer to this "problem of inter-modal synthesis" has two parts. First, he argues that the required synthesis cannot be achieved starting from either side of the unavoidable opposition, either from the logical or from the nonlogical side. Such an approach would simply transpose the original opposition into yet another opposition; the theoretical antithesis would not be transcended. Second, he suggests the only possibility for such a synthesis lies in the fact that the theorist is more than a theorist. The act of theorizing is itself carried out by a unitary agent in whom the various aspects of experience and of creation always already cohere. This agent cannot be a Cartesian or Kantian *cogito*: to be able to think, the "I" that thinks must be more than its thinking. Kant was right to posit the necessity of critical self-reflection for solving the problem of theoretical synthesis. But Kant failed to see that the underlying unity provided by the human self is "a central and radical unity," and it "transcends" all the aspects of experience and creation that theorists can distinguish and understand, including the logical aspect (NC 1:51).<sup>28</sup> Theoretical synthesis necessarily presupposes "a supra-theoretical starting-point which must transcend theoretical diversity" (NC 1:46).

Now a third transcendental question arises: What makes it possible for theorists to engage in such theory-transcending and critical self-reflection?<sup>29</sup> Again Dooyeweerd's answer has two parts. First, the act of theorizing cannot itself make such self-reflection possible, since the antithetical structure of theoretical thought excludes the underlying and rich unity needed. Second, what alone can make such self-reflection possible is the radical unity of the self itself. Only such a radically unified self can give theoretical thought a "concentric direction" pointing theoretical thought beyond itself. Once theoretical thought takes this concentric direction, it finds that the self too, despite its radical unity, is nothing in itself. Rather, the self is highly dependent on something (or, better, someone) other than itself. To put it more explicitly, the self who, among other activities, engages in theoretical thought, depends for its own existence on the human community to which it belongs and on the "absolute Origin" of everything that exists. Since Dooyeweerd considers this relation of dependence to be the core of religion, he can say that the critical self-reflection structurally necessary for engaging in theoretical thought is itself made possible by the religious nature of being human. By "religion" he means "the innate impulse of human selfhood to direct itself toward the true or

toward a *pretended* absolute Origin of all temporal diversity of meaning, which [diversity] it [human selfhood] finds focused concentrically in itself" (NC 1:57). As the Dutch text makes clear, religion is a matter of the heart and its direction.<sup>30</sup> On the heart's direction depends everything human beings are and do, including their scientific and philosophical activities. Hence the "central significance of the 'heart'" for Dooyeweerd's all-important "discovery of the religious root of thought itself" (NC 1:v, WW 1:v-vi).

So Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique of theoretical thought argues that every philosophy has a religious root, regardless of its specific stance on issues of faith, theology, and traditional topics in philosophy of religion. This is so not because every philosopher has consciously and carefully decided for or against the God revealed in scripture, creation, and Jesus Christ, but because philosophical thought could not even get started if theoretical abstraction, theoretical synthesis, and their supra-theoretical transcendence were not possible. In the end, what makes all of this possible is the integrity of the human self in relation to its true or supposed origin.

Were this the end of Dooyeweerd's account, we might think that he has not really explained the relation between faith and philosophy. And in one very obvious sense Dooyeweerd would agree, for he does not equate faith and religion.<sup>31</sup> Whereas religion encompasses and connects all of human existence with its origin, faith is simply one aspect of human existence alongside others.<sup>32</sup> Religion sets the direction of faith just as much as it sets the direction of thought or politics. But faith is no more optional to human existence than is thought or politics. To trace the relations between faith and philosophy, a follower of Dooyeweerd would need to do at least three things: show how, as modes of human existence, both faith and thought stem from religion, show how the activities of faith relate to the activities of theoretical thought, and show how in a specific sociohistorical setting the content of a particular tradition of faith intersects the content of a particular school of philosophy. In recent years, it seems to me, most Christian philosophers addressing the relation between faith and philosophy have started with the third of these and have only sporadically considered the first and second. Dooyeweerd could provide a valuable correction in this respect.

Here is where Dooyeweerd's much-disputed discussion of "ground-motives" plays a crucial role. Having made the argument that philosophy would not be possible without religion in Dooyeweerd's sense, he proposes a detailed account of how religion actually informs philosophical thought.<sup>33</sup> In brief, he argues that all human communities are driven by spiritual dynamic forces working through what he calls "religious ground-motives."<sup>34</sup> Philosophy is no more immune from these spiritual forces than is faith or politics. They take shape within philosophy itself by virtue of three "transcendental ideas." Not surprisingly, these ideas concern the (1) coherence, (2) totality or radical unity, and (3) origin of "all meaning" (NC 1:69)—i.e., of all creation. Taken together, they constitute the "cosmomic idea" (*wetsidee*) or "transcendental ground-idea" inherent to any philosophy. By calling such ideas "transcendental" Dooyeweerd indicates both that philosophy (indeed, all of theoretical thought) cannot avoid having such ideas and that the ideas concern whatever sets the conditions for theoretical thought yet exceeds its complete grasp. According to his fundamen-

tal intellectual-historical hypothesis, a significant correlation obtains between the actual content of these ideas in philosophy at a certain time and the religious ground-motives that drive the communities from which particular philosophies arise and to which these philosophies contribute.

Implicitly following Abraham Kuyper,<sup>35</sup> Dooyeweerd says four ground-motives have been dominant in Western philosophy and culture. The first, an outworking of the Holy Spirit, is the motive, central to the Bible, of "*creation, fall, and redemption by Jesus Christ in the communion of the Holy Ghost*" (NC 1:61). Two other ground-motives are outworkings of "the spirit of apostasy from the true God." They occur as the dialectic of form and matter ("form-matter motive") that dominates classical Greek culture and philosophy and as the dialectic of nature and freedom ("nature-freedom motive") that dominates modern humanist culture and philosophy (NC 1:61-62). Dooyeweerd describes the fourth ground-motive as follows:

The scholastic ground-motive of nature and supernatural grace originates from the attempt to accommodate the Greek form-matter motive and the radical biblical ground-motive to each other. In the scholastic theology of Thomism it gains its hold on Christian thought; it permeates Roman Catholic church doctrine, theology, philosophy and sociology. Reformed Protestant thought also, by and large, continues to be open to the religious influence of the scholastic ground-motive—as a result it soon loses its reforming impulse.<sup>36</sup>

Even without Dooyeweerd's detailed attempts to document the "nature-grace" ground-motive, his implicitly linking it with apostasy and his explicitly rejecting such a synthesis would be enough to set Thomist teeth on edge, not to mention traditionalist Calvinists and intellectualist Kuyperians. If his intellectual-historical intuitions were approximately right, however, this would call for a massive reconstruction of Christian philosophy and theology.

It is only against this backdrop that Dooyeweerd's concern for the "inner reformation" of philosophy and all the sciences begins to make sense. As Geertsema explains,

One of the ground-motives determines the content of the cosmological idea ... of any given thinker. In this way the religious ground-motive controls the direction of thought via the transcendental ground-idea. The transcendental ground-idea forms the inner point of contact between [religion] and science. Inner reformation, then, is guided by the biblical ground-motive, which is expressed in the transcendental ground-idea of divine Origin, unity in Christ, ... and coherence and diversity within time. In the first place this inner reformation applies to philosophy, but because the various disciplines ... necessarily imply a view of diversity in reality and so of unity and origin, it also relates to the sciences in general ....<sup>37</sup>

Hence the transcendental critique of theoretical thought provides a way to explore the impact of religion on the unavoidable "boundary concepts" of



philosophy and science, past and present. It simultaneously serves to remind Christian scholars of their spiritual direction on the issues that matter most. And it does all of this without burying philosophy and science in the details of a particular tradition of faith or theology. In that sense, Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique accomplishes for scholarship what Kuyper accomplished for social policy: to be both unreservedly modern and unashamedly Christian. Not surprisingly, the strongest objections have come from those who would rather have modernity without Christianity or Christianity without modernity.

### 3. *Religion, Rationality, and Radical Dependence*

"Transcendental Thomists" such as Bernard Lonergan share Dooyeweerd's general sense of the challenges facing Christian scholars. They, too, want their philosophy to be genuine philosophy, not crypto-theology, even as it raises the transcendental questions that hard-bitten secularists might dismiss or avoid. So I find it a bit surprising that Hugo Meynell's objections draw so heavily on traditional Thomism. In part these objections stem from misreadings of Dooyeweerd, encouraged, perhaps, by relying too heavily on the simplistic and combative prose of the popularizing pastor J. M. Spier, whose book lacks the subtleties of Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique. But in part they stem from those intellectual commitments to rational autonomy and self-subsistent existence which Dooyeweerd attacks in Greek, medieval, and modern philosophy. Rather than give an extensive response to each of Meynell's objections, I shall group them under the headings of religion, rationality, and radical dependence.

#### 3.1 *Religion and Fideism*

Meynell's essay suggests in various places that Dooyeweerd is a fideist for whom no common basis can exist for dialogue and debate across "ground-motives" and especially between fully Christian and "apostate" philosophy. The flip side to this suggestion is a worry that Dooyeweerd would require Christians to avoid the methods and practices of established academic disciplines such as differential calculus or standard behavioral research on the Norway rat. These concerns are misplaced. They can easily be alleviated within Dooyeweerd's own conception. Let me explain.

Dooyeweerd, like Kuyper, has a strong notion of "common grace." Thanks to God's providential care, much good occurs in society and culture (including philosophy) regardless of the life-direction ("religion" in Dooyeweerd's very broad sense) from which a particular product, practice, institution, or social pattern arises. It occurs despite the fall, "original sin," "total depravity," and all the other obstacles identified in traditional Calvinist theology. Accordingly, Dooyeweerd's ground-motive analysis gives only part of his assessment of Western philosophy and philosophies. He also tries to show that the fundamental structures of God's creation make possible philosophy and all other human endeavors and accomplishments. These structures the participants both acknowledge and (mis)interpret. A Christian faith-commitment gives one no special advantage in that regard,

both because all humans are finite and fallible, and because the antithesis between good and evil cuts right through humanity and through each human heart. Dooyeweerd cannot credit whatever good occurs, whether in philosophy or elsewhere, either to the faith-commitment of the practitioner or to some shared "rationality" but only to God's common grace, as sustained and carried out through God's laws for creation ("creation" in a broad sense that includes human beings, culture, and society). He *can* say forthrightly and from the outset, however, that his criticisms of "immanence-philosophy" are cases of "self-criticism" (NC 1: viii, WW 1: x).<sup>38</sup>

Now I admit Dooyeweerd has a more fideist side, especially in his writings prior to the 1940s, a side stressed by J. M. Spier. But it conflicts with the "common grace" side, which allows a more generous understanding of culture and welcomes dialogue, debate, and learning across philosophical and religious divides. The fideist side alone cannot explain Dooyeweerd's battles with the radical fideists in his own theological tradition, both Dutch Calvinists and American Presbyterians such as the "presuppositionalist" Cornelius Van Til. In any case, Meynell neglects the tension between fideist and nonfideist tendencies in Dooyeweerd's own conception. This tension has generated considerable creative effort among reformational philosophers, especially at the Free University of Amsterdam and the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto.

Yet there is one crucial respect in which Dooyeweerd simply cannot be a fideist. He does not think that faith, whether as a human capacity or as the content of a particular tradition, sets the direction for philosophy and science. Religion does, and religion is ontologically and epistemologically prior to both faith and scholarship. In this sense, whether or not one makes "explicit reference to God or Christ" is beside the point of whether a certain ground-motive is at work in the transcendental ideas informing one's philosophy. Similarly, if Dooyeweerd wishes Christians who philosophize to be "Christian all the way down", this cannot mean that he wants them to substitute faith talk for philosophy proper. Moreover, he opposes all "immanence philosophy" not, first of all, because it "is built up ... independently of God and God's revealed Word"<sup>39</sup> but because it misunderstands the nature of philosophy, denies the dependence of theoretical thought on something beyond itself, and finds the locus and origin of meaning in creation.

For such reasons I think it is fundamentally mistaken to say that "for Dooyeweerd, as for Barth, belief cannot argue with unbelief, but only preach to it." Dooyeweerd's crucial insight is not that human thought lacks satisfactory foundations or that "no satisfactory foundations for human thought can be set out."<sup>40</sup> Rather it is his claim that most attempts to spell out such foundations miss the actual "foundation" of human thought in the human heart and thereby in either the true origin of existence or some substitute. Dooyeweerd can affirm with Lonergan the importance of "attentiveness," "intelligence," and "reasonableness." But Dooyeweerd would deny that these provide the sort of foundation which, say, Descartes vainly sought. He would also deny that they supersede the dependence of even the most attentive, intelligent, and reasonable thought on that which transcends thought and makes it possible.

### 3.2 Rationality and Scientism

All of this has relevance for questions concerning rationality in Meynell's essay. At one place, for example, he says: "Apparently Dooyeweerd would deny . . . that some people can teach others the principles of good reasoning, and scientific method in particular, while prescind[ing] from the question of whether the Christian faith is true."<sup>41</sup> On my own reading, Dooyeweerd would not deny that such "faith-neutral" or "faith-detached" teaching and learning can occur. The fundamental antithesis does not lie between faiths, for faith itself is only one aspect of human life among many. It lies instead between comprehensive life-directions—toward God or toward some part of creation. Presumably a Christian could be just as torn between these two directions as anyone else. Hence the Christian should, in all due humility, learn and be ready to learn from others, whatever their faith.

Dooyeweerd would not point to "rational principles" as the basis or enabling conditions for such learning, however, but rather to the laws of God's creation and the Holy Spirit's ongoing presence in history, culture, society, and human life. Dooyeweerd would also ask why philosophers, whatever their faith or purported lack of faith, put so much stock in "rational principles." And he would ask whether the account he gives of "rationality" might not do two things better than other accounts: (1) explain the importance of culturally-bound "positivizations" of God's laws in this area (e.g., the rules of first-order logic) and (2) explain the inherent limitations, fallibility, and cultural variability of such "positivizations."<sup>42</sup> For Dooyeweerd, "rationality" is a limited but important aspect of human life as God has created this. Like all such aspects, rationality is made possible by God's laws and sustained by God's Spirit. When exercised by human beings in community, rationality is no less susceptible to evil and no less open to redemption than any other aspect of human life. The key to such renewal, however, does not lie in rationality itself but in how God's Spirit works in the hearts of humanity.

For Dooyeweerd, as for many other non- or anti-foundationalists, two questions must arise whenever someone appeals to "rational principles" as the basis for dialogue and debate: (1) What counts as rationality? (2) Why does such rationality count for so much? Dooyeweerd is by no means an irrationalist, of course. He seeks a better basis for rationality, properly understood, than that found by the great celebrants of reason such as Kant, the obvious primary target of *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*. Still, Dooyeweerd is not primarily interested in grounding Christian apologetics or explaining the intrinsic "rationality" of a "Christian position." Rather he aims to work out the philosophical implications of a creation-oriented life-direction that takes seriously both radical evil and God's great sovereignty and love. In some ways, his is a very Augustinian project of philosophical construction. As Alvin Plantinga suggests, such a constructive approach remains "the most difficult" and "in some ways the most important" task facing Christian philosophy today.<sup>43</sup>

Why, then, would rationality be important on Dooyeweerd's account? Because the capacity to analyze, argue, and reach conclusions yields logical insight into God's laws and their human outworkings that would other-

wise be unavailable. Yet logical insight is not the only kind of insight human beings need, and it is itself subject to divine laws, as are all other aspects of human existence. Does this mean that science, where specialized searches for logical insight occur, can only be properly pursued on the basis of extra-logical and faith-oriented insights, as Meynell interprets Dooyeweerd to be saying? Does Dooyeweerd hold that "all scientific work is really committed to a philosophical, and so indirectly to a religious stance"?<sup>44</sup> Yes and no. Yes, insofar as no academic discipline can avoid boundary questions concerning the relationship of its subject matter, methods, and results to those of other fields. To that extent no academic discipline can do without transcendental ideas concerning origin, unity, and coherence of the sort that arise in philosophy and that express religious ground-motives (NC 1: 545-66, WW 1: 508-530). Yet this does not imply that all scientific work is "really committed" to philosophical and religious stances in the sense that scientists themselves must hold specific philosophical theorems or beliefs of faith, either surreptitiously or properly, or must let these control the course of investigation.<sup>45</sup> With Geertsema, I doubt that Dooyeweerd's talk about the "inner reformation of the sciences"

really meant that the Christian starting-point would change the disciplines in the same way that it changed philosophy. ... In any case the fruitfulness of Dooyeweerd's philosophy ... seems to lie not so much in an alternative way of doing science, with its own theories and results, as in indicating the limits of science's pretensions and presenting a framework in which scientific theories and results can be interpreted. This applies both to specific sciences and to science as such.<sup>46</sup>

In other words, Dooyeweerd exposes scientism and rejects ontological and methodological reductionism, but he does not make the sciences subservient to either faith or philosophy. In this, too, he wishes to be both modern and Christian.

Perhaps the confusion in Meynell's reading here arises from his assuming that "the human subject" is the individual human being rather than a transcendental subject. This assumption is suggested by Meynell's talking about how "a person's Christian commitment should affect her work as a scientist," his asking rhetorically what part "Paul's Christian faith had in his tent-making business," and his wanting to say that there can be "the honest seeker" who is not just an "apostate."<sup>47</sup> When Meynell says that a transcendental Thomist "would strongly agree with Dooyeweerd that the human subject is at the base of all philosophy or scientific theory,"<sup>48</sup> it is not clear that Meynell and Dooyeweerd have the same "subject" in mind. Dooyeweerd's "ego" or "heart" or "religious root of human existence" is not the existing individual as such. Neither is it a Kantian transcendental subject, in the strict sense. It is the central, dynamic, and directed relationship that all human beings sustain, in their entirety, both individually and corporately, toward God, toward fellow humans, and toward the rest of creation.<sup>49</sup> Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique tries to show that the very possibility of theoretical thought, and hence of science and philosophy, depends upon thought's being subject to God's laws and being oriented

either toward the very source of those laws or toward some substitute. Accordingly his fundamental questions lie at an altogether different level from the question of what difference an individual's faith-commitment makes for one's practice of philosophy and science or for the results of such practice. Meynell's essay overlooks this difference in level.

### 3.3 Radical Dependence

Dooyeweerd held that his transcendental critique of theoretical thought would doubly enhance "the mutual exchange of ideas between the different schools of philosophy." First, schools that oppose each other but share the same ground-motive could "meet with better mutual understanding" once they understood how their opposition stemmed from "the same central ground-motive." Second, schools that proceed from different ground-motives could learn to evaluate their own starting points and begin to understand "that fruitful philosophical dialogue can only begin when the transcendental problems of philosophical thought *as such* are critically accounted for." The dialogue between his philosophy and neoThomism, carried out on this basis, "has led to increasing mutual depth of insight," he says. He invites "every school of thought" to be a "partner in this critical discussion, which replaces dogmatic defensiveness with mutual critical self-reflection, and replaces the *hubris* of exclusivism with philosophical modesty born of insight into the *relativity* of all philosophical totality views." He welcomes them all to the table, not because he is a philosophical relativist, but because he recognizes how everything, including philosophy, is relative to its origin: "*Meaning is the being of all that has been created; it is religiously rooted and is of divine Origin.*"<sup>50</sup>

This idea of creation's radical dependence on the Creator marks both the continuity and the discontinuity between reformational philosophy and transcendental Thomism. Both schools affirm that "reality" is God's creation, but they disagree about the implications of their affirmation for philosophical categories. Professor Meynell frequently suggests that traditional categories inherited from Aristotle's metaphysics will do just fine, and that even Dooyeweerd implicitly employs such categories. Dooyeweerd, by contrast, goes out of his way to show why categories such as "being" and "substance" are religiously loaded and philosophically problematic. Yet, as Meynell notes, even some of Dooyeweerd's followers suggest that his philosophy is more Aristotelian than he admits.

A key question here, it seems to me, is not whether Dooyeweerd resembles Aristotle, since it is hard to find any major philosopher after Aristotle whose thought does not resemble Aristotle's in some respect. One wants to know instead whether Dooyeweerd breaks with Aristotle on central questions of ontology, epistemology, and ethics. I think the answer has to be yes, he clearly does. Dooyeweerd's "modal order" implies no hierarchy of levels. His "structures of individuality" are functional rather than substantial. His emphasis on creational law and the radical distinction between Creator and creature resists any metaphysics of being. And his critique of the theoretical thought rejects any privileging of theory, even in the form of philosophy or theology.

The other key question is why Dooyeweerd's so adamantly opposes ideas such as "being" and "substance." Contra Meynell, it is not simply because they are "infected by the form-matter religious ground-motive." It is certainly not because Dooyeweerd fails to recognize that his discussion of the "individuality structures" of "things" addresses what "traditional philosophy" has dealt with "under the rubric of 'substance'."<sup>51</sup> Dooyeweerd opposes the idea of "substance" because he finds the notion of permanent self-subsistence both untrue to ordinary experience and internally antinomous.<sup>52</sup> In addition, of course, Dooyeweerd regards this category as incompatible with the radical dependence of creation on the Creator. Given such charges, it will not do simply to cite Aristotle or Thomas as authorities or to claim without adequate backing that on balance they got things mostly right. Dooyeweerd argues that when it comes to understanding plants, animals, human beings, cultural products, and social institutions, the substance theories of Aristotle and Thomas get things significantly wrong. He also proposes an elaborate alternative theory of the "structures of individuality,"<sup>53</sup> and he shows how his theory is compatible with the functional concepts of modern science. In that respect, too, I find he has more in common with Lonergan than Meynell's essay highlights.

#### 4. *Second Thoughts*

I have tried to show why Dooyeweerd is not a simple fideist, why he considers rationality important, and why he rejects Aristotelian metaphysics. Yet I do not want to leave the impression that Meynell's objections lack all merit or that Dooyeweerd's philosophy does not warrant criticism. Let me mention some problems in Dooyeweerd's conception of transcendental critique, in order to suggest how one could address them without abandoning his project. The problems pertain to the flawed structure of his argument and perplexities surrounding his notion of religion.

##### 4.1 *Logical Slippage*

Reduced to its barest outline, Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique of theoretical thought goes like this: (1) No one could engage in theoretical thought were it not for universally valid conditions that make such thought possible. (2) Any philosophy can identify these conditions by analyzing the structure of theoretical thought itself. (3) Such an analysis shows that three universally valid conditions make theoretical thought possible: (a) the *Gegenstand*-relation between logical and nonlogical aspects, (b) the supra-theoretical unity of aspects found in the theorizing agent, and (c) the agent's radical dependence on something other than itself that makes this agent possible. (4) This dependence can only be either on the "absolute Origin" of everything that exists or on some substitute that is itself dependent on the "absolute Origin." (5) No system of theoretical thought<sup>54</sup> can avoid employing all-pervasive ideas about the ontological status of the universally valid conditions that make theoretical thought possible: ideas about the coherence, unity, and origin of everything. (6) The most crucial

and unavoidable sources for the content of such ideas are supra-theoretical and religious ground-motives that grip human beings in their hearts and direct them either toward the “absolute Origin” or some substitute. (7) A biblical ground-motive is the crucial and unavoidable source for the transcendental ideas guiding this account of how theoretical thought is possible and how it is necessarily religious in root. (8) The transcendental ideas guiding this account concern (a) the temporal and intermodal coherence of meaning, (b) the “deeper identity” of the modal aspects of meaning “in a religious unity” (NC 1:79), and (c) the divine origin of meaning in its coherence and unity.

For the sake of argument, let me ignore complications from the *New Critique’s* combining two “ways” of transcendental critique, overlook infelicities in Dooyeweerd’s actual formulations, and assume the soundness of each premise. Even with all those concessions in place, I think two sorts of logical slippage beset his transcendental critique. In the first place, it seems self-referentially incoherent. That is to say, his critique does precisely what it declares impossible: it provides a theoretical account of that which surpasses the limits of theoretical thought. Given Dooyeweerd’s account of theoretical thought, his philosophical identification of the supra-theoretical unity of aspects and the agent’s radical dependence would need to set certain aspects of this unity and dependence over against the logical aspects of thought itself. But if that were done, the unity and dependence could not be grasped as supra-theoretical unity and radical dependence. On the other hand, if the grasping of unity and dependence were not achieved by Dooyeweerd’s own theoretical thought but in some supra-theoretical fashion, then this would bode ill for any philosophy that theoretically attempts to identify the universally valid conditions for theoretical thought. So Dooyeweerd’s account of the universally valid conditions for theoretical thought seems to subvert the very attempt to give such an account. He tries to get around this by saying that “critical self-reflection in the concentric direction of theoretical thought to the ego necessarily appeals to self-knowledge (which goes beyond the limits of the theoretical *gegenstand*-relation)” (NC 1:59). But he fails to see that philosophical reflection *on* such critical self-reflection—philosophical reflection such as his transcendental critique provides—is not in itself the same as critical self-reflection. The question remains whether, on Dooyeweerd’s account of theoretical thought, such philosophical reflection can be theoretical. If it cannot be theoretical, then it cannot be philosophical either.

The second sort of logical slippage concerns circularity in Dooyeweerd’s argument. If premises 5-8 are right, then they cannot help but be presupposed in premises 1-4. There are specific cases of this. It seems impossible, for example, to formulate the notion of the “*Gegenstand*-relation” (3-a) without presupposing a temporal and intermodal coherence of meaning (8-a). It also seems impossible to conclude that the agent’s radical dependence can only be on the “absolute Origin” or a substitute (4) without presupposing the divine origin of meaning (8-c). In some places Dooyeweerd even acknowledges such circularity and embraces it. He says, for example, that his philosophy’s “posing of the transcendental problem is controlled from the start by those supra-theoretical presuppositions which are not

exposed until the final stage of the transcendental critique."<sup>55</sup> Better to have one's theory controlled by supra-theoretical presuppositions that "free theoretical thought from dogmatic 'axioms' standing in the way of a veritable critical attitude" and to acknowledge this up front, he says, than to have one's theory enslaved to unacknowledged supra-theoretical presuppositions while pretending that it is, and all theory should be, free from such presuppositions (NC 1:56). But this rejoinder would be somewhat beside the point I am making. To move from premises 1-4 to premises 5-8, it seems to me, Dooyeweerd must presuppose the *content* of his idea of the divine origin of meaning (8-c) and import it into his *formal* claims about the agent's radical dependence (3-c) and (4). Otherwise one could grant that the agent's radical dependence is required for theoretical thought to be possible and still not suppose that the "other" on which it depends is either the "absolute Origin" or some "substitute." Since Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique intends to convince other philosophers of the validity of that critique, such circularity, while not "vicious," is certainly troublesome for Dooyeweerd's own project.

I do not have the space here to provide adequate repairs to Dooyeweerd's argument. It would not suffice to introduce a more "transformational" and less "antithetical" picture of how Christian philosophy relates to other schools of thought, although that would help.<sup>56</sup> Nor would the problems disappear if one took Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique in "hermeneutical" directions, although that would help as well.<sup>57</sup> Both the problem of self-referential incoherence and the problem of circularity stem from his (neoKantian) understanding of the limits to theoretical thought. What he formulates as "transcendental conditions" are intended to show that theoretical thought is not self-sufficient, that it unavoidably depends on that which is not itself theoretical. But one can construe this notion of "that which is not itself theoretical" in more than one way. It can refer to human activities and experiences that are not theoretical, or to topics and objects that are not theorized, or to processes and structures that make theoretical thought possible. It can also refer to whatever in principle exceeds the grasp of theoretical thought. Dooyeweerd combines some of these meanings, so that the processes and structures that make theoretical thought possible cannot in principle be theoretically grasped, although they can be indicated by way of "transcendental ideas." Since his transcendental critique is itself a theoretical enterprise, however, made possible by the same "supra-theoretical" matters, he finds himself in the awkward position of doing in theory what his theory of theory says cannot be done. Not even importing "supra-theoretical" religious content by way of a presupposed "transcendental idea" can extricate him from what Hegel would call the dialectic of the limit. The only way to salvage some version of Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique, it seems to me, is to redescribe the structure of theoretical thought, recognizing that every theoretical attempt to declare something beyond the limits of theory has already surpassed those limits.

#### 4.2 "Religion"

An inescapable corollary to such redescription would be thoroughly



recasting Dooyeweerd's notion of religion. I do not intend to propose an alternative notion here, but simply to indicate why I think one is needed to salvage Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique. As I understand Dooyeweerd, his notion of religion tries to accommodate three sets of competing considerations. Consequently it embodies tensions between unity and diversity, between universality and particularity, and between transcendence and historicity.

The first tension arises from the necessity of distinguishing religion from that which is not religion while holding that religion is all-encompassing. On the one hand, Dooyeweerd sees religion as an inescapable and all-embracing condition of being human. It is not simply a part of human existence, and it is not something added to the rest of human existence. Rather it is all of human existence in its deepest unity and in relationship to the (pseudo-)origin of all existence. On the other hand, he cannot avoid using language and categories that distinguish religion from that which is not religion—philosophy, for example, or science, or art, or politics. Such distinctions can make it sound as if religion has sufficient independence to “express” itself in philosophy or science or art and to “give direction” in these affairs. Add to this the complication that Dooyeweerd does not identify religion with faith, and one begins to wonder what content his notion of religion holds. These matters are crucial for Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique: his entire argument turns on the claim that theoretical thought would not be possible if it did not have a “religious root.” Indeed, Dooyeweerd's own intellectual conversion occurred with “the discovery of the religious root of thought itself” (NC 1:v, WW 1:v).

With respect to the second tension, it is clear that, although Dooyeweerd understands religion as an inescapable condition of being human, he does not want to leave it at that formal level of universality. He sees religion as a matter of life and death, as that on which an individual's or a community's destiny hinges. So religion also needs to be something each of us experiences—or, better, each of us is and enacts—in the depths of our particular selves. The tension between transcendence and historicity arises for similar reasons. On the one hand, Dooyeweerd understands religion as the directed connection between human beings and God or some substitute for God, and he understands God as transcending all of creation. On the other hand, he wants to say that such a connection occurs within human history. It develops, it takes new turns, it involves a world-historical battle between good and evil. Otherwise there would be little point to identifying “religious ground-motives” and tracing their historical manifestations in philosophy and culture.

When push comes to shove, however, Dooyeweerd's notion of religion privileges unity, universality, and transcendence over diversity, particularity, and historical phenomena. And this unitary, universal, and transcendent thrust results in a type of mysticism that reinforces the logical slippage I have already identified.<sup>58</sup> The reinforcement comes when Dooyeweerd describes the human heart, the religious root of human existence, as “supra-temporal.” This makes religion “supra-theoretical,” even though religion is at the core of human existence. Consequently, what is most central to being human, and what unifies all we are and do, cannot be grasped philosophically, theologi-

cally, sociologically, or in any other theoretical way. But Dooyeweerd's transcendental argument cannot afford to declare religion off limits for theoretical inquiry. Nor does his own practice of identifying and tracing religious ground-motives support such a view of religion, even though he assigns minimal content to these dynamic spiritual forces as such. Dooyeweerd leaves us with a perplexing, internally conflicted notion of religion that nevertheless serves as the pivot to his transcendental critique.

Any attempt to salvage Dooyeweerd's project must address both the logical slippage in his transcendental argument and the conceptual confusion in his account of religion. A brief comparison of the two books that do most to rearticulate Dooyeweerd's philosophy for a North American audience will bear this out. In *Understanding Our World*, Hendrik Hart reserves discussion of the issues raised by Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique for what he titles "Appendix: A Concluding Prescientific Postscript."<sup>59</sup> There Hart avoids the problems in Dooyeweerd's argument by abandoning the idea that either the transcendental relation between theory and religion or the specific version of that relation in a Christian philosophy can be successfully argued. In this way Dooyeweerd's theoretical prolegomenon to reformational philosophy threatens to become a personal faith-professing postlude, as I have shown elsewhere.<sup>60</sup> Hart retains Dooyeweerd's transcendental impetus without the critique.

Roy Clouser's *The Myth of Religious Neutrality*, by contrast, begins with the claim that everyone has "religious beliefs" in something that has "the status of not depending on anything else" or of being "self-existent."<sup>61</sup> From there Clouser needs only a few steps to conclude that every comprehensive theory, whether philosophical or scientific, is controlled by the contents of the religious belief it presupposes. And because of the abstract character of theorizing, any theorist who takes something other than the God revealed in Scripture to be the self-existent being on which everything else depends must make claims that are "self-performatively incoherent."<sup>62</sup> So Clouser avoids the problems in Dooyeweerd's argument by turning it into what Dooyeweerd would call a "theologically-transcendent critique," one which "subjects the different results of philosophical thought to the test of Holy Scripture or of a church dogma that is thought to be infallible."<sup>63</sup> Not surprisingly, Clouser says his book "is addressed to those who believe in God" and does not try to win "unbelievers" to his point of view.<sup>64</sup> He retains Dooyeweerd's critical impetus without the transcendental argument.

The difference between Hart's and Clouser's appropriation of Dooyeweerd transcendental critique—personal confession on the one hand, dogmatic criticism on the other—strikingly illustrates two ways to avoid addressing the problems in Dooyeweerd's argument.<sup>65</sup> Neither way addresses the dialectic of the limits to theoretical thought. Moreover, Hart and Clouser's fundamentally opposed accounts of religion, which emphasize different sides to the notion of religion in *New Critique*, do not provide convincing alternatives to Dooyeweerd's own account. Although Professor Meynell does not discuss either Clouser or Hart, he has identified puzzles in Dooyeweerd's bold project that neither adequately addresses. These puzzles merit the attention of anyone who thinks seriously about the rela-

tion between faith and philosophy. They remain generative challenges for the tradition of reformational philosophy that Dooyeweerd helped create.<sup>66</sup>

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#### NOTES

1. Herman Dooyeweerd, "Foreword (Abbreviated) to the First Edition," in *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, vol. 1, p. v; translation modified. All citations come the four-volume edition published in 1953-58, translated by David H. Freeman et al., and issued as a reprint edition (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1969). This work is both a revision and a translation of the three-volume Dutch magnum opus *De wijsbegeerte der wetsidee* (Amsterdam: H. J. Paris, 1935-36). Where the English version translates an equivalent passage in the Dutch version, I use square brackets to indicate nuances in Dutch not caught in the English translation. I also silently modify the translation in other ways, usually to render it in more idiomatic English. Citations use the abbreviations NC and (where appropriate) WW, followed by the volume and page number, as follows: NC 1:v, WW 1:v.

2. Traces of neoKantian and Husserlian thought abound in Dooyeweerd's ontology, epistemology, and social philosophy, as others have pointed out. See Albert M. Wolters, "The Intellectual Milieu of Herman Dooyeweerd," in *The Legacy of Herman Dooyeweerd: Reflections on Critical Philosophy in the Christian Tradition*, ed. C. T. McIntire (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1985), pp. 1-19. In the same volume, which marks the fiftieth anniversary of Dooyeweerd's first publishing *De wijsbegeerte der wetsidee*, Calvin Seerveld discusses the links between Dooyeweerd's and Nicolai Hartmann's ontologies; see "Dooyeweerd's Legacy for Aesthetics: Modal Law Theory," especially pp. 55-64.

3. Hugo A. Meynell, "The Philosophy of Dooyeweerd: A Transcendental Thomist Appraisal," *Faith and Philosophy* 20 (July 2003): 265-87 briefly mentions H. Steen, one of these early Calvinist critics, but fails to point out that Steen's book *Philosophia Deformata* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1937) is a diatribe against Vollenhoven, not Dooyeweerd. Steen barely discusses Dooyeweerd's writings and shows little comprehension of Vollenhoven's. The polemical character of Steen's book is apparent from the title, which mocks *Philosophia Reformata*, the scholarly journal begun in 1936, with Dooyeweerd as editor-in-chief until 1976, and with Vollenhoven as president of the Association for Calvinist Philosophy that sponsored the journal. Nor was Steen's book title very original. Like some of the book's contents, it derives from a more substantial critique of Dooyeweerd by the theologian Valentine Hepp in four brochures titled *Dreigende deformatie* ("Threatening Deformation") (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1936-37). Despite such preemptive strikes by fellow Dutch Calvinists, the journal and the association (now called the Association for Reformational Philosophy) continue to thrive more than 65 years later.

4. Dooyeweerd began to write and speak in English after World War II, and he played an active role in the translation of NC. The following of his English-language publications are especially important for assessing how he viewed the significance of his own project: "Introduction to a Transcendental Criticism of Philosophic Thought," *Evangelical Quarterly* 19 (1947): 42-51; *Transcendental Problems of Philosophic Thought: An Inquiry into the Transcendental Conditions of Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1948); and *In the Twilight of Western Thought: Studies in the Pretended Autonomy of Philosophical Thought* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1960). Similarly

important is his 1956 essay "Calvinistische Wijsbegeerte" [Calvinist Philosophy], which has been translated by John Vriend as "Christian Philosophy: An Exploration," in Herman Dooyeweerd, *Christian Philosophy and the Meaning of History* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996), pp. 1-37.

5. The intellectual center for fundamentalist Presbyterians was Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. Dooyeweerd's most important critic at Westminster was Cornelius Van Til, and his most important expositor there was Robert Knudsen. Van Til had an intellectualist Kuyperian background. He left a pastorate in the Christian Reformed Church to become a leading figure in Reformed apologetics. Highly instructive exchanges between Dooyeweerd and Van Til and between Knudsen and Van Til can be found in *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Philosophy and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til*, ed. E. R. Geehan (Philadelphia: Reformed and Presbyterian Publishing, 1971), pp. 74-127 and 275-305. For details about Van Til's earlier criticisms of Dooyeweerd, as well as about Dooyeweerd's Dutch Calvinist precursors and early critics, see William Young, *Towards a Reformed Philosophy: The Development of a Protestant Philosophy in Dutch Calvinist Thought Since the Time of Abraham Kuyper* (Franeker: Wever, 1952).

6. The post-war center for intellectualist Kuyperians was Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan. William Harry Jellema, the leader of the opposition to Dooyeweerd, taught philosophy at the college from 1920-35 and 1946-63. When H. Evan Runner joined the college's philosophy department in 1951, legendary battles began between the "Jellemanians" and the "Dooyeweerdians." Runner was a graduate of both Westminster Theological Seminary and the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam who wrote his dissertation under Vollenhoven's supervision. He soon became the leading North American proponent of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven's philosophy and a founder of the Institute for Christian Studies (ICS) in Toronto, a graduate school for interdisciplinary philosophy and theology established in 1967. Most of the original faculty at ICS had studied with Runner at Calvin College and received their graduate training at the Vrije Universiteit. By contrast, several founders of the Society of Christian Philosophers were students of Jellema or of Jellema's own students, including Alvin Plantinga, Nicholas Wolterstorff, and Kenneth Konyndyk. Although I never studied at Calvin College, I taught there from 1985-2002 and enjoyed excellent collegial relations with the "Jellemanians." My own graduate training came at the Vrije Universiteit and the Institute for Christian Studies, where I took up a position as Professor of Philosophy in 2002.

7. Published in the journal *Studiën. Tijdschrift voor godsdienst, wetenschap en letteren* 67 (1935): 85-99; 68 (1936): 153-53; and 69 (1937): 324-31. For summaries of Dutch Thomist criticisms of Dooyeweerd and his responses to them, see Yong Joon Choi, *Dialogue and Antithesis: A Philosophical Study on the Significance of Herman Dooyeweerd's Transcendental Critique* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Potchefstroom University, South Africa, 2000), pp. 50-51, 86-97. Readers of Dutch should also consult H. G. Geertsema, "Dooyeweerd in discussie met de rooms-katholieke filosofie" [Dooyeweerd in Discussion with Roman Catholic Philosophy], in *Herman Dooyeweerd 1894-1977: Breedte en actualiteit van zijn filosofie*, ed. H. G. Geertsema et al. (Kampen: Kok, 1994), pp. 228-54.

8. Michael Fr. J. Marlet S. J., *Grundlinien der kalvinistischen "Philosophie der Gesetzesidee" als christlicher Transzendentalphilosophie* [Basic Outlines of the Calvinistic "Philosophy of the Cosmological Idea" as Christian Transcendental Philosophy] (Munich: Karl Zink, 1954). Dooyeweerd's "Zum Geleit" appears on pp. v-vii.

9. Choi, *Dialogue and Antithesis*, pp. 91-92. See also the objections of the

Dutch Calvinist Aquinas scholar J. A. Aertsen, who argues “that Dooyeweerd interprets Aquinas too exclusively from the perspective of Aristotle and too little as a Christian thinker” (Choi, p. 93).

10. Like Calvin Seerveld, who coined the term from the Dutch “reformatisch,” I use “reformational” to include Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven and those scholars who both build on their work and identify themselves as participants in the Kuyperian tradition of Calvinist Christianity. See Craig Bartholomew and Gideon Strauss, *Bread and not Stones: An Introduction to the Thought of Calvin Seerveld*, ed. In the *Fields of the Lord: A Seerveld Reader*, ed. Craig Bartholomew (Carlisle, UK: Piquant; Toronto: Toronto Tuppence Press, 2000), pp. 3-22, especially p. 3, n. 1. Reformational scholars have produced a large body of secondary literature on Dooyeweerd, in both Dutch and English. In chronological order, representative anthologies (some cited above) include *Philosophy and Christianity: Philosophical Essays Dedicated to Professor Dr. Herman Dooyeweerd*, ed. W. F. De Gaay Fortman et al. (Kampen: Kok; Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing, 1965); *The Legacy of Herman Dooyeweerd* (1985); *Herman Dooyeweerd 1984-1977* (1994); *Christian Philosophy at the Close of the Twentieth Century: Assessment and Perspective*, ed. Sander Griffioen and Bert M. Balk (Kampen: Kok, 1995); and *Contemporary Reflections on the Philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd*, ed. D. F. M. Strauss and Michelle Botting (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000). The journal *Philosophia Reformata* is the single most important source for “in-house” debates on these issues. Since the 1980s the journal has published an increasing number of articles in English.

11. By “theoretical thought” Dooyeweerd means the sort of abstractive thinking that characterizes philosophy and the sciences. He uses the term “science” in the broad sense that attaches to “wetenschap” in Dutch and “Wissenschaft” in German. It encompasses all the academic disciplines, including mathematics, the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities.

12. See David H. Freeman, “A Comparative Study of the Relationship between Philosophy and Theology as Exemplified by Representatives of Neo-Augustinianism, Neo-Thomism, and Neo-Existentialism” (Ph. D. Diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1958); Anna Louize Conradie, *The Neo-Calvinistic Concept of Philosophy: A Study in the Problem of Philosophic Communication* (Natal, South Africa: Natal University Press, 1960); and Vincent Brümmer, *Transcendental Criticism and Christian Philosophy: A Presentation and Evaluation of Herman Dooyeweerd’s “Philosophy of the Cosmological Idea”* (Franeker: Wever, 1961). Both Conradie and Brümmer hailed from South Africa. Their interest probably stemmed from Dooyeweerd’s substantial debates, dating from the 1930s, with the South African Calvinist philosopher Hendrik Stoker, himself a former student of the German phenomenologist Max Scheler.

13. The fact that the authors of the only general English-language introductions to Dooyeweerd’s thought were not scholars, and certainly not professional philosophers, has not helped the academic reception of Dooyeweerd’s thought in North America. (J. M. Spier was a pastor, and L. Kalsbeek was a school teacher—see the next two notes for details about their books.) Nor has it helped that these introductions are translations of Dutch popularizations. Of the two options, Kalsbeek’s book is the more nuanced and has the more adequate scholarly apparatus, thanks largely to the work of the editors and the “Glossary of Terms” provided by Albert M. Wolters (an adapted version, titled “Glossary,” appears in *The Legacy of Herman Dooyeweerd*, pp. 167-71.)

14. J. M. Spier *An Introduction to Christian Philosophy*, trans. David Freeman (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1954). A second English edition appeared with Craig Press in 1966 but did little to update the text in light of Dooyeweerd’s later writings. Spier tells us in his “Author’s Preface” (p.

vii) that his first English edition, which appeared one year after NC 1, is a translation of his "fourth revised Dutch edition published in 1950" (i.e., a few years before the publication of NC 1). The Dutch original was titled *Een inleiding tot de wijsbegeerte der wetstidee* [An Introduction to the Philosophy of the Law-Idea] (Zutphen: G. J. A. Ruys, 1938). Like the fourth edition, the second and third editions were published by J. H. Kok (Kampen)—in 1940 and 1946, respectively.

15. L. Kalsbeek, *Contours of a Christian Philosophy: An Introduction to Herman Dooyeweerd's Thought*, ed. Bernard and Josina Zylstra (Toronto: Wedge Publishing Foundation, 1975). The Dutch original was *De wijsbegeerte der wetstidee: Proeve van een christelijke filosofie* [The Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea: Sample of a Christian Philosophy] (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 1970).

16. John N. Kraay, "Successive Conceptions in the Development of the Christian Philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd," *Philosophia Reformata* 44 (1979): 137-49 and 55 (1980): 1-40. Kraay labels these (1) the organon conception, (2) the Archimedean point conception, and (3) the groundmotive conception.

17. The Archimedean point is distinct from the "Archè." The Archè is what a philosophy takes as the origin of everything. For Dooyeweerd's philosophy, God is the Archè on whom all creatures, including "reborn humanity," depend, and to whom they all refer. Religion is the fundamental relation, via humanity, between creation and either its divine origin or some creaturely substitute. He succinctly summarizes this ontology as follows: "Meaning [zin] is the being [zijn] of all creaturely beings [creatuurlijk zijnde], the mode-of-being [zijnswijze] of our selfhood too—religious in root, and divine in origin" (NC 1:4, WW 1:6).

18. Kraay, "Successive Conceptions," *Philosophia Reformata* 55 (1980): 35.

19. This is not transparent from the headings, however. The Introduction to the "Prolegomena" carries the subtitle "The First Way of a Transcendental Critique of Philosophic Thought" (NC 1:3, emphases added). Only in the subtitle to section 2 of chapter 1 does one find mention of a "second way," and then it is called "The Second Way to a Transcendental Criticism of Philosophy" (NC 1:34, emphases added). Nothing of substance depends on the shift from "of" to "to" or from "critique" to "criticism" or from "philosophic thought" to "philosophy." One does hope, however, that such terminological slippage disappears in the new edition from the Dooyeweerd Centre at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario. The Dooyeweerd Centre is producing "The Collected Works of Herman Dooyeweerd" in English. For more details, see the web site <<http://www.redeemer.on.ca/Dooyeweerd-Centre/dooyew.htm>>.

20. This is the only way a transcendent in the Dutch text (WW 1:5-33), where the heading does not label it a "transcendental critique."

21. See in this connection Robert D. Knudsen, "The Religious Foundation of Dooyeweerd's Transcendental Method," in *Contemporary Reflections on the Philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd*, pp. 271-85. Knudsen explains that religion in Dooyeweerd's sense "cannot be fixed directly in one's gaze" but "can be discerned only in depth, by ... reflecting on what is already present and is exerting influence on what one is doing. It is what Dooyeweerd calls 'the hidden player' behind all thought" (p. 274). In a footnote Knudsen explains that the "hidden player" metaphor comes from the practice in some Dutch churches of hiding the organ console behind a screen; one hears the organ music but does not see the organist at work. I am reminded here of Walter Benjamin's allegory for the preferred relation between "theology" and "historical materialism" in "Theses on the Philosophy of History," *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 253. I should add, however, that Knudsen's account of "transcendental method" is too broad to

capture Dooyeweerd's mature conception of transcendental critique.

22. Dooyeweerd scholars disagree about whether to distinguish two ways of transcendental critique. H. van Eikema Hommes, Dooyeweerd's student and successor in legal philosophy at the Vrije Universiteit, argues that only the so-called "second way" can count. Henk Geertsema replies that Dooyeweerd's application of the term "transcendental critique" to his earlier and so-called first way is in keeping with the deepest motivations of Dooyeweerd's life work. See Geertsema, "Dooyeweerd's Transcendental Critique: Transforming It Hermeneutically," in *Contemporary Reflections*, 83-108. I think Hommes' argument verges on the pedantic, but Geertsema's reply lets Dooyeweerd off too easily.

23. For similar formulations by Dooyeweerd, see "Christian Philosophy: An Exploration," p. 4; and *In the Twilight*, p. 4. The continuity of his transcendental critique with Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is most apparent from Dooyeweerd's formulation in *Transcendental Problems*, p. 19: "How is philosophy in the theoretical sense ... possible, that is to say, under what universal and necessary conditions? This problem is of a radical-critical character. It implies the question in respect to the possibility of scientific thought in all its forms .... It touches the necessary pre-supposita of all theoretical thought whatsoever."

24. In Dooyeweerd's own technical vocabulary, this question reads: "What do we abstract in the antithetic attitude of theoretic thought from the structures of empirical reality as these structures are given in naïve experience? And how is this abstraction possible?" (NC 1:41) Or, more simply, "what do we abstract in the intentional antithetic thought-relation from the integral structure of the horizon of our experience" and how is this abstraction possible? ("Christian Philosophy," p. 11)

25. Perhaps no other topic has drawn such sophisticated criticism from reformational philosophers as Dooyeweerd's account of the "Gegenstand-relation." See especially D.F.M. Strauss, "An Analysis of the Structure of Analysis," *Philosophia Reformata* 49 (1984): 35-56, and Hendrik Hart, "Dooyeweerd's Gegenstand Theory of Theory," in *The Legacy of Herman Dooyeweerd*, 143-66. As Geertsema suggests in his summary and response to Strauss's criticisms, so much in Dooyeweerd's mature conception depends on his account of the *Gegenstand*-relation that eliminating it would knock out the scaffolding for his transcendental critique. See Geertsema, "Dooyeweerd's Transcendental Critique," pp. 86-91.

26. Although I cannot elaborate the point here, Dooyeweerd's account of theoretical thought successfully sidestepped the debate between epistemological realists and epistemological anti-realists long before it became a preoccupation of protestant Christian philosophers in North America.

27. "From what standpoint can we reunite synthetically the logical and the non-logical aspects of experience which were set apart in opposition to each other in the theoretical antithesis?" (NC 1: 45) Or, "from what standpoint can the aspects of our horizon of experience, which were set apart and in opposition to each other in the theoretical antithesis, be reunited in a theoretical synthesis?" ("Christian Philosophy," p. 14)

28. Cf. "Christian Philosophy," p. 17.

29. "How is this critical self-reflection, this centric direction of theoretical thought to the I-ness, possible, and what is its true character?" (NC 1:52) Or, "how is this critical self-reflection, this centric direction of theoretical thought toward the self, possible, and what is its origin?" ("Christian Philosophy," p. 18)

30. "The heart is the fullness of our selfhood, the genuinely transcendent focal point [*concentratiepunt*] of our existence. In the heart all temporal meaning-functions [*zin-functies*] come together. As such the heart is also the necessary point of departure for philosophical thought. This point of departure truly cannot be eliminated, since our selfhood is intellectually at work [*denkende*

*werkzaam*] in every theoretical abstraction. And the fullness of our selfhood consists solely in the *religious center* of our creaturely existence, where the *direction* for all of life is set [*bepaald wordt*] with respect to the completely true and absolute origin of everything. As Christ has said: Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (WW 1:30-31, my translation; this passage does not seem to have an equivalent in NC).

31. For an explicit and nuanced account of the difference and relationship between faith and religion, see NC 2: 298-330, WW 2: 227-59. For the relevance of this to Dooyeweerd's understanding of the relation between theology and philosophy, see *In the Twilight*, pp. 113-72.

32. There is, to be sure, a special role for faith and a special connection between faith and religion, as James H. Olthuis indicates in "Dooyeweerd on Religion and Faith," *The Legacy of Herman Dooyeweerd*, pp. 21-40. He summarizes Dooyeweerd's view as follows: "First, spirituality—being religious—is as broad as life itself. ... [R]eligion is a way of life that people engage in with their full existence and at all times. ... Second, faith is *one* of the fundamental modes of being religious: a *sui generis* mode of human experience, belonging to the order of creation, in which the intrinsic spirituality of all of life receives explicit and concentrated focus" (p. 21).

33. For an exceptionally clear and succinct statement of the transition from Dooyeweerd's three transcendental questions to his account of religious ground-motives and the three transcendental ideas, see "Christian Philosophy," pp. 22-23, 35-37.

34. "Now a religious community is maintained by a common spirit, which as a *dynamis*, as a central motive-power, is active in the concentration-point of human existence. This spirit ... works through a *religious ground-motive*, which gives contents to the central mainspring of the entire attitude of life and thought" (NC 1:61).

35. Kuyper distinguishes five "life systems": Paganism, Islamism, Romanism, Modernism, and Calvinism. See Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1975, c1931), pp. 19-40.

36. "Christian Philosophy," p. 29.

37. Henk G. Geertsema, "The Inner Reformation of Philosophy and Science," in *Christian Philosophy at the Close of the Twentieth Century*, p. 15.

38. The Dutch passage from 1935 is more poignant than the English rendering from 1953, so let me attempt my own translation: "Indeed, a smug scientific stance toward immanence-philosophy hardly meshes with a Christian view of science and a Christian epistemic posture [*kennishouding*]. One has not grasped the intentions of the philosophy of the cosmonomic idea if one does not understand that [my] detailed critique of humanist immanence-philosophy ... is essentially meant as *self-critique*, as a case the Christian thinker pursues *with himself*. I would not judge so pointedly about immanence-philosophy had I not been there myself, had I not jointly and personally experienced its problematic [*haar problematiek mede persoonlijk heb ervaren*]. And I would not pass such a trenchant judgment about attempts at synthesis between this philosophy and Christian truths of faith, had I not undergone the inner tension between both myself and [had I not] personally struggled through these attempts" (WW 1:x).

39. Meynell, "The Philosophy of Dooyeweerd," pp. 266-67.

40. Meynell, p. 268.

41. Meynell, p. 271.

42. I should note, however, that the later Dooyeweerd's worries about "historicism" complicate the question of rationality's cultural variability.

43. Alvin Plantinga, "Christian Philosophy at the End of the 20th Century,"



in *Christian Philosophy at the Close of the Twentieth Century*, p. 45. Plantinga's essay originated as an address to the 1994 international symposium organized by the Association for Calvinist Philosophy in the Netherlands to mark the centennial of Dooyeweerd's birth. The essay distinguishes four divisions or tasks of Christian philosophy: "negative and positive apologetics," "philosophical theology," "Christian philosophical criticism," and "constructive Christian philosophy."

44. Meynell, p. 270.

45. The vocabulary of "control beliefs" in Nicholas Wolterstorff's *Religion within the Bounds of Reason* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1976) does not do justice to the complexity of relationships between religion, philosophy, and science, it seems to me. Nor does the model proposed by Brian J. Walsh and J. Richard Middleton, increasingly popular among Evangelical scholars, according to which "religious world views" shape "philosophical paradigms" that shape various academic disciplines in turn. See their book *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian World View* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1984), pp. 163-86.

46. Geertsema, "The Inner Reformation of Philosophy and Science," pp. 17-18.

47. Meynell, pp. 270-72.

48. Meynell, p. 272.

49. Perhaps we can say that the transcendental *function* of the "ego" or "heart" in Dooyeweerd's account resembles that of the Kantian subject, even though its *content* differs dramatically.

50. Dooyeweerd, "Christian Philosophy," pp. 36-37.

51. Meynell, p. 278.

52. See especially NC 3: 3-29, WW 3:1-10, where Dooyeweerd describes the metaphysical concept of substance as "a speculative exaggeration of a datum of naïve experience."

53. Jonathan Chaplin sorts out the strengths and weaknesses of Dooyeweerd's social theory in "Dooyeweerd's Notion of Societal Structural Principles," *Philosophia Reformata* (1995): 16-36. I assess Dooyeweerd's cultural theory in the same journal issue, under the title "Fantastic Things: Critical Notes toward a Social Ontology of the Arts" (pp. 37-54).

54. More carefully, perhaps one should say "no philosophy and (by extension) no science insofar as its boundary questions are philosophical."

55. "Christian Philosophy," p. 23.

56. Here I have in mind several instructive essays by Jacob Klapwijk: "The Struggle for a Christian Philosophy: Another Look at Dooyeweerd," *The Reformed Journal* 30 (February 1980) 2: 2-15; "Dooyeweerd's Christian Philosophy: Antithesis and Critique," *The Reformed Journal* 30 (March 1980) 3: 20-24; "Antithesis, Synthesis, and the Idea of Transformational Philosophy," *Philosophia Reformata* 51 (1986): 138-52; and "Reformational Philosophy on the Boundary between the Past and the Future," *Philosophia Reformata* 52 (1987): 101-134.

57. In addition to the two essays by Geertsema cited earlier, see Hendrik G. Geertsema, "Christian Philosophy: Transformation or Inner Reformation," *Philosophia Reformata* 52 (1987): 139-65.

58. Although I restrict my criticisms to the role Dooyeweerd's conception of religion plays in his transcendental critique, I agree with other critics that additional problems are even more pressing, such as a lack of messianic perspective, a muteness with respect to suffering and oppression, and an inability to recognize how religion, even in its most fundamental and central sense, is mediated by the practices, institutions, and structures of finite and fallible

human beings. See, for example, Klapwijk, "Reformational Philosophy on the Boundary between the Past and the Future." For the main lines of my own alternative, see "Earth's Lament: Suffering, Hope, and Wisdom," an inaugural address given on November 21, 2003. The text is available online at <<http://www.icscanada.edu/events/convocation/>>.

59. Hendrik Hart, *Understanding Our World: An Integral Ontology* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984), pp. 325-70.

60. Lambert Zuidervaart, "Existence, Nomic Conditions, and God: Issues in Hendrik Hart's Ontology," *Philosophia Reformata* 50 (1985): 47-65. I address later developments in Hart's account of religion and rationality in "Artistic Truth, Linguistically Turned: Variations on a Theme from Adorno, Habermas, and Hart," in *Philosophy as Responsibility: A Celebration of Hendrik Hart's Contribution to the Discipline*, ed. Ronald A. Kuipers and Janet Catherina Wesselius (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2002), pp. 129-49.

61. Roy Clouser, *The Myth of Religious Neutrality: An Essay on the Hidden Role of Religious Belief in Theories* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), pp. 16-24.

62. Clouser, pp. 72-73, 191-94.

63. Dooyeweerd, "Christian Philosophy," p. 4; cf. NC 1: 37-38. Both passages give a harsh assessment of the value and pitfalls of transcendent critique.

64. Clouser, p. 5.

65. Perhaps this difference also helps explain why neither book discusses the other author's work, despite a personal acquaintance over many years. A cursory examination uncovers only one mention of the other author in each book, and that in an endnote, not in the main text (see Hart, p. 377, n. 17 and Clouser, p. 313, n. 6). The fact that Hart's book appeared seven years earlier might help explain his not discussing Clouser's work, but the same cannot be said the other way around.

66. I received word of H. Evan Runner's death (March 14, 2002) when I was completing the revisions to this essay. I dedicate it to his memory. I also wish to thank Lee Hardy, Henk Hart, Bill Hasker, Hugo Meynell, Cal Seerveld, and Bob Sweetman for their instructive and encouraging comments on a draft of this essay.