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## Herman Dooyeweerd—A Profile of his Thought

### 1 Introduction

One of the dominant themes of Dooyeweerd's philosophy is his belief that everyone has some sort of ultimate commitment which materially affects the nature of everything that that person does, including his theoretical activity. Such a view is not—of course—unique to Dooyeweerd, but what is distinctive about Dooyeweerd's philosophy is—firstly—his belief that the nature of this ultimate commitment is religious and—secondly—the elaborate account that he gives of the character that a person's religious presuppositions must take. I'll explain what these are in greater detail later, but now I'll just mention them.

Dooyeweerd sees every theoretical enterprise—be it economics, aesthetics or even mathematics—as having philosophical presuppositions; and every philosophical system has religious presuppositions. Underlying every system of philosophy there's a *religious ground-motive*. Each of these is common to many thinkers and Dooyeweerd isolates four ground-motives that have dominated Western philosophy since its conception; and these are the Greek ground-motive of form and matter, the Christian ground-motive of creation, fall and redemption, the Scholastic ground-motive of nature and grace, and the modern—that is to say, post-Cartesian—ground-motive of nature and freedom. This latter 'assumes that man is autonomous and free and that nature is completely determined.' ([13, p. 63]). There's nothing special about the number four and some disciples of Dooyeweerd think that underlying existentialism there's a fifth ground-motive, namely that of freedom and contingency.

Dooyeweerd also claims that every philosophical system must give some account of the structure and regularity that exists in nature. The answer is encapsulated in what he calls a *cosmonomic idea*. Hence, an alternative name of Dooyeweerd's philosophy is the philosophy of the cosmonomic idea.

And finally, Dooyeweerd claims that every philosophical system must contain an Archimedean point, which is a sort of fixed starting-point from which theoretical thinking begins.

So, summarizing, Dooyeweerd says that everybody's thinking presupposes a religious ground-motive, a cosmonomic idea and a

choice of Archimedean point. Most people are unaware of the fact that underlying their thinking all these forces are at work, but Dooyeweerd—rather in the spirit of psychoanalysis—says that if you're unaware of the presence of these things, then their effect on your thinking is even greater.

As I said, I'll explain these more fully below, but now I'll say something about my personal attitude to Dooyeweerd's philosophy. I would not call myself a Dooyeweerdian, but I do think that Dooyeweerd has contributed some really worthwhile ideas to Christian thinking. To mention just one example at this stage, I think that his replacement of the Greek idea of the soul—in his philosophy—by the Biblical concept of the heart is entirely correct and justified. Furthermore, many people argue whether or not there can be such a thing as a Christian philosophy. Both Heidegger—from the philosophical side—and Barth—from the theological—say that a Christian philosophy is a contradiction in terms. Rather than just arguing against such a view, what Dooyeweerd has done is to construct a massive philosophical system that he claims to be Christian. If you think that a Christian philosophy is impossible, then you need to show that what Dooyeweerd has done is either not philosophy or not Christian. At present, I tend to side with those people who deny the possibility of a Christian philosophy, but I'm not a hardline advocate of this position. I think that large chunks of Dooyeweerd's philosophy are not particularly Christian.

But, the main reason why I do not think of myself as a Dooyeweerdian is that—ultimately—I find Dooyeweerd's philosophy too *rigid*. I'm tempted to call it *legalistic*, but I think that that would be misleading. Dooyeweerd—as will become apparent—has a very elaborate conception of law and the nature of what he calls individuality structures. (Examples of individuality structures are those 'for the state, for marriage, for works of art, for mosquitoes, for sodium chloride, etc.' [13, p. 349.]) In reading his—often perceptive—analyses of the law spheres and individuality structures, I often feel that he is forcing the material he's dealing with into his preconceived rational scheme of things. He is imposing a rational structure upon reality rather than seeing the rational in the real. Peter Singer has a very nice parable which illustrates this point ([20, pp. 36–37]):<sup>1</sup>

When people first began to live in towns, no one thought of town planning. They just put up their houses, shops and factories wherever

1. He actually uses this to expound Hegel's criticism of the French Revolution.

seemed most convenient, and the cities grew higgledy-piggledy. Then came along someone who said: 'This is no good! We are not thinking about how we want our towns to look. Our lives are being ruled by chance! We need someone to plan our towns, to make them conform to our ideals of beauty and good living.' So along came the town-planners, who bulldozed the old neighbourhoods and erected streamlined high-rise apartment buildings, surrounded by swathes of green lawns. Roads were widened and straightened, shopping centres were put up in the midst of generous parking areas, and factories were carefully isolated from residential zones. Then the town-planners sat back and waited for the people to thank them. But the people complained that from their high-rise apartments they could not watch their children as they played on the lawns ten floors below. They complained that they missed the local corner shops, and that it was too far to walk across all those green lawns and parking spaces to the shopping centres. They complained that since everyone now had to drive to work, even those new wide straight roads were choked with traffic. Worst of all, they complained that, now no one was walking, the streets had become unsafe and those lovely green lawns were dangerous to cross after dark. So the old town planners were fired, and a new generation of town planners grew up, who had learnt from the mistakes of their predecessors. The first thing the new town planners did was to put a stop to the demolition of old neighbourhoods. Instead they began to notice the positive features of the old, unplanned towns. They admired the varied vistas of the narrow, crooked streets, and noticed how convenient it was to have shops and residences and even small factories mixed up together. They remarked on how these streets kept traffic to a minimum, encouraged people to walk, and made the town centre both lively and safe. Not that their admiration for the old unplanned towns was totally unreserved; there were a few things that needed to be tidied up, some particularly offensive industries were moved away from where people lived, and many old buildings had to be restored or else replaced with buildings in keeping with the surroundings. What the new town planners had discovered, however, was that the old cities *worked*, and it was this that had to be preserved, whatever tinkering might still be desirable.

I mention this right at the beginning so that when I come to expound the theories of the law-spheres you won't think that I believe in them.

I also think that I should mention here something about Dooyeweerd's style. A critical reviewer wrote that Dooyeweerd's

exposition of his theme . . . is marred by a large number of vague and obscure statements in a formidable and inadequately defined terminology. (12, p. 407)

A sympathetic commentator has said that Dooyeweerd's

style is always cumbrous, repetitive and obscure, and that this has not been improved by the translation into English. ([2, p. 45].)

Whereas, a dedicated follower claims that Dooyeweerd

writes with the carelessness of genius. ([19, pp. 199–200])

Now, I'll briefly sketch the structure of this article. I'll continue by telling you something about the historical background to Dooyeweerd's thought, both religious and philosophical. Then, I'll say something about transcendental arguments and the structure of philosophy. Then I'll expound Dooyeweerd's theory of the law-spheres; and after that I'll give an account of the four religious ground-motives that he sees underlying philosophy.

## 2 The Historical Background

### 2.1 *Religious Influences*

Dooyeweerd stands firmly in the Dutch Reformed tradition and a very important figure in this was Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920). He was primarily a politician—being Holland's Prime Minister from 1901 to 1905—but he strongly believed that Christian principles should affect every area of life—including politics—and to this end he formed the Anti-Revolutionary Party, a Christian political party which had a large role to play in Dutch politics until the Second World War, but whose influence has waned since then. To give a flavour of the principles of the ARP I will quote a few passages from its Statement of Principles.<sup>2</sup> First, the Preamble:

The anti-revolutionary or Christian-historical movement represents that element of our national character which was formed under the influence of the Reformation and the leadership of William of Orange and which acquired its identity in the second half of the sixteenth century.

Its point of departure is the confession that God is the absolute Sovereign and that He has given to Jesus Christ all power in heaven and on earth. Both the Government and the people are to acknowledge this power and are therefore obliged to keep the commandments of God for the life of the state. (p. 633.)

The ARP definitely believes in a pluralistic state. Although the government should 'acknowledge God's Name in all of its public activity' (p. 634), it also asserts that the government must 'abstain,

2. Included as Appendix 1 of [21, pp. 633–42] under the title 'Statement of the Principles and General Political Program of the Anti-Revolutionary Party'.

in view of its incompetence in these matters, from all measures which intend to coerce the religious development of the nation in a particular direction' (p. 634) and also that it must 'extend equal treatment to all churches and all citizens, whatever their religious beliefs may be' (p. 634).

And I'll quote their policy on education in full (pp. 636–7):

It is a matter of public interest that there be adequate educational facilities and that everyone be enabled to receive instruction and training suited to his aptitude and ability. As a consequence of its duty to protect the spiritual freedom of its subjects, the Government must base its educational policy on the principle of freedom in the choice of school, in accordance with the general guideline that the free and private school should be the rule and the state school a supplement. The particular responsibility of the parents for the education and development of their children must indeed be recognized by the Government. The Government must accord equal treatment, financially and otherwise, to private and to state education, in order that the freedom of private education be respected and guaranteed.

Kuyper is a very clear writer and I'd recommend you all to read his lectures on Calvinism, in which he explores the influence that Calvinism should have in every area of life. The titles of the lectures are 'Calvinism a Life-System', 'Calvinism and Religion', 'Calvinism and Politics', 'Calvinism and Science', 'Calvinism and Art' and 'Calvinism and the Future'. ([15].)

### 2.2 *Philosophical Influences*

Dooyeweerd's major philosophical work is *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*. This was first published in Dutch in 1935 and 1936 and then in a revised form in three volumes in English between 1953 and 1958. It is a massive book. The English version runs to some 2,000 pages. He wasn't a philosopher by training, but rather an academic lawyer. In 1926 he became Professor of Legal Philosophy, Encyclopedia of Law and Medieval Dutch Law in the Faculty of Law of the Free University of Amsterdam—which Kuyper founded in 1880—and he stayed there until he retired in 1965. (He was born in 1894 and only died recently.)

In Dooyeweerd's formative years there was a very powerful Kantian revival and he was greatly influenced by this. The *New Critique* is full of comments about various neo-Kantian philosophers who are now only of historical interest. Such people as Rickert and Natorp. I don't think that you need to know much about these philosophers to understand Dooyeweerd, but you do have to have

some understanding of Kant, as the cornerstone of Dooyeweerd's philosophical system is his transcendental critique of theoretical thought which—he claims—goes deeper than Kant's critique of pure reason, because it lays bare the religious presuppositions of theoretical thought.

Before saying something about the nature of transcendental arguments, I'd just like to mention that Dooyeweerd was also profoundly influenced by both Husserl and Heidegger, especially Heidegger's analysis of Kant's epistemology (see [11]). And on the theological side, Dooyeweerd was quite impressed by Barth's theology, although he usually disagrees with him.

### 3 The Epistemological Enterprise

Right at the heart of the epistemological enterprise is the problem of synthesis. Around the time Dooyeweerd was writing philosophers thought that knowledge of objects, like chairs, was somehow made up from components that came from the external world and elements that we contribute from ourselves. I suppose from the time of Kant one of the valid options in epistemology was that we construct reality rather than just being passive recipients of stimuli that originate in reality. For Kant the chair we see is not the chair that exists-in-itself, it is rather an amalgam of the essential chair and concepts from our consciousness that somehow come together to appear as a chair. We must not, he argues, mistake the appearance of the chair for its reality. To us, nowadays, after the Fregean revolution all this talk seems very much like armchair psychology.

But, Dooyeweerd *uncritically* accepts—he nowhere argues for it—the view that the theory of knowledge is central to philosophy.

### 4 Transcendental Arguments

Dooyeweerd argues for the position that every theoretical system of thought has religious presuppositions by means of a *transcendental argument*, which is nothing to do with transcendental mysticism. A transcendental argument starts from the existence of some phenomenon and tries to bring to light what has to be the case for that phenomenon to be even possible. That is to say, a transcendental argument begins with something that exists and then works 'backwards' to try and discover that existent's presuppositions.

My favourite example of an *invalid* transcendental argument comes from Chief Justice Hale in 1676:

There must be such things as witches, since there are laws against

witches, and it is not conceivable that laws should be made against that which does not exist.<sup>3</sup>

The first person to seriously use transcendental arguments was Kant, who started from the fact that we have knowledge of the external world and then tried to lay bare the necessary structures which both human consciousness and the world have to have for such knowledge to be even possible. Thus, Kant did not start from the idea of the thing-in-itself; he, rather, started from experience and by means of a transcendental argument concluded that there must be things-in-themselves—like the chair-in-itself—and also that there must be a thinking self of a particular kind.

More recent examples of transcendental arguments are to be found in Davidson's work. He begins from the (supposed) fact that humans can successfully communicate with one another and from that he hopes to show what beliefs about the world and what understanding of language someone must have in order to participate in such communication.<sup>4</sup>

Transcendental arguments are crucial to philosophy—hence their prominence in Anglo-American philosophy—because—if they exist—they are the *only* way that philosophical truths can be established, since their conclusions are synthetic *a priori* and synthetic *a priori* truths can be established in no other way.

But, back to Dooyeweerd. I won't go over Dooyeweerd's argument in detail, I just want to mention some of its salient features.

Dooyeweerd himself defines the idea of a transcendental critique in these terms:

By this we understand 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 thought itself. ([4, p. 37].)

Dooyeweerd begins by making a distinction between theoretical and pre-theoretical thought. Theoretical thought is that that we engage in when we're involved in any sort of scientific or analytic activity, such as thinking about physics or chemistry or thinking critically about politics or economics or, even, aesthetics.

Dooyeweerd observes that in such theoretical or scientific thinking we only focus on one aspect of reality. (The word 'scientific' here includes theology, ethics, aesthetics, etc.) For example, from the point of view of physics a table is just an object subject to the

3. Quoted on the title page of [17].

4. See the essays in his collection [3].

law of gravity and made up out of electrons and protons, or whatever, etc. The fact that the wood the table is made from has a particular chemical composition is irrelevant to the physicist, as is the fact that it was once part of an organic, living entity, namely a tree.

Furthermore, the physicist *qua* physicist isn't interested in the economic value of the table. Its price doesn't concern him, nor does its aesthetic value, whether or not it is beautiful or ugly. And he doesn't care about any historical significance that the table might have. For example, that it is the table at which Luther wrote, or whatever.

So, the physicist, the biologist, the economist, the historian, etc., all *abstract* from reality. And this Dooyeweerd sees as the characteristic feature of theoretical thought. Pre-theoretical thought, on the other hand, doesn't fragment experience in this way. It just accepts reality as it is without focusing on any one aspect to the exclusion of the others.

And this leads us to what Dooyeweerd calls the first transcendental problem, which is:

By what characteristics is scientific thought distinguished from pre-scientific thought? ([8, p. 29].)

And his answer just amounts to what I've already said, that theoretical thought abstracts from reality. He calls this a theoretical antithesis, because he sees it as arising from the opposition of logical thinking and some kind of non-logical experience. This gives rise to what he calls the second transcendental problem:

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? ([4, p. 45].)

Using less technical terminology, what Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique of theoretical thought amounts to is an investigation into the possibility of the abstraction and analysis that is essential to theoretical thought and then an exploration of the nature of the synthesis that tries to combine together the various abstracted aspects of reality. For example, how do you relate the physicist's view of the table with the chemist's, and how do you relate those to the economist's and the historian's, and so on?

It's at this point that the Christian character of Dooyeweerd's philosophy appears. He claims that a non-Christian or immanent thinker cannot successfully recombine the abstracted aspects of reality. He argues that immanent thinkers are compelled to be

reductionists. They are forced to reduce, say, the biological to the physical, or the ethical to the aesthetic, or the political to the economic, and so on.

Okay then, where does this compulsion come from? According to Dooyeweerd it comes from the fact that the immanent non-Christian thinker has no vantage-point from which to carry out the synthesis which transcends theoretical thought. His Archimedean point must lie within theoretical thought. It's only the Christian who's in Jesus Christ who has a transcendent Archimedean point.

In Dooyeweerd's philosophy all this is captured by the third transcendental question. He writes:

The way of critical self-reflection is . . . the only one that can lead to the discovery of the true starting-point of theoretical thought. Even Socrates realised this, when he gave the Delphic maxim . . . (know thyself), a new introspective meaning and raised it to a primary requisite of philosophic reflection. ([4, pp. 51–2].)

And so the third transcendental question is:

How is this critical self-reflection, this concentric direction of theoretical thought to the I-ness, possible, and what is its true character? ([4, p. 52].)

I'll now try to explain this more straightforwardly. I begin with the notion of an Archimedean point. The name comes from the story of the Greek scientist Archimedes who discovered the principle of the lever, and afterwards said: "Give me a place to stand, and I will move the earth." ([13, p. 347].) In Dooyeweerd's philosophy it is the point from which you try to combine the results of all the theoretical disciplines. A non-Christian has to attempt to carry out this synthesis from within theoretical thought, whereas a Christian thinker's Archimedean point is in Jesus Christ and so he need not be a reductionist.

I must admit that I find this part of Dooyeweerd's philosophy incredibly difficult to understand. His account of reductionism is very good, but the talk about synthesis and abstraction seem to suffer from psychologism. I'm claiming, therefore, that Dooyeweerd's philosophy itself suffers from reductionism. To explain this I have to say something about the Fregean revolution in philosophy and about philosophical architectonics in general.

## 5 Philosophical Architectonics

In recent analytical philosophy there has been a lot of discussion

about which philosophical discipline is at the heart of philosophy. For example, whether ethics depends on the philosophy of mind or not. Anscombe argued in a very important paper that ethics presupposes philosophical psychology and urged moral philosophers to give up philosophising about ethical issues until a workable philosophy of mind had been established, since she thought that much ethical writing was vitiated by an inadequate understanding of mental concepts, like intention and motivation and freedom.<sup>5</sup>

Assuming that the various disciplines that make up philosophy can be ordered in some way the question arises whether any one of them is fundamental or foundational. One aspect of the Cartesian revolution in philosophy was to make epistemology the central and foundational philosophical discipline. Before Descartes no one branch of philosophy was thought to be the basic one and Medieval philosophers freely move from topic to topic with little concern about issues of priority. And their main concerns are in ontology, the theory of meaning and the philosophy of mind. They tend to say very little about the theory of knowledge. By contrast, the emphasis in philosophy after Descartes is firmly in epistemology, that is to say, in questions about how we can have knowledge of the external world, ourselves and God.

Modern philosophy is different again. At the turn of the century there was another revolution in philosophy, brought about by Frege and Wittgenstein, and the main tenet of this revolution was that the foundation of philosophy was the theory of meaning, that understanding is prior to knowledge. And one of the difficulties for us in trying to understand Dooyeweerd is to appreciate the fact that he thinks epistemology is central to philosophy.

Dummett puts this point about architectonics as follows:

There is, between the various areas of philosophy, a certain hierarchical ordering . . .

The question naturally arises, therefore, whether there is any part of philosophy that is in this way prior to every other: whether, as we might express it, philosophy has a foundation. Before Descartes, it can hardly be said that any one part of philosophy was recognized as being thus fundamental to all the rest: the Cartesian revolution consisted in giving this role to the theory of knowledge. Descartes made the question, 'What do we know, and what justifies our claim to this knowledge?' the starting-point of all philosophy: and despite the conflicting views of the

5. See her article [1].

various schools, it was accepted as the starting-point for more than two centuries.

Frege's basic achievement lay in the fact that he totally ignored the Cartesian revolution, and was able, posthumously, to impose his different perspective on other philosophers of the analytical tradition. This is not to say that Frege was uninterested in questions of justification . . . ; but he did not make such questions the starting-point, something that must be settled before anything else can be said.

For Frege the first task, in any philosophical enquiry, is the analysis of meanings. ([9, pp. 666–7].)

As an illustration of how this affects philosophy, consider the case of philosophical theology or philosophy of religion. Is the question 'How can we know God?' prior to or posterior to the question 'How can we meaningfully talk about God?'. The latter question is particularly difficult. On the one hand, if our words are used in the same sense of God as of man, then we're engaging in anthropomorphism. On the other hand, if a word like 'father' when it's used of God has no connection of meaning with the sense of the same word when it's used of man—as, for example, the senses of the word 'bank' when it's used of a financial institution and when it's used of the side of a river have no connection with one another (although some claim they are etymologically related)—then their meaning cannot be fixed. Palmer writes:

There is a basic doctrine on this matter, associated with the name of Thomas Aquinas and known as the theory of Analogy . . . The things people say about God, on this view, are not to be taken literally . . . , neither are they fatally ambiguous . . .—for then their ordinary sense would provide no clue to their religious meaning, and taking them literally would make complete nonsense of what they really meant: rather they are to be taken analogically . . . , so that a literal acceptance of these religious statements . . . is a first step, and a step in the right direction, and will require only correction and qualification, not radical revision in the life-and-death-long progress towards fuller appreciation of the real significance of what is being said. ([16, p. 15].)

## 6 Law Spheres

Dooyeweerd distinguishes between fifteen different aspects of reality and each aspect is subject to its own kind of laws. These law spheres or modal aspects of reality are the numerical, the spatial, the kinematic, the physical, the biotic, the psychic, the logical, the historical, the symbolic, the social, the economic, the aesthetic, the juridical, the moral and the aspect of faith. He doesn't just present

these fifteen aspects of reality as a *fait accompli*, a large part of the *New Critique* is taken up with arguments to justify this particular taxonomy.

In Dooyeweerd's philosophy the modal aspects of reality are mutually irreducible. 'For instance, no matter how closely the spatial aspect seems to be connected with the arithmetic or numerical aspect, it really cannot be understood or explained in terms of the arithmetic aspect. If the spatial, or any other meaning-aspect, could be reduced to another aspect, we would have to conclude that it is a variation of the latter and is to be eliminated from the list of irreducible modalities.' ([13, pp. 84–5].)

Associated with each law sphere is a modal moment or meaning-kernel or meaning-nucleus which defines the character of that modal aspect. I'll just make comments about some of them here.

law-sphere	modal moment	special science
numerical	discrete quantity	arithmetic
spatial	continuous extension	geometry
kinematic	motion	kinematics
physical	energy	physics and chemistry
biotic	vitality	biology
psychic	feeling	psychology
logical	distinction	logic
historical	formative power	history
symbolic	symbolic meaning	semiotics
social	social intercourse	sociology
economic	frugality	economics
aesthetic	harmony	aesthetics
juridical	retribution	jurisprudence
moral	truth	ethics
pistic	faith	theology

The psychic aspect has nothing to do with supernatural phenomena. The word 'psychic' here just refers to what we can experience or sense.

The symbolic aspect covers more than just writing and speech. Dooyeweerd includes all manner of conventional symbolism here, such as a white flag indicating a truce or surrender.

The meaning-kernel of the economic aspect can be spelled out as meaning frugality or saving in the management of scarce resources. Nothing very exciting here.

## 7 Religious Ground-Motives

As already mentioned, Dooyeweerd isolates four religious ground-motives that underlie every philosophical system.

The fundamental motive of Greek thought is the religious contrast between *matter* and *form*. For Dooyeweerd, all non-Christian thought is rooted in a deification of some aspect of creation. The form-matter motive is a deification of the historical and biotic aspects of reality.

The central motive of the ancient Greek nature religions 'is that of the shapeless stream of life eternally flowing throughout the process of birth and decline of all that exists in a corporeal form. This is the original religious sense of the matter-principle in Greek philosophy. It issued from a deification of the biotic aspect of our temporal horizon of experience and has found its most suggestive expression in the ecstatic cult of Dionysus, imported from Thrace.

The form-motive, on the other hand, was the central motive of the younger Olympian religion, the religion of form, measure and harmony. It was rooted in the deification of the cultural aspect of classical Greek society. This motive found its most profound expression in the cult of the Delphian god, Apollo, the legislator. ([7, pp. 39–40].)

The Christian ground-motive is 'the radical and central biblical theme of creation, fall into sin and redemption by Jesus Christ as the incarnate Word of God, in the communion of the Holy Spirit.' ([7, pp. 41–2].)

The scholastic ground-motive is that of nature and grace. This has been the starting-point of scholastic philosophy as it developed in both Roman Catholic and Protestant circles since the rise of Thomism. This ground-motive implies the distinction between a natural and a supernatural sphere of thought and action. It originated as an attempt to accommodate the Biblical ground-motive with the Greek. It can be described in greater detail thus:

Within the natural sphere a relative autonomy was ascribed to human reason, which was supposed to be capable of discovering the natural truths by its own light. Within the supra-natural sphere of grace, on the contrary, human thought was considered to be dependent on the divine self-revelation. Philosophy was considered to belong to the natural sphere, dogmatical theology, on the other hand, to the supra-natural sphere. In consequence, there was no longer a question of Christian philosophy. Philosophical thought was, in fact, abandoned to the influence of the Greek . . . basic motive in its external accommodation to the doctrines of the Church. This motive was marked by the dogmatic acceptance of the autonomy of natural reason. The scholastic meaning ascribed by the nature-grace theme. Natural reason should not contradict the supra-natural truths of the Church's doctrine, based on divine revelation. This implied an external accommodation of the Greek philosophical conceptions to this ecclesiastical doctrine as long as the ecclesiastical authority was factually accepted by the students of philosophy. The Thomistic attempt at a synthesis of the opposite motives of nature and grace, and the ascription of the primacy to the latter found a clear expression in the adage: . . . Grace does not cancel nature, but perfects it . . . ([7, pp. 44–5].)

The basic religious motive underlying modern philosophy since the time of Descartes is the humanistic ground-motive which is the motive of *nature* or the ideal of science and the motive of *freedom* or the ideal of free autonomous personality.

While the watchword of the Reformation was *solī Deo gloria* and man's liberty was defined in terms of his willing obedience to the all-wise and loving will of Almighty God, the new humanistic nature-freedom motive proclaimed the independence of man and the sovereignty of the human spirit. Man now came to be regarded as independent of the God of the Scriptures and absolute in himself and he was henceforth considered to be the only ruler of his own destiny and that of the world. He is now regarded as creative of the world in which he is placed, not, of course, in any originating sense, but in the sense that his mind and his rational will impress their character upon the universe and give it its distinctive character, especially in the realms of intellectual, political, artistic and scientific activity. ([21, p. 183])

A good example of the influence of the humanistic nature-freedom ground-motive is to be found in Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*, where he writes near the end:

Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me. ([14, p. 161].)

And when Kant mentions the admiration he feels for the starry heavens above he's not talking about some aesthetic experience;

he's, rather, talking about the admiration he feels for science, and especially for Newtonian science.

## 8 Conclusion

So, in conclusion, we see that three major criticisms can be made of Dooyeweerd's philosophy:

1. He uncritically accepts the Cartesian position that epistemology is the foundation of philosophy.
2. His epistemology is psychologistic.
3. The theory of the law-spheres is a straight-jacket into which reality is forced to fit.

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