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A THEME FROM THE PHILOSOPHY OF HERMAN DOOYEWEERD

Hendrik Hart

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Herman Dooyeweerd's *New Critique of Theoretical Thought* in 1985 and the 10th anniversary of his death in 1987, I explore his theory of theory. Dooyeweerd distinguished theory as conceptual knowledge of abstracted functions from everyday knowing as integrated knowledge of wholes. He tried to show that critical theorizing requires philosophical integration, self-awareness, and religious knowledge of the origin of ourselves and creation. In the course of developing his view Dooyeweerd touched on many issues that are still current for us today, in particular issues around foundationalism. A brief evaluation in the context of our contemporary philosophical scene closes the essay.

The year 1985 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Christian philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd's three volume *magnum opus*, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, first published in Dutch in 1935, later in English in 1953.¹ Dooyeweerd, who lived from 1894-1977, was a Dutch philosopher, according to some the most important philosopher in Holland since Spinoza. His influence extends far beyond that small European country, however, and North America is one area where scholars have found Dooyeweerd's thought to be worthwhile.² It would seem appropriate, therefore, that especially Christian philosophers take note of Dooyeweerd's work at this time, more than a decade after his death and over half a century after the appearance of a seminal and original philosophical work by a contemporary philosopher whose influence, although limited to a small number of philosophers in North America, is nevertheless perceptible. In general one might say that awareness of Dooyeweerd's work is concentrated among scholars who are interested in connections between knowledge and religious belief and who have an affinity for thinking about these epistemic connections within certain Calvinian traditions.

The theme from Dooyeweerd's work I propose to introduce here is that of his *Gegenstand* theory of theory.³ I chose this theme because the *magnum opus* takes its title from a focus on theoretical thought. Not only is this theory one of the better known and more controversial of his views among those who do know his work, but it is also one of the clearest links between his philosophy and his Calvinist heritage. Insofar as historical links between Calvinism and philosophy

have been especially close in certain areas of epistemology,⁴ Dooyeweerd's *Gegenstand* theory as an epistemological theory will help to see his philosophy as clearly embedded in his religious position.

Introduction

The theory can perhaps best be introduced by reference to a well known traditional model philosophers use to represent what goes on when people know something. We say that there is someone who knows, a knowing subject, as well as something that is known, a known object. The subject relates to the object in knowing it, while the object is related to the subject in being known. We may symbolize this as S-O. In this formula S and O are on either side of a hyphen. They are, we say, on *opposite* sides of the relation, one is *over against* the other. If we want to say this in German, we can say that, since the object "stands over against" the subject, the object is a *Gegenstand* to the knower or subject. Following this train of thought we could be tempted to see Herman Dooyeweerd's *Gegenstand* theory as just another one in the long line of theories of the knower-known relation conceived as a subject-object relation. However, it would be a mistake to put it like this. Dooyeweerd used the German *Gegenstand*, which as a term is no more than a German translation of the Latin *objectum*, in order to be able to distinguish this *Gegenstand* of theoretical thought from the *object* of naive experience.⁵

Dooyeweerd made this distinction because he viewed everyday concepts (non-abstractive)⁶ as very different from the highly abstract concepts of theory. In theoretic thinking, which he saw as dissective, he wanted to place great emphasis on the dis-tinctive, ab-stractive, ana-lytic, or ex-planatory character of that sort of knowing. In contrast, he understood everyday conceptual knowing wholistically, as in-tegrative and co-herent. In a theory, Dooyeweerd maintained, we have a splitting apart of reality, a dissection of the world into some of its various parts and dimensions. In ordinary conceptual knowing we make distinctions which are normally not experienced with the isolation of theoretical abstraction. Theoretical concepts always pick only an element, an aspect, a property, a structure out of the integrated complexity that is reality. Reality, characterized by wholeness and integration, "resists" this being taken to pieces. Dooyeweerd found evidence for this in his belief that no theoretical concept can really be understood unless we see it against the background of the original context from which we isolated it.⁷ Dooyeweerd believed that in theoretical thought, reality can only be known if even in its most abstract concepts contact with the rest of reality remains. One might say that, if in our attempts to isolate an element of reality in abstraction, we sense the presence of the rest of reality in our isolated concept, we then have a sense of reality's "resistance" within theory.⁸

Dooyeweerd tried to capture this sense of theoretical resistance in the term *Gegenstand*. A concept of *theoretical* knowledge for Dooyeweerd grasps a *Gegenstand*, that is, an abstracted, isolated dimension of reality which, because of this isolation, exists in tension with the reality to which it refers, as well as with the rest of reality from which the referent was isolated. A concept of everyday knowledge, in contrast, grasps an *object* which maintains the integrality of our wholistic experience of reality. Terminologically, then, there is a contrast between a theoretical *Gegenstand* and what Dooyeweerd called a naive object.⁹

Some Background

Before I give a more detailed description and clarification of the *Gegenstand* theory I will now first present a short characterization of the problems Dooyeweerd hoped to be able to tackle with this theory and a brief sketch of the historical circumstances which set the context for these problems.

When Dooyeweerd developed his *Gegenstand* theory it allowed him to make helpful approaches to a number of significant questions. How do we get at the role played by the thinker in the process of thought?¹⁰ If science is unified in its method, how do we account for the many different scholarly disciplines and how do they relate?¹¹ Is scientific knowledge a specific kind of knowledge with a character of its own?¹² Is theoretic thinking unprejudiced, objective, or autonomous?¹³ With the *Gegenstand* theory (GT) in hand Dooyeweerd was able to formulate helpful answers to these problems. But why was he interested in them?

The need to face these problems arose out of a complex background with religious, social, and philosophical components. From his Calvinian religious tradition he inherited the conviction that human life in its totality is integrally religious, that our choices and decisions are ultimately moulded and motivated by religious forces, by our relationship to what we believe to be ultimate.¹⁴ The Calvinian confession of God's sovereign rule in creation implies the need for subjecting all of our lives, including our life of scholarship, to this rule. Knowledge not guided by faith was foreign to Dooyeweerd's experience. If science developed out of a different set of convictions, then science must be reformed. Only a moment's reflection on the implications of this heritage for the questions mentioned in the preceding paragraph will reveal that Dooyeweerd had strong convictions against certain answers traditionally given to these questions.

In the footsteps of Abraham Kuyper, founder of the Free University where Dooyeweerd taught all of his scholarly career, he worked on a specific theory to give scholarly expression to the spiritual need he saw for redirection in the world of science. Though he acknowledged science as having a character of its own that should be respected and developed, he was equally insistent that science not dictate to other areas of human experience; least of all in matters of truth.

Scientific method as supreme standard of truth or as most authentic road to knowledge was not something Dooyeweerd subscribed to. Nor did he believe that science is the supreme authority for deciding what is real. The fact that some belief might not pass scientific muster was not by itself reason for rejecting the belief, as Dooyeweerd saw it. The setting of supreme standards could for him only be a matter of the will of the world's Creator. Science is just one area of our lives. It is in no position to rule over other areas of human experience. Nor can, within science, one field claim to have discovered the standards to be followed by all other fields.

Stimulated by these beliefs from his Calvinian tradition, Dooyeweerd deeply experienced his culture from the perspective of the worldview inspired by these beliefs. He sharply saw the need for freedom of conviction *in* the academy, that is, the need for ultimate openness in the academy, unobstructed by false notions of objectivity; as well as the need for the freedom *of* the academy to be itself in its relation with other social institutions. Freedom from control by political or ecclesiastical authority was no more essential to Dooyeweerd than freedom from control by the hidden agendas of unconfessed intellectual ideologies within the world of scholarship. Because the Free University of his day was still concerned to establish its viability both as a religiously open institution among the religiously closed universities of that time, and as a religiously free institution in relation to the church and its theologians of that day, we can in this context understand Dooyeweerd's concern that the proper character of theory be investigated.

Philosophically these religious and cultural impulses come into focus in Dooyeweerd's lifelong struggle with the philosophical dogma, as he referred to it, of the pretended autonomy of theoretical thought.¹⁵ Michael Polanyi's theory of the scientist's indwelling in his framework of commitment, Jürgen Habermas's theory of the role of human interests in science, Thomas Kuhn's theory of the role of paradigms in the natural sciences, and Gerard Radnitzky's theory of steering fields internal to science, are all prefigured in the way Dooyeweerd worked out his GT.¹⁶ He not only saw the problems connected with rational autonomy very early, but he also was one of the first to formulate a comprehensive theory to deal with these problems.

The Theory

Briefly stated, Dooyeweerd approached these problems of his religious, cultural, and philosophical milieu by means of the GT as follows. In order to overcome what he called rational autonomy we need to see that any rational process is a human activity. By reflecting on their role in the process people will detect that theory is not closed to their subjective selves. When we theoret-

ically reflect (a rational process) on how we are present in our theorizing (theoretical self-reflection), we will uncover our philosophical assumptions. That happens because the presence of the self in theorizing differs from that presence in the contextual reflection of everyday experience. Let me explain.

For everyday thought the world about which we reflect is an intellectually unproblematic *given*.¹⁷ For science, however, the *Gegenstand* is an abstract product of human intelligence. It is not a neutral given of observation. Having been removed from its context by means of logical operations, the place of the *Gegenstand* in the coherence of reality becomes a logical problem. As such this *Gegenstand* is inherently problematic and is encountered only in scientific knowing. The theorizing person brings coherence into that theoretically problematic world by means of philosophical categories, that is, ontological points of view which by means of concepts of totality and integration systematize the multiplicity of theoretical concepts into a theoretical unity. The sciences themselves, with their many different points of view, cannot contribute this unity, because their *Gegenstand* comes from many different fields. None of these fields has any primacy in the sense that any one of them could serve to integrate all the others. Therefore, to get a coherent scientific view of reality, only an underlying philosophy can integrate these irreducible and diverse approaches.¹⁸

So the first level of self-reflection in theory gets in touch with the self in terms of a person's assumed philosophical categories of integration. These underlying philosophical assumptions represent, as it were, the theoretical presence of the self inside the theoretical world. But in order that in its presence that self may become fully self-conscious, theoretical self-reflection demands philosophical self-reflection. Having come across the philosophical assumptions, these assumptions must be confronted in philosophy by the self whose points of view they are. And self-reflection has nowhere else to go in philosophy than to the presence of the self behind these assumptions in its reflection. Thus the avenue via which Dooyeweerd tries to undermine the autonomy of reason is that of self-critical reflection on the rational process. Reason, rather than being autonomous, is rooted in assumptions which in many instances transcend reason. The major exception is the assumption (not acknowledged as such) of reason rooted in assuming itself. But that point of view leads to major antinomies.¹⁹

How does the GT lead to these insights? To understand this we need an analysis of its main concepts and contours. The classical place is *New Critique* volume I, pages 38-55. These pages are part of the "Prolegomena" in which Dooyeweerd develops his transcendental critique of theoretical thought, that is, his attempt to show that theory, via the theorizing person, originates in religious ground motives, in the self's deepest ultimate motivations. It will be helpful to summarize the theory in the very sequence in which Dooyeweerd develops it.

It is essential for an understanding of Dooyeweerd that we remember his stress

on ordered wholeness. He refers to the empirical universe as an integral totality, whose order gives that universe the reality of cosmic coherence.⁽⁴⁾²⁰ In that cosmic coherence we find two foci for our awareness, the one of individually existing entities in their relations (covered in volume III)²¹, the other of the many kinds of properties which these individuals and their relations have (treated in volume II). Thus, Dooyeweerd's theory is a classical theory of "particular substances" and the "attributes" they have. The attributes, to which Dooyeweerd mostly refers as the functions which things have, can be categorized according to him in terms of a number of irreducible levels of functions. There are many attributes (properties, qualities, functions) which things have. But all of them are of some kind or other. And these kinds finally yield a number of mutually irreducible ultimate kinds. Dooyeweerd calls these ultimate kinds the irreducible modal dimensions of our universe.⁽⁴⁾ These modal dimensions are the focus for theoretical knowledge,²² while the individual entities in their interrelations are the focus for ordinary knowledge.⁽³⁸⁾ So theoretical thought or science is functionally oriented, while everyday thought is focussed on actual wholes or concretely interrelated individual entities.²³

Another way of drawing attention to this functional focus of theory is to refer to that focus as antithetical.⁽³⁹⁾ In this context "antithetical" does not have the religious sense in which Dooyeweerd also and more prominently uses the term, namely to indicate the religious irreconcilability of opposing ultimate directions in life. Dooyeweerd calls the theoretical focus antithetic, because he wants to draw attention to the fact that, in his view, theory typically juxtaposes functions of one irreducible kind (the logical functions of the analytic aspect of our thinking) to abstracted functions of another irreducible kind (say, organic functions if the field of inquiry happens to be biology).

Dooyeweerd's most frequent reference to this use of antithesis is to what he calls the opposition of logical and non-logical functions. By logical he means human conceptual, rational, intellectual functions. By non-logical he means other functions we or other entities may have, such as metabolism, sensitivity, skills, morality, and so on. Because our concepts are usually concepts of other than conceptual reality, Dooyeweerd speaks of a conceptual versus non-conceptual or logical versus non-logical opposition.

This antithetical attitude in theory creates a tension between our conceptual operations and their *Gegenstand*, that is, between our analysis and the functional field on which we conceptually operate. The functional field enters into our theory as an abstraction. And the making of abstractions creates tensions caused by the breaking up of the original cosmic coherence within which the abstracted functions have their actual reality.²⁴

So according to Dooyeweerd the sorts of properties typically investigated in one irreducible field of science, that is, the functions of the mode on which we

concentrate our theoretical attention, "resist" being separated from their original context.(40) This problem of opposition and resistance does not occur in everyday thinking, because ordinarily our thinking remains embedded in the context in which it occurs. But theoretical concepts cause us problems, because they are synthetic constructions.(41-44)²⁵ They are taken out of their cosmic coherence.

The synthetic theoretical concept is the focal point for the problems Dooyeweerd sees here. For one thing, there is the opposition between our logical or conceptual functions on the one hand, and the functions of another irreducible mode of functioning on the other. If there is to be a concept, that is, a logical grasping of what is a (usually) non-logical order, that opposition will have to be overcome. For another, once we have analytically resolved the complex reality we are investigating into simpler components, the logical-conceptual point of view does not as such offer any clues as to how the theoretical synthesis must be accomplished. The coherence of certain kinds of properties in a certain kind of entity is usually not a logical matter. Further, argues Dooyeweerd, the conceptual synthesis cannot possibly come from just one of the originally opposed poles. The theoretical concept of a cell, for example, is neither a purely logical reality nor a purely organic reality. It is, as we say, a bio-logical concept. How is that concept possible?(45)

At this point Dooyeweerd makes one of his most important moves in the GT. Since theoretical thought is essentially antithetical in its opposition of logical to nonlogical functionality, he argues, any synthesis will have to originate outside of that opposition. So for Dooyeweerd this means the theoretical synthesis must originate somewhere outside of theory.(46) Against Descartes Dooyeweerd maintains that theory left on its own could never, once having analytically resolved something into its conceptual components, succeed in rebuilding reality in a purely logical way. To be successful theory needs to go outside of itself for its basic clues. True concepts require an extra-theoretical element. But to make that extra-theoretical element theoretically operative it needs to enter into theory. How is that to be accomplished?

Dooyeweerd goes on to argue that, within theory, we need a theoretical view of the whole of reality which lies outside of theory and from which we make the theoretical abstraction. Only the availability within theory of the original coherence provides us with a viewpoint from which we can make the synthesis which occurs in a theoretical concept. A theoretical total view is required.(49) And this is where philosophy comes in. Philosophy, according to Dooyeweerd, ought to be theoretical reflection directed toward the totality of cosmic coherence.(4) This, however, will not become really clear to us unless we become aware of the fact that theoretical analysis is not just an abstracted logical process resulting in concept formation. Rather, theoretical analysis is a real, actual, concrete act of a human person. As a concrete act analysis has, besides logical

functions, many more functions of different kinds. And the act is performed by an individual person whose functions these are.

The importance of this lies in the fact that the theorizing person, in having a philosophical point of view, thereby is able to bring a total view of reality inside the theoretical arena. Thus, in the unity of the person theoretical thought becomes unified. Or rather, it can become so unified. For that to actually happen, we need to become conscious of our philosophical viewpoint²⁶ and even go beyond that to engage in critical self-reflection. The person or community who critically reflect on a philosophical point of view will need to push on to confront the very self or selves-in-community who are responsible for having that point of view. If we concentrate thought on ourselves who think, we will enable ourselves to direct thought to its underlying unity in the human self.(50-51, 5)

Thus Dooyeweerd wants to make a case for the fact that truly successful theoretical concept formation requires self-knowledge. Though this need not be the case for every scientist, Dooyeweerd certainly thought it needed to be true for a scientific community as a whole. The necessary self-awareness that leads to philosophical awareness must go beyond philosophy, urging the scientific community to ask: who are we? who-in-the-world are we? what-in-the-world is our task? who are the "we" asking these questions? Such self-knowledge is only possible in knowing one's origin, religiously speaking. If he were writing today, Dooyeweerd would almost certainly say that our fundamental theoretical notions are linked to our fundamental commitments to what we take to be the ultimate basis for reality. Religious self-knowledge, for Dooyeweerd, is knowing ourselves in knowing our God whose revelation we accept about who we are called to be.

And so Dooyeweerd concludes that the theoretical enterprise has religious roots.(52-55 and 7-12, 15-16) He arrives at that conclusion by analyzing the consequences of his view that theoretical thought is bound to an antithesis of logical and nonlogical functions. Let me briefly summarize the point of the preceding pages once more. In order to overcome this antithesis we need a synthesis to form a *logical* concept of a *nonlogical Gegenstand*. For the synthesis we need a theoretical view of the unity and totality of the world. We require, that is, an ontology, or cosmology, or metaphysic.

Such a totality view, in his analysis, requires self-awareness in philosophy. Self-awareness, in turn, requires religious awareness of our own and the world's origin. It requires religious awareness because we need to come face to face with the source of all knowledge in revelation, which requires knowledge to be rooted in the religious attitude of hearing what is revealed. Both self-awareness and religious awareness, however, lie outside the boundaries of theory. Thus, since theory requires the extra-theoretical to be successful as theory, reason in

theory is not autonomous. Kant was mistaken in saying that in theory reason is autonomous. We need a new critique of theoretical thought.

Evaluation

Of course, this brief summary cannot do justice to Dooyeweerd's elaborate treatment of the GT in various contexts. But enough of it has emerged here to allow us, by way of descriptive summary, to make some general evaluative comments about the GT. Perhaps the most serious problem is Dooyeweerd's lasting satisfaction with the insight that there is a structural difference between theoretical thought and naive or everyday thought. He insisted that the use of our conceptual functions in theory differs *in principle* from their use in other contexts. He never questioned either this insight or his formulation of it. Yet other formulations were in tension if not direct conflict with his articulation of the difference in question here.

One such conflict arises when we critically question his view of philosophy as theory. As theory, philosophy must remain bound to the antithetical attitude and thus be bound also to a dissected universe. As philosophy, however, this theory must be occupied with coherence and even totality.²⁷ That tension is never satisfactorily resolved. The conflict is visibly present in Dooyeweerd's admission of a structural *Gegenstand*, that is, one which rather than being modal is the abstracted grasp of the typical structure of a totality or whole. (Volume II, page 469.) Thus, the view of the *Gegenstand* as necessarily modal in character (39-40) is abandoned in later volumes. But the consequences of that move for earlier formulations are apparently not considered.

In addition to his insufficiently developed concept of the *Gegenstand* Dooyeweerd also did not analyze his concept of naive experience in great detail. It never becomes really clear whether there is a difference between naive thought and naive experience. As a result there is hardly any place in the *New Critique* where Dooyeweerd thoroughly examines naive thought as thought, that is, as conceptual in nature.²⁸ That all thinking, as conceptual, might necessarily be abstractive and therefore characterized by tension, is not only not acknowledged by him, but also never considered. As a result the inner connections between his notions of the *object* of naive thought and of the *Gegenstand* of theoretical analysis are not brought to light.

Experience, knowledge, and thought are not, as a whole, clearly distinguished by Dooyeweerd, even though he does make a very sharp distinction between two kinds of thought. But that sharp distinction itself becomes fuzzy when related to the lack of broader distinctions.²⁹ One may appreciate the distinction between scientific thought and other forms of awareness, while yet expecting a more

defined concept of just with what in those forms of awareness scientific thinking needs to be contrasted.

Contributions

It would not be difficult to add to the list of problems in connection with Dooyeweerd's theory of theory.³⁰ But there are also obvious contributions to be appreciated. From a contemporary point of view it must immediately become evident that the GT is relevant to a number of issues in today's thinking about theory. Examples are presentday reflection on the relativity of *apriori* logical analyses,³¹ on the role of extra conceptual factors in theoretical inquiry, and on the relation of rationality and nonrational elements in our experience. Our exploration of these issues can benefit from a consideration of many cogent arguments in Dooyeweerd's analysis. He deals extensively with the limitations of *apriori* arguments, with the role of the non-theoretical in theory, and with the relation of conceptual and non-conceptual functions in experience. In that sense his fifty-year old theory is a contemporary theory.

Another example is that the GT provides arguments for the necessary relation of theory to practical issues of relevance in a culture. Insofar as our present climate calls for the social relevance of theory we can say that the GT fits that climate. More than that, Dooyeweerd has clearly laid bare connections between theory and the ultimate commitments of the people who theorize.³² In that way he has not only given concrete theoretical articulation to a long held view about religion and theory in his own religious tradition, which up to the formulation of his theory had remained largely intuitive,³³ but he also contributed to the re-emergence in that tradition (Calvinian thought) of reflection on the religious roots of our culture and on the need to act on the basis of one's fundamental convictions.³⁴

Dooyeweerd's contribution to our reflection on the present state of philosophy is also important. By putting great stress on the analytic character of conceptual inquiry, that is, by showing that analysis is essentially a process of taking something apart into its elements, Dooyeweerd provided an explanation for why the theoretical enterprise, if left without philosophical integration, must disintegrate. The GT allows us to understand the fragmentary character of contemporary scholarship. In Dooyeweerd's view the rejection of "metaphysical" philosophy by the academic disciplines as irrelevant must result in the drifting apart of these disciplines from one another as well as within their own territories, since they themselves lack an inner point of integration. At the same time, it provides a rationale for the rehabilitation of philosophy,³⁵ since philosophy is identified as the discipline which provides the context within which science can achieve

integration.

In addition, the GT provides concepts that can help us contribute to the recovery of philosophy itself. If a return to wholistic emphases and to totality concepts is indeed a recovery, then the GT does have contributions to make in this context. When, under the pressure of positivism and the analytic tradition, philosophy as a totality discipline gave way to philosophy as analytic technique and as method for the precise determination of isolated abstractions, the philosophical task of providing a general picture of the total framework of empirical existence seemed to fall into disrepute. The GT shows that such an attitude is not necessary.³⁶

Another lasting contribution to thinking about theory is that besides emphasis on the analytic character of theory, the GT also places emphasis on the synthetic character of theory. In the GT we find an elaborate ontological framework for the Gödelian thesis that theoretical systems as formal systems are in principle incomplete.³⁷ From within theory we cannot satisfactorily complete the theoretical picture. Such an insight undermines the idea that in theory we have a view of reality as it "really" is, as well as the idea that theoretical truth is truth *par excellence*. Further, armed with the conviction that the theoretical enterprise as a whole is synthetic,³⁸ we are challenged to look for the extra-theoretical factors needed to complete theory. To use a turn of phrase: Dooyeweerd would say that analytic truth (as in the analytic tradition) is by definition synthetic (as in artifacted by reason) and can thus never be significantly true as such, by itself.

Dooyeweerd, almost thirty years before Polanyi's *Personal Knowledge* made its appearance, forcefully advanced the conviction that knowledge, including theoretical knowledge, is personal. No knowledge is possible, according to Dooyeweerd, except as the knowledge of persons and with the involvement of these persons noticeable within theory. And in that conviction he included the notion that persons can only be themselves in commitment.

Dooyeweerd's examination of the antithetic or analytic direction in thought in its relation to the synthetic direction reinforces the concept of the relativity of the rational dimension of human experience. Rational knowing is meaningful only in relation to the rest of experience. When it is *a priori* in the sense of divorced from the rest of experience it cannot count on being genuinely meaningful or true. Thus the relativity of rationality in Dooyeweerd is contrasted with its autonomy in the tradition of rationalism. Dooyeweerd never subscribed to the isolated and substantivized view of our conceptual faculties which is so characteristic of all who believe in reason.³⁹ He rejected the notion of a mind or of a reason as a mental substance. His examination of the uncritical dogma of the autonomy of reason led him to a theory of the relativity of our rational knowing. By demonstrating this relativity he showed both that reason is neither the origin of truth or reality,⁴⁰ nor autonomous (and certainly not the measure

of the rest of the world),⁴¹ and that rational procedures can be authentic only in integral relation to the other dimensions of human experience and to the world about which we reason.⁴²

Institute for Christian Studies

NOTES

1. This roughly 2000 page treatise was first put out in Amsterdam by H. J. Paris in three volumes, appearing from 1935 to 1936. The English translation was a genuinely new edition with new material added. It was put out by the Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company of Philadelphia in four volumes, appearing between 1953 and 1958. The fourth volume, which was new, was an extensive index. In 1969 a reprint of all four volumes was bound in a set of two volumes. The same two volume set was reprinted again in 1983 and made available by Paideia Press of Jordan Station, Ontario, Canada.

2. See C. T. McIntire's "Herman Dooyeweerd in North America" in David F. Wells, editor, *Reformed Theology in America*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985, pp. 172-185.)

3. The *Gegenstand* theory is a transcendental theory, describing the conditions which make theory possible.

4. John Calvin's connection of self knowledge and knowledge of God is one such link, Calvinists' suspicions of reason is another. The voluntarist position that God is not bound by laws of logic also finds strong support in certain Calvinist traditions. The work of contemporary theologians such as Karl Barth, Gerrit Berkouwer, and Hendrikus Berkhof provides ample evidence of these traditions. For a recent exploration of these connections see Alvin Plantinga's paper "The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology" in *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 15 (1980): 49-62.

5. The Latin also has the sense of something placed (thrown even) before us, standing out there before us. The German is an etymologically precise translation. So is the Dutch "voorwerp." But both the English and Dutch terms were too far removed in their present meaning to remind the reader immediately of this "outstanding" character of what we think about. And since that aspect in the knower known relation in theory is what especially attracted Dooyeweerd, he chose the German term because of its greater clarity. Purely verbally, object and *Gegenstand* have identical meaning. See *New Critique* I, p. 40 for the *Gegenstand* as "opposite."

6. Dooyeweerd uses a fairly large number of different expressions to stand for the same reality as synonyms. Some of these are "naïve," "every day," and "ordinary," while others used in combination with these are "concepts," "thinking," and "knowing." But it also appears that he often distinguishes sharply within the second group. Such usage, of course, can lead to confusion. Later in the paper I will come back to this. Up to that point I will follow Dooyeweerd's own usage of interchangeability among these expressions.

7. There are definite parallels here with the functions of the "tacit dimension" in the thought of Michael Polanyi, as worked out by him in various places but perhaps best accessible in the opening pages of *Personal Knowledge*. (Various editions. For the publishing history see page iv in the Harper

Torchbook edition, New York, Harper and Row, 1964. xvi, 428 pp.)

8. Unusual though this talk about "resistance" may be, the expression is authentically Dooyeweerdian and its meaning will become clearer later on.

9. Dooyeweerd's use of "object" is both traditional and untraditional, for which reason his statements about objects can be confusing. Traditional is his insistence that what is objective about objects is that they are what they are "objectively" in the sense of the same for all normal observers. But at the same time no object for Dooyeweerd is merely something out there. For him its being objective is always related to the functions of a subject. The development of that latter doctrine is highly untraditional. A further confusion is, of course, the fact that the English term object is as much a translation of the Latin *objectum* as the German term *Gegenstand*.

10. He asked this question because, long before Polanyi's *Personal Knowledge* appeared, Dooyeweerd was persuaded that dealing with the process of abstraction apart from the person abstracting would be dealing with that process, mistakenly, as though it were itself an abstraction.

11. As an anti reductionist, Dooyeweerd was opposed to letting one method of one science stand model for all the rest. He was a methodological pluralist. But he also wished to stress the interrelatedness and unity of all methods of science.

12. He intuitively opposed the idea of science as the perfection of all knowledge.

13. Well before Richard Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979) the concept of reason as the judge of all culture by means of its permanent neutral matrix for all knowing was rejected by Dooyeweerd.

14. For a similar conviction in the same tradition see Nicholas Wolterstorff's *Reason within the Bounds of Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976).

15. What is called foundationalism today is closely related to what Dooyeweerd referred to as the autonomy of reason. This whole approach to theory was suspect to him as an uncritically adopted prejudice. Long before that tradition of centuries became questionable to philosophers in general—as it has for the last two or three decades—Dooyeweerd developed the GT in order to expose the fallacies of this unexamined dogma.

16. Polanyi's theory is analogous to Dooyeweerd's insistence on the inescapability of the religious motivations of a thinker finding their way into unavoidable ideas regarding the totality of reality which fundamentally determine that thinker's outlook. Habermas's theory is present in Dooyeweerd's insistence that each thought community is compelled to follow the leads of their deepest convictions about humanity's place in the world. Kuhn's and Radnitzky's theories have their parallel in Dooyeweerd's view that all science occurs within ontological frameworks. There are, of course, many differences. But the fundamental insights are strongly analogous and point to similar states of affairs. See Clarence W. Joldersma, "Beliefs And The Scientific Enterprise: A Framework Model Based On Kuhn's Paradigms, Polanyi's Commitment Framework, And Radnitzky's Internal Steering Fields." Master Of Philosophy thesis, Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto, 1982.

17. Dooyeweerd literally means *intellectually* unproblematic, not unproblematic in every sense. Naive experience can have all sorts of problems. But the object of naive experience or everyday thought does not present us with the typical logical-analytical problems we encounter when we engage in theoretical abstraction.

18. In Dooyeweerd's classification of the sciences he takes the point of view that all fundamental fields are characterized by a property that is irreducible to the properties characterizing other fields. Thus he would say that the biological sciences are determined in their approach by life, whereas

the physical sciences are thus determined by energy; in such a way that life and energy are irreducible properties.

19. Many contemporary refutations of foundationalism are related to the discovery that the rational enterprise cannot rationally and coherently be claimed to be its own foundation.

20. A reference like this refers to a page or pages in volume I of Dooyeweerd's *New Critique*.

21. Rocks, trees, insects, tools, people, governments, churches.

22. See note 18, above. This functional focus or orientation is not the same as a theoretical field's referent. Dooyeweerd distinguishes between a theory's "point of view" or orientation within reality on the one hand, and its subject matter on the other. Its referent is the order of a field, its coherent system of laws, regularities, etc. Biology's *point of view* is "life" while its *subject matter* is general patterns of regularity in reality seen from that point of view.

23. So science as functionally oriented takes its point of view in life, or energy, or space, or sensitivity. All of these are functions or kinds of functions of things, of entities. But they are not themselves things that can have such functions. Plants (things) can live (function that way). Living is not something done by life. People (things) can think (function that way). Thinking is not something done by thought. The things that do the functioning are the wholes, the concretely individual entities.

24. One can easily and unproblematically "take hold" of a plant. There is nothing "unreal" in that. But to "grasp" photosynthesis "in general," i.e., to understand this process via a concept of it, is far less easy and far more problematic. Many of our concepts and theories are subject to controversy and rejection or revision. And "the man in the street" tends to have an "unreal" feeling when scholars discuss concepts. Reality as they know it makes these abstractions seem unreal. These are the phenomena Dooyeweerd refers to as theoretical problems and resistances. See also notes 5, 7, and 17, above.

25. Terms like analysis and synthesis have a more Cartesian ring to it in Dooyeweerd than the later Kantian and positivistic or analytic meaning we know so well in our contemporary discussions. Analytic refers to the resolution of complex concepts into their distinct conceptual components, while synthetic refers to the conceptual recombination of these simpler distinctions. See also the second half of the opening paragraph of this section.

26. Most scientists will tend not to be conscious of their philosophical bias. But through education, adoption of paradigms, and in many other ways they do operate from the vantage point of such a bias.

27. Hence the fairly obvious question: can philosophy be genuine theory? If so, how can it transcend diversity; or how then is theory in principle diversity oriented?

28. But see volume II, p. 432.

29. If one tries to imagine how Dooyeweerd might have cleared up this difficulty, every answer raises new problems. E.g., if naive experience is intended to be the same as naive thought, then all experience becomes some sort of thought. For the contemporary reader, given the author is no longer alive, it is best to accept that the terminology is not precise or well defined on this point and that the context will have to determine what is intended. As a result, the same term can in different contexts have quite different meanings.

30. By using this expression I do not intend to suggest that the GT is in fact a complete theory of theory, but only that, as a theory, it deals with theory, though not perhaps with all of what theory is about.

31. What I mean here is that even among those who accept the validity of *apriori* arguments for empirical situations, there are those who claim that this validity is relative to other factors outside

of logic. See, e.g., D. M. Armstrong's views on the use of *apriori* arguments in determining what universals there are; in the introduction to the first volume of his *Universals and Scientific Realism* (2 volumes, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1978).

32. As described above: by linking theory to the theorizing person and the theorizing person to religious commitment.

33. Dooyeweerd's views on the religious connections within theory have always been present in Calvinism; see, e.g., Hendrik Hart, Nicholas Wolterstorff, and Johan van der Hoeven, eds., *Rationality in the Calvinian Tradition* (Washington, D.C., University Press of America, 1983). See also note 14, above.

34. Reformed Christians who came to Canada shortly after World War II who invested much energy in the establishment of cultural organizations in education (Curriculum Development Center), labor (Christian Labor Association of Canada), politics (Citizens for Public Justice), the arts (Patmos Art Gallery), or theory (Institute for Christian Studies) often traced much of their inspiration directly or indirectly to the work of Dooyeweerd.

35. This rehabilitation is not, of course, a matter of a total reintroduction. But as a theoretical discipline which has something of relevance to offer to all of the disciplines of the modern academy, philosophy needs rehabilitation. It needs to take itself seriously as an integrative force and, having thus returned to what Dooyeweerd would call its original and legitimate vocation, it needs to make itself serviceable in the academy. Kai Nielsen's Presidential address to the 1984 meeting of the Canadian Philosophical Association in Guelph seemed to me to be an invitation to philosophers in this direction. (See "On Finding One's Feet in Philosophy: From Wittgenstein to Marx." In *Metaphilosophy*, Vol. 16, No. 1, January 1985, pp. 1-11.)

36. Dooyeweerd would say that his analysis demonstrates the possibility to combine serious theory with wholistic emphases and that in order to be empirical and scientific, philosophy need not go into the fragmenting and isolating direction of the analytic tradition.

37. Kurt Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem does not strictly teach this, of course. But various authors, including Michael Polanyi in *Personal Knowledge*, have taken the theorem to imply this.

38. See note 25, above. Synthetic also means, of course, artificial, which comes closer to Dooyeweerd's meaning than the more common meaning of the term in analytic philosophy.

39. In this respect Dooyeweerd's views of the main Western tradition on rationality have much in common with Richard Rorty's views in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*.

40. The Cartesian view of reason.

41. Autonomous in the sense of subject to no authority except its own, while perhaps being authoritative for the rest of experience.

42. The fact that reason can argue for the non-autonomy of reason is not a contradiction. To argue that argument does not have the last word is not the same as abandoning argument, but only to substitute arguing with humility for arguing with mistaken pride.