

S U M M E R S E S S I O N 1 9 5 9

Free University, Amsterdam

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Dr. Herman Dooyeweerd

Dr. Herman Dooyeweerd was born 7 October 1894 in Amsterdam.

After the completion of his juridical studies at the Free University he took his doctorsdegree in law in 1917 with a dissertation entitled "The Cabinet in Dutch Constitutional Law". In 1926 he was appointed professor in philosophy, encyclopedia and history of law at the Free University. From this time he founded, together with his brother in law, Dr. D.H.Th. Vollenhoven (professor in philosophy), a new school of christian philosophy.

His main philosophical works are:

1. De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee (Dutch, 3 vol. publ. by H.J. Paris, Amsterdam. 1935-1936)
2. Reformatie en Scholastiek in de Wijsbegeerte (Dutch, projected in 3 volumes, of which the first appeared 1946 publ. by Wever, publ. C^o-Francker).
3. Transcendental Problems of Philosophical Thought. (W.M.B. Eerdmans Publ. C^o, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1948)
4. A new Critique of Theoretical Thought (4 vol. publ. by H.J. Paris, Amsterdam and the Presbyterian and Reformed Publ. C^o, Philadelphia, 1953-1958).

The appearance of his first Dutch trilogy gave rise to the international "Association for reformed philosophy" (1936) whose philosophical quarterly review is "Philosophia Reformata" publ. by J.H. Kok, Kampen, the Netherlands. Dr. Dooyeweerd is editor in chief of this review, wherein he published many of his greater articles.

After the second world war a foundation was formed for the establishing of particular chairs for this philosophy at the public universities and institutions for university-instruction in the Netherlands.

Until now such chairs have been established at the University of Leyden, Utrecht and Groningen, and at the "Technische Hogeschool" of Delft and the "Economische Hogeschool" in Rotterdam.

Dr. Dooyeweerd was invited for different lecture-tours in other countries to introduce his philosophy. So he delivered philosophical lectures at most of the South-African universities, at the Universities of Aix and Marseille, Louvain, Paris (the Sorbonne), and the last year at the Universities of Toronto, Philadelphia, Boston and the Harvard University (Cambridge).

He is fellow and secretary of the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences and Humanities (section Humanities), vice president of the Board of Trustees of the Institute of Social Studies in the Hague and President of the Dutch "Association for philosophy of law".

He is knight in the order of Oranje Nassau and of the Dutch Lion.

THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPT OF NATURE

Does there exist a genuine Christian concept of nature? The embarrassing ambiguity of the term nature causes a lot of difficulties when we try to answer this question.

In modern Western thought the term "nature" is preponderantly understood in a natural scientific sense. Until the rise of micro-physics "nature" was identified with the whole of objective phenomena capable of a systematical causal explanation to be formulated in mathematical equations. In this sense "nature" was tantamount to a closed deterministic picture of the world which found its dialectical counter-pole in the practical idea of autonomous freedom of the human personality. This dialectical tension between "nature" and "freedom" such as it was most pregnantly conceived by Immanuel Kant, was characteristic of the Humanistic world - and life view since the Renaissance. It was the hidden dialectical basic motive of modern Western thought insofar as this latter was ruled by the Humanistic starting-point. It found also expression in the contrast between the concepts of "nature" and "culture", insofar as "culture" was viewed as the realm of creative human freedom,

In scholastic christian philosophy and theology the term "nature" has a quite different sense. Here its meaning is determined by the dialectical basic motive of nature and supra-natural grace. According to Thomas Aquines, whose view was accepted by the Roman Catholic Church, nature is the intrinsic ontological structure of all created beings, inclusive of man, who are composed of "form" and "matter" and as such, are liable to becoming and decay. The human nature is characterized by its rational form, the immortal rational soul. This nature is the ontological substructure of the supra-natural gift of grace by means of which man was destined to participate in the divine being. This gift was lost by the fall into sin but regained by the redemption brought about by Jezus Christ, Who has entrusted the sacramental means of grace to the church. The natural sphere of life has a relative autonomy over against the supra-natural sphere of grace.

Natural reason can arrive at the insight into all natural truths without the supra-natural light of divine revelation. But, rightly used, it cannot contradict the supra-natural truths of the church-doctrine. Sin has not corrupted the human nature but only wounded and weakened it.

*From the days of scholastic and renaissance
I left no room for any supra-natural element upon the natural order*

Therefore, natural reason is liable to error and should be submitted to the unfallible doctrinal authority of the church.

How is the relation between the order of nature and the miracles.
This scholastic concept of nature, though it has deeply penetrated the traditional christian theology and philosophy, was certainly not of a *Biblical* ~~christian~~ origin. It was taken from greek philosophy, more particularly from Aristotle, and only externally adapted to the church-doctrine of creation.

The greek concepts of nature were from the very outset ruled by a dialectical religious basic motive, originating from the conflict between two pagan religions, namely the older religion of life and death, and the younger cultural religion of the Olympian gods. The former deified the ever flowing stream of organic life, which cannot be fixed in any limiting form. From this formless divine source all generations of beings which seek to maintain themselves in an individual form take their origin. Thereby they do wrong to each other since the individual corporeal form can only be kept up at the cost of others. Thus there is a natural law of retributive justice or anankè, according to which each corporeal form of life is doomed to death.

In other words, the central theme of this religion was the temporal process of becoming and decay, while the moving principle and origin of this process was considered to be the formless everflowing stream of life.

This is what since Aristotle was called the matter-principle of nature, namely the formless principle of becoming and decay.

The cultural Olympian religion, on the other hand, was the religion of form, measure and harmony. In this religion the fundamental form-principle of greek thought found its origin. In the Aristotelian concept of nature we are confronted with the attempt to synthesize the antagonistic principles of matter and form. The essential form of a natural substance was conceived as the immanent end (entelechy) of the developmental process of its matter. Apart from this form, matter does not have actual being. The teleologisch order of nature shows a hierarchy of these substantial forms, culminating in the rational soul-form of the human nature.

But the irreconcilable dualism in the religious basic motive of greek thought reappears in the Aristotelian view of human nature. On the one hand man is conceived as a substantial unity of his rational soul and his material body, on the other the active intellect, which was supposed to

have the central position in this rational soul, is conceived as a separate form and immortal immaterial substance which does not originate from nature but is implanted in man from outside.

God himself is conceived as the pure actual form, the absolute intellect, whose counter-pole is absolute matter.

It is the same dualistic basic motive which excludes in principle any idea of a divine creation of nature in greek thought. This is why the scholastic attempt at an accommodation of the aristotelian concept of nature to the biblical doctrine of creation could only result in an inner deformation of both of them. It introduced a basic dualism into christian thought which was incompatible with the integral and radical character of the christian religion. The scholastic basic motive of nature and grace gives a clear expression to this dualism.

The central theme of the biblical revelation, that of creation, fall into sin and redemption by Jesus Christ in the communion of the Holy Spirit, unmasks the dualist religious basic-motives lying at the foundation of the greek, the scholastic and the modern Humanist concepts of nature. It lays bare their completely or partially apostate character. Creation in its biblical sense is not an ontological concept; it has a central religious meaning, and should therefore not be identified with the greek concept of temporal genesis.

God created all things after their own nature. All cultural formation brought about by man presupposes the inner nature of all things which is determined by the order of creation. Within the order of time (which is implied in the latter) our world, such as it presents itself to human experience, shows a great diversity of model aspects and typical structures, which are arranged in an unbreakable mutual coherence. But God created man in His image. This means that the human nature in its temporal diversity of aspects has a religious centre, the human selfhood or I, wherein after the order of creation the whole sense of the temporal world should be concentrated into a radical unity, namely the service of love of God and the neighbour. This is why the human fall into sin implied the apostasy of our whole temporal world, since it affected this world in its religious centre, in its very root or radix. There does not exist a realm of nature independent of this religious centre of the temporal world.

For the same reason the redemption in its biblical sense has a radical character. It means that in Jesus Christ mankind, and in mankind its whole temporal world, has received a new religious root in which the image of God is revealed in its perfect sense. This implies the eschatological message of a new world which in the fulfillment of times will be opened up to a clear expression of the endless love of God.

This is the only possible Christ view of nature in its biblical sense.