

Points of Convergence Between  
Dooyeweerdian and Feminist Thought:  
Reflections on their Critiques  
of the Kantian Heritage

by  
Janet Catherina Wesselius

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Four months after my husband and I moved to Toronto to begin graduate school, my father-in-law William Sinnema accidentally drowned. The shock of his death brought up memories of my older sister's death many years ago. As I was writing this thesis, I marked the twentieth anniversary of her death and I gradually became conscious that this very personal experience has been definitive for my relationship with feminism. While I have five wonderful brothers, I still grieve the loss of my only sister. I have many reasons for embracing feminism: political, intellectual, moral, and so on. However, writing this thesis has made me realize that feminism is also part of my continuing search for sisters. My earliest experiences of sisterhood were shaped by Alynne. Hence, I dedicate this thesis to my first sister.

In memory of  
Heather Alynne Wesselius  
December 26, 1960 - April 12, 1971

### List of Abbreviations

AP	<i>After Philosophy.</i> Baynes, Bohman, and McCarthy.
CPR	<i>Critique of Pure Reason.</i> Kant.
ER	<i>Epistemic Responsibility.</i> Code.
FP	<i>Feminist Perspectives.</i> Code, Mullett, and Overall.
FPHN	<i>Feminist Politics and Human Nature.</i> Jaggar
GBK	<i>Gender/Body/Knowledge.</i> Jaggar and Bordo.
LHD	<i>The Legacy of Herman Dooyeweerd.</i> McIntire.
MR	<i>The Man of Reason.</i> Lloyd.
NC	<i>A New Critique of Theoretical Thought.</i> Dooyeweerd.
OLSS	<i>On Lies, Secrets, and Silence.</i> Rich.
PFM	<i>Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics.</i> Kant.
PFT	<i>Philosophy and Feminist Thinking.</i> Grimshaw.
PMN	<i>Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature.</i> Rorty.
RGS	<i>Reflections on Gender and Science.</i> Keller.
SCWT	<i>Search for Community in a Withering Tradition.</i> Nielsen and Hart.
SMFT	<i>Science, Morality and Feminist Theory.</i> Hanen and Nielsen.
SQF	<i>The Science Question in Feminism.</i> Harding.
SS	"The Secularization of Science." Dooyeweerd.
STHN	<i>Seven Theories of Human Nature.</i> Stevenson.
TM	<i>Truth and Method.</i> Gadamer.
TWT	<i>In the Twilight of Western Thought.</i> Dooyeweerd.
WCSK	<i>What Can She Know?</i> Code.
WJWR	<i>Whose Justice? Which Rationality?</i> MacIntyre.
WRWF	<i>What's Right With Feminism.</i> Storkey.

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## Introduction

This thesis is part of my attempt to make room for myself in the tradition of philosophy as both a Christian and a feminist. I was disappointed with traditional philosophy because I felt marginalized by it, both as a Christian and as a woman. As a graduate student, I was introduced to the work of Herman Dooyeweerd and to the work of feminist philosophers. Their work articulated many of the criticisms I had of the philosophic tradition and I was intrigued by the points of convergence between them. Feminist philosophy<sup>1</sup> is a fairly recent phenomenon in the history of philosophy, since it arises out of the contemporary feminist movement. But fifty-five years ago, a Dutch, male, Christian philosopher<sup>2</sup> was already advocating a view of philosophy that is remarkably similar to the contemporary feminist view in its emphasis on integration. I first noticed similarities in their distaste for the transcendental logical ego and their espousal of a holistic, integrated self in philosophy. As I analyzed their criticisms, I saw that the implications of these criticisms were also similar.

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<sup>1</sup>I confine my comments in this thesis to the work of North American feminist philosophers since there are important differences between North American feminism and European or third world feminism and this project is too short to deal with all of them adequately. I also acknowledge that North American feminist philosophers are not a homogeneous group although I think there is sufficient commonality in the broad themes of their work to compare it in general with that of Dooyeweerd.

<sup>2</sup>Although better known in Europe, Dooyeweerd (1894-1977) and his work are not well known in North America. From 1926-1965, he was professor of law at and was twice rector of the Free University of Amsterdam. Throughout his career, he published over 200 articles and books, his chief work being A New Critique of Theoretical Thought which was published in 1935. In the course of his career, he was also president of the Society of the Philosophy of Law, a member of the Royal Society of Arts and Sciences of the Netherlands, editor of the journal Philosophia reformata, and one of the founding members of the Society for Calvinist Philosophy in the Netherlands. For a detailed introduction to Dooyeweerd and his work, see the Introduction by C. T. McIntire to The Legacy of Herman Dooyeweerd and "The Intellectual Milieu of Herman Dooyeweerd" in the same volume by Albert M. Wolters.

I was dissatisfied with traditional philosophy because I was forced to fragment myself when I tried to imitate the transcendental logical ego as a philosophy student; that is, I had to abstract the rational from my entire self. In contrast, I found Dooyeweerdian philosophy attractive because it allowed me to be myself--a Christian--when studying philosophy. In a similar way, I found feminist philosophy attractive because it also allowed me to be myself--a woman--when studying philosophy. However, if I was to avoid another (different) kind of fragmentation--where I was sometimes a Christian and sometimes a feminist but never both at the same time--I needed an integration of both and to seek the points of their convergence. I had to learn how to be both a Christian and a feminist while studying philosophy.

I have often felt the tension between being both a Christian and a feminist; many people of both groups think that it is impossible to be both at the same time. However, when I began to compare Dooyeweerd's Christian philosophy<sup>3</sup> and feminist philosophy, I noticed similarities between the two. And both were in striking contrast to the philosophy I had been taught. I could no longer accept the belief of many Christians and many feminists that Christian philosophy and feminist theory are incompatible. So now I began to examine the similarity between Dooyeweerdian and feminist thought. In this Introduction, I will

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<sup>3</sup>It is important to realize that Dooyeweerdian philosophy is not the only Christian philosophy. However, I think this philosophy is the most radically Christian, especially in terms of its attention to integration.

summarize the four areas where I think Dooyeweerdian and feminist theory converge. This summary will serve as an outline of the four chapters.

## Outline

1. Both feminist philosophers and Dooyeweerd argue for the presence of a holistic, integrated self in philosophy. Indeed, Dooyeweerd has done so since the 1920's. In Chapter 1, I begin by analyzing the characteristics of a transcendental logical ego since it has had an enormous influence in the tradition of philosophy. The transcendental logical ego is to be the most basic condition for any knowledge whatsoever, so we must abstract everything from our thinking selves that is not logical. In this fashion we will arrive at the a priori structure of the thinking self. "An ego that is a priori must also be without gender since gender is an empirical aspect. An ego that is a priori and has no gender is also impartial because it has no commitments or interests of any kind. In turn, this means that a transcendental logical ego will also be universal because it will be the same for all people everywhere. If the transcendental logical ego is a priori, genderless, impartial, and universal, then it is also autonomous because it is subject to no influence outside itself.

Feminist philosophers argue that the transcendental logical ego is in fact a masculine ideal since the knowledge of women has been barred from the tradition of philosophy on the grounds of gender. Hence, they are suspicious of an ideal that purports to



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be the most basic condition for any knowledge whatsoever, but at the same time cannot account for the knowledge of women. If the transcendental logical ego were truly an *indispensable* condition for *human* knowledge, then it should be able to explain women's experience as well as men's. On the basis of their experience, feminists argue for a philosophic model of self that is empirical and experientially-based. Such a self is necessarily gendered; it has goals and commitments; it is particular and situated; and it is interdependent with other selves in a community.

Dooyeweerd contends that a transcendental logical ego cannot be the most basic condition for knowledge since such a self does not exist; only entire selves do philosophy. According to him, reality can be analyzed into different functional aspects of which the logical is only one. When we theorize, we abstract some aspect of reality we wish to study and oppose it to our logical function, thus making it a *Gegenstand*. Human beings also have different functional aspects in addition to the logical. Kant's mistake is to suppose that the logical aspect of our thinking self by itself sets up this *Gegenstand* relationship. On the contrary, according to Dooyeweerd, it is our entire self that abstracts and sets up this *Gegenstand*.

Traditional philosophy has posited a transcendental logical ego as ideal. In contrast, although they use different arguments, both feminist philosophers and Dooyeweerd maintain that only actual, entire selves do philosophy. Dooyeweerd's argument for the presence of the entire self in philosophy

suggests that the model of self that he espouses is very similar to the feminist model. If only entire human beings do philosophy then philosophy must deal with empirical, gendered, committed, particular, situated, interdependent selves. The locus of the difference between Dooyeweerd and feminists lies in their perspectives. Feminist philosophers are motivated by the desire to make room for women in the tradition of philosophy whereas Dooyeweerd is motivated by a wish to make room for Christians.

2. Dooyeweerd and feminist philosophers agree that reason is relative to other aspects of reality. In chapter 2, I shall examine the implications of the autonomy of the transcendental logical ego. Since it is an ideal of pure reason, then reason itself must be autonomous. To be autonomous is to be absolute. The transcendental logical ego is the result of absolutizing reason. If reason were not absolutized, we would not be tempted to reify a purely rational self as a philosophic ideal. When reason is absolute, the limits of knowledge are circumscribed by the rules of rationality.

For feminist philosophers, the absolutization of reason is implicated in the devaluation of women. The non-rational is reduced to absolutized reason. According to traditional philosophic dichotomies, masculinity and reason are associated with one another whereas femininity is identified with the non-rational; the former are valorized and the latter are consequently degraded. In order for women to be valued *qua* women (and not insofar as they are like men), that which is

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traditionally feminine (for example, the non-rational) must also be reclaimed as equally valuable. There is no use in arguing that women are as valuable as men while still subscribing to the masculine values of traditional dichotomies; reason itself, as traditionally conceived, must be relativized. Feminist philosophers also argue for the relativization of reason on the basis of experience by examining the influence of the non-rational on theory; for example, they analyze the effects that the body, morality, and emotions have on philosophy.

Dooyeweerd's critique of the transcendental logical ego is fundamentally a critique of the autonomy of reason. Dooyeweerd charges Kant with making two related mistakes: he makes reason absolute by assuming that it is autonomous and he subsequently identifies his entire self with the rational aspect of his thought. In contrast, Dooyeweerd's view of reason is one in which reason is relative to other aspects of reality; these non-rational aspects cannot be reduced to (that is, exhaustively explained in terms of) the logical. Human beings are indeed rational creatures, but they are also physical, aesthetic, moral creatures. While some things like theory may be primarily characterized by their rationality, they continue to function in their other aspects as well.

Although the feminist and Dooyeweerdian arguments are very different, they come to the same conclusion: that reason is always relative to other aspects of reality. They see the interconnections between the rational and the non-rational and

they agree that the non-rational cannot be reduced to the rational. If only actual, entire human beings do philosophy, then reason is not autonomous because actual human beings are not exclusively rational. Theories are not autonomously rational artifacts because they are created by humans who are more than simply rational.

3. If Dooyeweerd and feminist philosophers are right that reason is relative, it follows that philosophy, as the discipline of reason, is also relative to its context. In contrast, Kant wants to ensure that philosophy is independent of its context. If reason is autonomous, then it cannot be influenced by or dependent on anything outside itself; it can have no context and must set the context for everything else. Philosophy is the discipline of autonomous reason. Therefore, philosophy, too, must have no context and it can be decontextualized by cleansing it of every non-rational influence. Kant's attempt to absolutize reason and thus decontextualize philosophy is related to his own context in which philosophic knowledge was beset by disagreements and controversy. He hoped that making philosophy independent of its context would quell all controversy over philosophic knowledge.

The decontextualization of philosophy, however, excludes women *qua* women in philosophy. As long as women are identified with the devalued, non-rational half of traditional dichotomies, they will be excluded from philosophy and philosophic theories. The whole point of decontextualizing philosophy was to ensure its

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impartiality and universality. But any tradition that can dismiss the experiences of (at least) half the human race is far from being impartial or universal. Philosophy cannot avoid context, nor should it try to do so. Rather than acquiescing to traditionally masculine standards that value decontextualization, feminist philosophers acknowledge that their context affects their philosophic theories and they make a point of analyzing their position.

Dooyeweerd also charges traditional philosophy with failing to attain its own standards for being impartial and universal. He argues that the perennial disagreements of philosophers show that reason is not an unproblematic starting point for theorizing. He denies that there is a neutral, indisputable starting point for all theoretical thought because reason is not autonomous. Philosophy is contextualized by the context of its theorizer, by its place as a discipline concerned with totality among the other disciplines that deal with specific aspects of reality, and by the connections between its rational and non-rational aspects. His point is that every theorizer has to choose a position for theoretical reflection, in which the thinker's positioning as a historical/cultural context is expressed.

Dooyeweerd and feminist philosophers agree that decontextualizing philosophy degrades the non-rational. They agree that philosophy is affected by its theorizer and her context. They agree that philosophy exists in the context of a

tradition and the academy, in addition to the fact that reason is only one aspect of an entire human being, and that there is no universal, context-free standpoint.

4. In chapter 4 my concern is to show that Dooyeweerd and feminist philosophers can account for a broader range of human experience than can traditional philosophy because they acknowledge the distortion of dichotomistic influences on philosophy. The arguments of the preceding chapters that reason is absolutized, and thus philosophy is decontextualized, imply that, traditionally, some things are considered suitable for philosophic reflection and others aren't. Philosophy will deal with the a priori, the universal, and the necessary and dichotomistically oppose this to other issues. Even when it tries to deal with matters on the other side, such as emotion, it tries to explain them in terms of the preferred side, thereby doing its topic an injustice.

In accordance with the feminist argument that dichotomies must be repudiated, feminist philosophers seek to "re-vision" the scope of philosophy. Many topics that have traditionally been considered feminine concerns (for example, the care of children and housework) are associated with the devalued half of dichotomies. Rather than simply trying to add feminine topics to those of traditional philosophy, feminists challenge the entire public/private dichotomy and reclaim all matters that has been identified as private. If it is true that philosophy cannot be impartial and universal (as traditionally conceived), then we

need to analyze the role of pre-theoretic commitments, goals, and contexts. "The personal is political" means that no thing can be excluded a priori from philosophic examination.

Dooyeweerd argues that the choice of a position for philosophic reflection is itself a non-philosophic matter. He also contends that ignoring or denying that we have motives for our choice will not prevent them from influencing our philosophy. Therefore, philosophy must re-vision its scope so that it can acknowledge and account for pre-philosophic motives. Dooyeweerd argues that even Kant has pre-philosophic motives for choosing his starting point in the autonomy of reason. Since Kant wanted to dispel uncertainty and gain autonomy for philosophy, he posits the autonomy of reason. Dooyeweerd's pre-philosophic motive for insisting that philosophy is not neutral is his belief that all of life is religious.

Both Dooyeweerd and feminists agree that theory is never neutral. They concur in their acknowledgment of bias in their own theorizing. They both use criteria that are other than rational to judge theories (that is, religious and feminist criteria respectively). Consequently, they re-vision the scope of philosophy so that it can analyze bias, commitment, motives, and perspectives in philosophic theorizing according to non-rational, as well as rational, criteria.

5. In the Epilogue, I will examine how being a Christian and/or a woman have total implications for the world views underlying Dooyeweerdian and feminist philosophy. However, this similarity,

in itself, is not enough to explain the points of convergence between Dooyeweerdian and feminist thought since any theory whatsoever presupposes a view of the totality of reality. I shall then argue that Dooyeweerdian and feminist philosophy are similar because they are both marginalized by traditional philosophy and thus, they have a common interest in challenging traditional philosophy.



Chapter 1

The Integration of the Entire Person

As I said in the Introduction, in recent years, I have become increasingly dissatisfied with the traditional philosophic view of the self, epitomized by the Kantian transcendental logical ego. As pure a priori thought, a transcendental logical ego transcends all of empirical reality. I believe that the transcendental logical ego implies asexuality, impartiality, universality, and autonomy. I had hoped that by cultivating the characteristics of a transcendental logical ego I could become a "real philosopher" since I had been taught that "real philosophers" think as transcendental logical egos. Accordingly, as a philosophy student, I tried to imitate the Kantian subject by setting aside my own particular experiences, characteristics, and desires in an effort to think and write in an impartial and rational manner.

However, I have never succeeded in thinking in any way other than as a woman, although I think I have sometimes managed to be empathetic to the views of some men. Nor have I ever succeeded in being completely impartial in my thought because despite my best efforts my hopes and aspirations, my likes and dislikes have crept into my work; hence, I have not succeeded in being theoretically universal. I have certainly never been able to be autonomous in my thought; I am constantly influenced by my teachers and my colleagues, by my reading and my experiences. In short, I tried to transcend my empirical self as a philosophy

student and I failed.

Not only did I fail to think from the standpoint of a transcendental logical subject, but my philosophic work did not benefit from my attempts to write from such a standpoint. Instead, I found that my work was criticized for being indifferent and unenthusiastic. Even worse, I found that I was losing my passion for philosophy. I began to dislike philosophy because I failed in all my attempts to think like (what I thought was) a "real philosopher". But I also began to realize that a transcendental logical ego excludes from philosophy anything about which I could be passionate. As a matter of fact, a transcendental logical ego cannot be passionate since it doesn't have emotions. If being a philosopher involved thinking as a transcendental logical ego which eliminated myself, then I was no longer sure I wanted to be a "real philosopher". At this point, I could have given up on philosophy but it so happened that I was introduced to the work of feminist philosophers and to the work of Herman Dooyeweerd at approximately the same time. I realized that I was not the only person who found the transcendental logical ego inimical and that there were other ways of doing philosophy.

In this thesis I am trying to transform my undergraduate education, much of which I can no longer accept (for example, a transcendental logical ego) though I realize that I have not yet fully immersed myself in the feminist and Dooyeweerdian way of doing philosophy. In contrast to the fragmentation required when

imitating a transcendental logical ego, I now tend to be overwhelmed by all the inter-relationships I am able to see. One of the problems of overcoming isolated, abstracted theorizing is seeing everything as connected to everything and hence not paying enough attention to differences. Now things seem so related that distinctions are sometimes hard to make.<sup>4</sup> As I learn to do feminist and Dooyeweerdian philosophy, I need to remember to emphasize distinctions (which is what I learned as an undergraduate) as well as interconnections (which I am learning from Dooyeweerdian and feminist thought).

In the last number of years in North American philosophy, there has been a growing number of challenges to the traditional, Kantian concept of the self, otherwise known as the transcendental logical ego.<sup>5</sup> Many of the challenges come from feminist philosophy with its emphasis on "re-vision". The editors of *Feminist Perspectives* describe re-vision as an exploration of how the traditional problems of philosophy might look different if they were seen from a radically different perspective (3). Accordingly, many feminist philosophers seek to transform traditional philosophy with a more integrated view of self than the traditional concept of self. Many of their

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<sup>4</sup>This thesis is evidence of my new interest in connections rather than differences. At first glance, Dooyeweerdian philosophy and feminist philosophy seem to have more differences than similarities. Although I appreciate the importance of recognizing difference (and the oppression that results from false universalizing), I am now more interested in seeing the similarities between two positions despite their differences.

<sup>5</sup>The editors of After Philosophy claim that many post modern themes are presented as critiques or variations upon Kantian themes such as the autonomous rational subject (3-4). The same is true for feminist themes. See for example Lorraine Code's discussion of the knowing subject in Epistemic Responsibility; Kathryn Pauly Morgan's reasons for rejecting the standpoint of a detached transcendental knower ("Women and Moral Madness" (SMFT:201-226); and Ann Ferguson's discussion of the shortcomings of theories of self which fail to take account of the many aspects of human selfhood in "A Feminist Aspect Theory of Self" (SMFT:339-356).

critiques are rooted in actual experiences for which, they claim, the traditional concept of self is unable to account.

Herman Dooyeweerd was not a contemporary of feminist philosophers but his assertion that "philosophical thinking is an actual activity; and only at the expense of this very actuality (and then merely in a theoretic concept) can it be abstracted from the thinking self" (NC I:5) is similar to feminist thought in its goal to replace the transcendental logical ego with the entire person in philosophic thinking. I take Dooyeweerd to mean that I myself in my entirety do philosophy and I agree wholeheartedly with him on this point. I think that there is good reason to suppose that most feminist philosophers would agree with him. For example, Code's assertion that "it is persons who know - not abstracted, isolated intellects, understandings, imaginations, or faculties of reason" (ER:101) is remarkably similar to Dooyeweerd's assertion that the whole person does philosophy. I also understand Dooyeweerd to be saying that philosophy is existential, fundamentally experiential; it is an actual activity (NC I:5). Many women, including myself, find it difficult to relate to the philosophic experience or at least they find that it is in conflict with their other experiences.<sup>6</sup> In particular, we find it difficult, if not impossible, to relate to a transcendental logical ego. The transcendental ego is

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<sup>6</sup>Genevieve Lloyd also claims that many women experience conflicts between femininity and reason (MR:x). As well, in "Philosophical Methodology and Feminist Methodology: Are They Compatible?", Susan Sherwin claims that the reason many women experience tension between themselves as women and themselves as philosophers is because feminist methodology (which tries to take account of female experience) and philosophical methodology (which ignores female experience) conflict in several important respects (FP:13-28).

alienating for myself and many women because it conflicts with our actual experience of doing philosophy. However, it is not the purpose of this thesis to argue that most women are dissatisfied with traditional philosophy and the transcendental logical ego although much of feminist philosophy bears witness to the widespread antipathy of women to the transcendental logical ego.

I find this point of convergence between contemporary feminist thought and Dooyeweerdian thought, both insisting that only empirical humans do philosophy, quite astounding. (I will explore reasons for this convergence in the Epilogue). In this chapter, I wish to examine how taking seriously Dooyeweerd's assertion that we do philosophy with our entire being can be of value to feminist philosophers in their quest to find and do more integrated and humane philosophy. Specifically, I think that Dooyeweerd's argument provides theoretical reasons for rejecting the transcendental logical ego whereas feminist arguments for new ways of viewing selfhood can concretely unfold the implications of Dooyeweerd's emphasis on the whole human being. Since I am not alone in my dislike of the transcendental logical ego, I believe that such an examination can help me as I struggle to make room for myself (as an entire woman) in the tradition of philosophy.

I shall first examine the traditional concept of self, namely the transcendental logical ego. In this section I shall primarily refer to Kant's argument for a transcendental logical

ego because it is against a Kantian conception that Dooyeweerd mainly argues and also because Kant's thought has had so much influence on contemporary philosophic views of the self. Second, I will discuss feminist arguments against the traditional view of self and the new views of self that they oppose to traditional self. Third, I shall discuss Dooyeweerd's argument against the transcendental logical ego. I will then explore the implications of Dooyeweerdian and feminist thought for the kind of self that we need to work with in philosophy.

### The Transcendental Logical Ego

The transcendental logical ego is the consequence of Kant's answer to what he sees as the basic question of all epistemology: "what are the necessary conditions for any knowledge whatsoever?". It is not enough if our ideas of objects happen to correspond with the objects themselves because a contingent correspondence does not assure us that we will be able to acquire true knowledge all of the time. Rather, true knowledge requires that the correspondence between my ideas and the object of my ideas is guaranteed. What could possibly guarantee that the ideas in our minds are true representations of the objects? Kant maintains that if empirical reality is to be known with complete certainty, then empirical reality must reflect the structure of the mind. Hence, for Kant, the proper answer to this question

involves reflection directed toward the self as it thinks.<sup>7</sup>

Kant believes that the philosopher cannot start with his particular experience since experience is contingent and personal and thus will not satisfy the requirement that it provide the conditions of all knowledge whatsoever. Sensory experience alone cannot provide an answer to the question of conditions for knowledge that is universal and objective, even for my own personal experiences, since my senses often deceive me. Hence, Kant maintains that it is necessary to look away from experience and gaze inward at the thinking self in order to discover the inner structure of the theoretical attitude of thought. Kant is looking for an a priori answer to his question because only a priori conditions can be necessarily and universally valid.<sup>8</sup> If empirical reality reflects the structure of the mind and if the structure of the mind is a priori, then empirical reality can be known with complete certainty. In order to discover that which is a priori in our thought, we must eliminate all that is empirically based in our thought.<sup>9</sup> When we analyze our activity of thinking, we can distinguish between that which is non-logical

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<sup>7</sup>In Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, Richard Rorty writes that for traditional philosophy, "to know is to represent accurately what is outside the mind; so to understand the possibility and nature of knowledge is to understand the way in which the mind is able to construct such representations" (3).

<sup>8</sup>"For if we eliminate from our experiences everything which belongs to the senses, there still remain certain original concepts and certain judgments derived from them, which must have arisen completely a priori, independently of experience, inasmuch as they enable us to say, or at least lead us to believe that we can say, in regard to the objects which appear to the senses, more than mere experience would teach - giving to assertions true universality and strict necessity, such as mere empirical knowledge cannot supply" (CPR:A2). Kant is saying that a priori concepts are independent of experience and we can discover them by eliminating from experience that which belongs to the senses. Experience is identified with the senses and contrasted with the purely a priori.

<sup>9</sup>Kant writes that "the subject of the present enquiry is...how much we can hope to achieve by reason, when all the material and assistance of experience are taken away" (CPR:Axiv).

(and thus contingent and variable) and that which is purely logical (and thus necessary and universal). Since it is the self *as it thinks* that he is examining, he believes that it is necessary to eliminate all that is non-logical and his entire self is then exclusively identified with his analytic activity. The residue of this methodic elimination is the transcendental logical subject; that is, pure thought.<sup>10</sup>

Kant limits self-reflection to logical self-reflection by identifying his *entire* self with the logical structure of his mind. Thus, he believes that it is this transcendental logical ego that thinks and does philosophy because it alone is pure thought. This ego is ultimately self-sufficient and foundational because we cannot move beyond the transcendental logical ego in our quest for the foundations of knowledge since there is nothing beyond it or at least nothing beyond it that we can know with any certainty. The transcendental logical ego is not merely the structure particular to Kant's mind; it is the necessary structure of all human minds and no experience is possible without it. According to Kant, pure reason discovers that the transcendental logical ego is a necessary presupposition for all experience whatsoever. The transcendental logical subject is the bare minimum necessary for knowledge; it is the consistent factor in all theoretical investigations. The time and place of the thinker change, the personal experiences of the thinker change

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<sup>10</sup>"A priori modes of knowledge are entitled pure when there is no admixture of anything empirical" (CPR:B3).



and the thinker himself changes; but the transcendental logical subject remains the same for all thinkers everywhere at all times. Consequently, every human who does philosophy will inevitably think in the same manner each time since the transcendental logical ego is universal for all humans.

The transcendental logical ego must not be confused with my self (or indeed anyone's self) in particular since it has no particularity (although every thinker's self has the logical structure of the transcendental logical ego).<sup>11</sup> This subject cannot be found anywhere in empirical reality since it is the external condition for any empirical experience. In addition to abstracting all that is not rational from a particular self, we must, according to Kant, methodically eliminate all that is individual and unique about a particular subject in order to arrive at the transcendental logical ego. As the structure of human minds, this ego has no gender, no body, and no emotion; it is not affected by the time and place of its existence. We cannot gain any self-knowledge from a Kantian ego since this ego can never be an object of human thought; it is always presupposed by any human thought. This ego is a transcendental prerequisite for knowledge because all knowledge is necessarily related to a unified I which thinks.

The transcendental logical ego transcends empirical reality by being the most basic condition for any possible act of

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<sup>11</sup>The fact that the transcendental logical ego does not exist in empirical reality but is, nevertheless, the condition for any knowledge whatsoever poignantly shows the problem of trying to imitate it in an effort to do "real philosophy".

thinking. As an a priori structure of the self, it also transcends gender and any particular interests or characteristics. In turn, this means that an a priori, genderless, impartial self is also universal since it is necessarily valid for all thinkers. For Kant, the nature of the knowing subject is solely a matter of objective theoretical truth valid for everyone who wants to think theoretically. It is this lack of individuality that gives the transcendental logical subject its universal validity. Consequently, it follows that such a self is also autonomous. The transcendental logical self is autonomous because it is not conditioned or determined by anything outside itself; on the contrary, it determines the conditions of all knowledge.

Throughout this discussion, there is a tension between the transcendental logical ego as the structure of all minds and as an actual self. I have argued that the transcendental logical ego cannot be found anywhere in reality since it is the condition for any knowledge. Nevertheless, even though the transcendental logical subject is unattainable in fact, it continues as an ideal for philosophers. Code asserts that "autonomous man does enjoy the status of a character ideal in modern society; his mode of being is considered worthy of admiration and emulation" (SMFT:359). Lloyd argues that the ideals of reason are "incorporated . . . into our understanding of what it is to be a person at all, of the requirements that must be met to be a good person, and of the proper relations between our status as knowers

and the rest of our lives" (MR:ix). Even the most committed Kantian cannot live out this ideal of an autonomously rational subject, so why continue to construct theories with this sort of entity - it can hardly be called person - as an ideal? Despite the impossibility of imitating this ideal, it continues to be used frequently as the standard against which philosophic theories are measured.<sup>12</sup> The transcendental logical ego is a cherished myth of the philosophic tradition but for many women it has been a nightmare.<sup>13</sup> Since such an entity as the transcendental logical ego cannot exist (let alone live), it is no wonder that so many women (including myself) find it difficult, if not impossible, to do philosophy when we feel constrained to emulate such an abstract, purely rational thinker.

Theories based on a transcendental logical ego have some characteristics in common that both feminists and Dooyeweerd abhor. The transcendental logical ego is a result of making reason autonomous, as I shall argue in Chapter 2. This in turn

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<sup>12</sup>To give just three examples, Sherwin believes that "philosophers, in contrast [to feminists], continue to hope to find the pure, general, universal point of view" (FP:20); Morgan claims that "striving to adopt the standpoint of a detached transcendental knower, many traditional philosophers hope to define human nature in way which is unaffected by the vicissitudes of human history, human culture, and evolutionary variability" (SMFT:203); and Code writes that "Claims to the effect that one should not be swayed by feelings and loyalties in the making of moral decisions, for example, presuppose that human beings are creatures whose nature is amenable to guidance by reason rather than emotion and are creatures capable of living well when they act as impartially as possible. Analogously, claims to the effect that knowledge, to merit that title, should be acquired out of independent cognitive endeavour uncluttered by opinion and hearsay, suggest that human beings are creatures who can come to know their environment through their own unaided efforts" (SMFT:367).

<sup>13</sup>Morgan expresses the disgust of many women when she writes, "I am inclined to accept the existence of such reflecting transcendental egos about as much as that of the Great Pumpkin. As far as I can determine only empirical egos engage in philosophical reasoning, and empirical egos invariably walk about in gendered garb" (SMFT:203). Her article, "Women and Moral Madness", provides eloquent evidence that the cherished fantasy of the philosophic tradition to be a purely rational ego has been a nightmare of moral (and epistemic) madness for many women.

leads to the decontextualization of philosophy; we will continue to believe that philosophic theory is able to stand on its own regardless of the theorizer, time, or place, as I shall argue in Chapter 3. When philosophy is decontextualized, philosophers will have little philosophic use for anything that is not rational; as I shall argue in Chapter 4, they are unable to deal with anything that is "non-philosophic" except by reducing everything to and judging everything by the standards of rationality. Women and men, insofar as they are philosophers, must bracket the non-theoretic aspects of their lives; when we do philosophy, we will continue to disallow the (philosophic) examination of the relations of mutual influence between the philosophic and various other parts of our lives. Taken to an extreme this leads to the stereotype of the brilliant philosophy professor who is unable to function outside of his office or classroom.

### The Feminist Critique

Most feminist philosophers, as well as many other contemporary philosophers,<sup>14</sup> vehemently argue against a purely Kantian view of the self as being too thin to deal with the reality of human life. The feminist critique stems from a growing awareness that women as a group have been excluded from

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<sup>14</sup>For example, the two collections of essays in Feminist Perspectives and Science, Morality and Feminist Theory demonstrate the widespread dislike of feminists for the transcendental logical ego. Since these two books were the first works of feminist philosophy I read as a graduate student, their commonality in this respect was very evident to me. See the introduction to and the essays collected in After Philosophy (3-4) for some critiques of or variations upon the Kantian theme of the autonomous rational subject of contemporary non-feminist philosophers.

the tradition of philosophy simply because they are women. Since the transcendental logical ego purports to be the universal and necessary condition for all experience, feminist philosophers have reason to be critical of an indispensable condition for knowledge that excludes them on the basis of gender. A truly universal and objective condition for knowledge would be able to encompass all human experience, female as well as male. Since philosophers participate in our patriarchal society, it is not surprising that the philosophic academy, too, is at least indifferent to women and their concerns, if not downright hostile. Nowadays, most philosophers reject the crudely misogynous views of their predecessors while retaining the rational structure of their work.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, however, the philosophic antipathy toward women will not be overcome by simply deleting misogynous statements from philosophy texts while allowing the main tenets of the theory to stand, because misogyny is not simply a matter of exclusive language or simple attitudes. Misogyny is incorporated into the very way we do philosophy.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Jean Grimshaw writes that "it is supposed, no one holds views like that about women any more (least of all intelligent, liberal-minded philosophers), so they are not really worth discussing. But this view is only tenable if you make two assumptions. The first is that the sorts of attitudes to women held by philosophers in the past are dead or disappearing, and there might be good reason to question that. The second is that such attitudes are a mere question of 'prejudice', supposedly belonging to a past age, so that we can, in effect, simply delete all the passages where philosophers have said embarrassing things about women, ignore them as unfortunate relics of the past and go about our philosophical business as usual. But this supposes that it is always possible to isolate what a philosopher says (or implies) about women from the rest of their philosophy, to cut it out and leave the rest intact. And it is this in particular that needs to be questioned" (PFT:2-3). Sherwin writes that "most contemporary philosophers are more careful in their discussions of gender than the historical figures were; they tend to be liberal on such matters, and generally excuse their predecessors as being naively misguided by the culture of their times when it came to the question of women. It is commonly accepted that we can simply excise the offensive empirical claims from their philosophy and maintain the pure intellectual core" (FP:17-18).

<sup>16</sup> For example, Lloyd perceptively demonstrates the continuing presence of misogyny in the tradition of philosophy in The Man of Reason. I shall return to this point later in this section.

Feminist philosophers are in a unique position to criticize the transcendental logical ego because it is an important component of the philosophic tradition that has excluded their specifically feminine experiences. As such, they have the motivation and the empirical evidence to criticize it.<sup>17</sup>

In contrast to the a priori character of the transcendental logical ego, feminist philosophers oppose an empirical, experientially-based model of self. The editors of *Feminist Perspectives* insist that feminist philosophers base their theories on actual humans: "broadly speaking, this [feminist] perspective is based in the experiences of feeling, thinking, temporally located human beings. . . . Such an emphasis resists attempts to superimpose theory upon experience. It rejects claims to the effect that theory must transcend experience" (3). The transcendental logical ego was never based in empirical reality since it was Kant's ideal to transcend the contingencies of experience, thereby rendering universal and objective knowledge. However, feminists argue that such an a priori notion is unable to account for much of feminine (and indeed human) experience and as such, it is of little use for philosophic

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<sup>17</sup>Evelyn Fox Keller's remarks concerning science and gender also apply to philosophy and gender. She argues that unselfconsciously internalized assumptions, such as the autonomy of reason, are difficult to see when you are part of the community, such as the philosophic one, that takes for granted such assumptions. "Such parochialities, like any other communal practice, can be perceived only through the lens of difference, by stepping outside the community. As a woman and a scientist, the status of outsider came to me gratis. Feminism enabled me to exploit that status as privilege" (RGS:12). In itself, the exclusion of women from philosophy is a bad thing but feminism can help women turn their exclusion to their advantage, and hence to the advantage of philosophy. I shall discuss the point in further detail in the Epilogue.

theory.<sup>18</sup>

It is true that all humans have gender but whether an individual is female or male is a contingent particularity that can be abstracted from pure reason. Since the transcendental logical ego has no individuality and is thus common to all, it follows that it admits of no gender. As a universal ideal of pure reason, the transcendental logical ego transcends gender since gender is a particular attribute of particular individuals.<sup>19</sup> Lloyd asserts that "gender, after all, is one of the things from which truly rational thought is supposed to prescind. . . . The aspiration to a Reason common to all, transcending the contingent historical circumstances which differentiate minds from one another, lies at the very heart of our philosophical heritage" (MR:ix). Theoretically, then, women should fare just as well as men in the realm of philosophy, but experientially this has not been the case. The tradition of philosophy has been dominated by men and the few female philosophers are philosophers "despite, rather than because of, their femaleness" (MR:108). To quote Lloyd again, "the obstacles to female cultivation of Reason spring to a large extent from the fact that our ideals of Reason have historically incorporated an exclusion of the feminine" (MR:x). The transcendental logical

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<sup>18</sup>For example, while Code credits Kant's epistemology for placing the epistemic subject at the centre of the cognitive process, she argues that his model of self "is too poor in its failure to take into account the affective, cultural, and historical aspects of human life" (ER:99).

<sup>19</sup>The belief that pure reason is genderless did not originate with Kant. For example, Augustine believed that the mind (as distinct from the body) had no gender (Lloyd MR:ix; 28-33).

ego (as an ideal of reason) is not gender neutral; if Lloyd and other feminist philosophers are right, it is quite definitely masculine.<sup>20</sup> Hence, to the asexuality of the transcendental logical ego, feminists oppose a self that is always gendered.<sup>21</sup>

Individual humans have differing interests and desires but once these contingent peculiarities are eliminated, they maintain in common their ability to reason. Once again it follows that particular interests are contingent factors of individual selves and, unlike rationality, can be abstracted in order to form a concept of human selfhood. Since the transcendental logical ego is a priori and non-gendered, it is also impartial because it is disinterested. Such an ideal implies that philosophers should and can avoid bias and prejudice because such an ego is devoid of commitment to anything except reason. Commitment to anything aside from reason is mere prejudice.<sup>22</sup> To the impartiality of the transcendental logical ego, feminist philosophers oppose the inevitable pre-philosophic commitments of any self. Not only do feminists think that bias cannot be avoided, they also think that

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<sup>20</sup>Views on the capacity of women to reason competently depend not only on the gender-neutrality of the transcendental logical ego but also on the differences (or lack thereof) between men and women. Descartes, for example, thought that there was no difference between women and men insofar as humans are rational creatures and so he also believed that "even women" could gain knowledge if they followed his method (MR:44). The *cogito* applied equally to the sexes. In contrast, Kant asserted that women and men usually have very different characteristics and it is the masculine characteristics that are conducive to rational thought thereby implying that only men are capable of pure thought (see Grimshaw, PFT:42-45 and Lloyd, MR:64-70). In neither case is it admitted that the transcendental logical ego is masculine.

<sup>21</sup>There is no simple agreement among feminists as to whether or not reason is ultimately able to transcend gender. Lloyd argues that "the confident affirmation that Reason 'knows no sex' may likewise be taking for reality something which, if valid at all, is so only as an ideal... . Notwithstanding many philosophers' hopes and aspirations to the contrary, our ideals of Reason are in fact male; and if there is a Reason genuinely common to all, it is something to be achieved in the future, not celebrated in the present" (MR:107). What is agreed upon is that the present ideals of reason, including the transcendental logical ego, are male and that empirical subjects (insofar as they are empirical) are gendered.

<sup>22</sup>I shall discuss this point further in Chapter 3.



bias should not be avoided provided the philosopher is self-aware of her commitment.<sup>23</sup>

If it is true that the transcendental logical ego is a priori and thus asexual and impartial, then it follows that its standpoint is also universal and objective. Knowledge can be universal on this view because the transcendental logical ego is the most basic condition for any knowledge whatsoever; it is the I to which all knowledge is necessarily related and it is valid for all thinkers everywhere at all times. Knowledge can be objective because the transcendental logical subject is universal rather than particular; the actual particular knower is irrelevant. To the universality and objectivity of the transcendental logical ego, feminist philosophers oppose a personal and situated model of the self.<sup>24</sup>

They argue for a personal and situated theory of selfhood for two main reasons. First, feminists have good reason to be suspicious of claims to universality since they and their experience have been excluded by the transcendental logical ego. I am convinced that feminists don't trust this alleged impartiality because what has been claimed to be a neutral and universal standpoint as seen or constructed by the transcendental logical ego is not a standpoint that women can unproblematically

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<sup>23</sup>Sherwin contrasts feminist and philosophic methodology when she writes "feminists readily admit to bias in their perspective, while philosophers continue to assume bias should and can be avoided" and "feminists have political as well as intellectual aims that they are quite willing to admit to" (FP:20-21).

<sup>24</sup>The editors of Feminist Perspectives write that "in feminist philosophy there is a constant awareness of history, process, and change" (6) and Sherwin writes that "while philosophers seek objective truth, defined as valid from any possible viewpoint, feminists consider it important to look to the actual view of the individual speaking" (FP:19).

adopt insofar as they are women. Since many female philosophers find that they are excluded by this putatively impartial standpoint, they are continually forced either to question its impartiality or to repudiate their own womanly experiences. If it is true that a transcendental logical ego is an masculine ideal of reason that excludes the feminine then it follows that it is not impartial and if it is not impartial, then it is also not universal in the sense of being valid for all thinkers. Sherwin accurately remarks that "recognizing that what has been claimed to be objective and universal is in reality the male point of view, feminists concentrate on women's own experience and explicitly avoid any claims of being 'objective, abstract, or universal'" (FP:19). She goes on to assert that "feminists acknowledge that their perspective is not universal or unpremiered, recognizing that women's perspectives might in fact be different if the world were different" (FP:19).

The second reason feminist philosophers argue for a personal and situated self is because an abstract theory of self is inadequate to explain some of the experiences of women. For example, if the transcendental logical ego is truly universal, why is it that so many women experience conflicts between being a philosopher and being a woman? Why is it that women have so often been judged incapable of high-level conceptual thinking? Why is it that theories based on the transcendental logical ego are unable to explain such occurrences? A personal, situated self can give more satisfactory explanations of these phenomena

since it can take into account the empirical circumstances of everyday life.

For example, Descartes believes that women have the rational capacity to employ his method and thus they are capable of attaining knowledge. As Sherwin astutely remarks "unfortunately, in advocating this method he did not take into account his own further claims that such activity required a concentration that necessitates freedom from concern with practical demands" (FP:18). Considering the fact that our social practices still burden women with the greater responsibility for the practical concerns of day to day living, it is no wonder that most women haven't the time to consistently concentrate on "philosophic" problems. My point is that the problem that women have with philosophy is never seen as being a problem with the transcendental logical ego; it is seen as a problem with women. If I have problems thinking from the standpoint of a transcendental logical ego, that is a deficiency inherent in me, not a deficiency of the transcendental logical ego.

If the transcendental logical ego is really a priori, asexual, impartial, universal, and objective, then it is also rationally autonomous. It is autonomous because pure reason discovers that it alone is a necessary presupposition for all knowledge. As an ideal of pure reason, it depends on nothing and all knowledge depends on it. To the autonomous transcendental logical ego, feminists oppose a model of the self that is

connected to other knowers in an interdependent relationship.<sup>25</sup>

Once again, feminists charge that the theory of the autonomous self is far too abstract to adequately explain human life and that it in fact contradicts much of human experience. Our experience teaches us that we are never wholly autonomous in any area of our lives and our intellectual lives are no exception. The transcendental logical ego supposedly theorizes in isolation but real philosophers are influenced by teachers, colleagues, students and the historical texts of a philosophic tradition. If I honestly reflect upon the origin and growth of my own knowledge, I realize that I have never learnt anything on my own and that my community of knowers is important to any ongoing learning. This interdependence is not to be lamented since mutuality is a large part of being human and it does not exclude choice and responsibility for individuals. As Code pointedly remarks, "philosophical interpretations of the value of autonomy have often tended to result in an autonomy-obsession which serves no one's purposes well" (SMFT:358; WCSK:73). An over-emphasis on autonomy does no one any good because humans are not essentially autonomous creatures and any attempt to be autonomous is going to result in less humanness rather than more humanness.

I conclude that not only does the transcendental logical ego have no basis in empirical reality (since it is an a priori condition), it has no empirical existence at all. Such a self

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<sup>25</sup>In "Second Persons" (SMFT:357-382), Epistemic Responsibility, and Chapter 3 of What Can She Know?, Code argues that it is impossible to be an autonomous knower and all our knowledge is dependent in varying degrees on being part of a community.

has never existed and will never exist. For one thing, feminist research gives me good reason to think that rationality can never transcend gender; we are always going to do our thinking as either female or male. Your gender is an integral part of who you are and it doesn't disappear when you sit down to theorize. Lloyd is right when she asserts that "it is clear that what we have in the history of philosophic thought is no mere succession of surface misogynist attitudes, which can now be shed, while leaving intact the deeper structures of our ideals of Reason.. . . Women cannot easily be accommodated into a cultural ideal which has defined itself in opposition to the feminine" (MR:103-4). Second, human thought simply isn't neutral and universal in the sense of being completely impartial. Even Kant is unable to live up to this ideal for he is not disinterested when searching for the absolute pre-conditions of knowledge; he is strongly committed to reason and his goal is rational autonomy.

### Dooyeweerd's Critique

A feminist critique is motivated by the exclusion of the feminine from the tradition of philosophy and is often supported by appeals to experience. In contrast, Dooyeweerd's critique is motivated by his conviction that theory is never neutral or purely logical and is supported by theoretical arguments. Central to his philosophical system is his belief that "our ego

[self]<sup>26</sup> expresses itself as a totality in the coherence of all its functions within all the . . . aspects of cosmic reality" (NC I:4). I am always an integrated whole active in all the different aspects of my being. For example, I can never bracket the physical aspect of myself while doing philosophy because I can never do philosophy except as a physically embodied creature. Doing philosophy assumes that I have eyes with which to read, hands with which to write, and a brain with which to think. I may ignore this physical aspect as I do philosophy, but I cannot transcend it, thereby becoming a transcendental logical ego and nothing else. To the concept of the transcendental logical ego, Dooyeweerd contrasts a holistic integrated view of the self. What Dooyeweerd has to offer feminist philosophers in their argument against the transcendental logical ego is his view of reason - to be explained in chapter 2 - as one aspect of the multi-faceted coherence of life and his view of the *Gegenstand* relation in theoretical thought in which I focus the logical aspect of my experience on abstracted aspects of the world. It is because of his work and my own experiences that I am intensely convinced that "the logical function of thought itself is nothing without the inter-modal coherence of meaning" (NC I:17).

I will briefly explain what Dooyeweerd means by the inter-modal coherence of meaning. According to Dooyeweerd, reality can

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<sup>26</sup>"Ego" is not a fortunate choice of words since it implies an abstraction from an entire self; rather, "self" is closer to what Dooyeweerd means here. However, we must remember that he was writing in Dutch fifty-five years ago. It becomes clear in the context of his work that by "ego", he means the whole person.

be analyzed into different aspects of which the rational is one.<sup>27</sup> He says that "in this . . . [multi-faceted] cosmic coherence no single aspect stands by itself; every-one refers within and beyond itself to all the others" (NC I:3). In naive or pre-theoretical experience, there is an indissoluble interrelation between the aspects of reality; in theoretical experience, we, with the engagement of our entire selfhoods, distinguish reality into its different aspects (NC I:38). Furthermore, in theoretical thought, "we oppose the logical, that is, the analytic function of our real act of thought, to the non-logical aspects of temporal existence" (NC I:39). The non-logical aspects become the *Gegenstand*, or object of an investigation which is characterized by focusing experience logically. For example, in everyday life I am tacitly aware that the novel that I read takes up space (its spatial aspect), that it cost me money (its economic aspect), that it evokes certain feelings in me (its sensitive aspect); when I read it as a student of literature, however, I ignore all these dimensions of the text and concentrate on its aesthetic aspect. I attempt to isolate its aesthetic aspect and I oppose the logical aspect of my act of thinking to it in order to judge it as well or poorly written. But my focus on the text's aesthetic characteristics

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<sup>27</sup>"Within the temporal order, this [human] experience displays a great diversity of fundamental modal aspects, or modalities which in the first place are aspects of time itself. These aspects do not, as such, refer to a concrete what, i.e., to concrete things or events, but only to the how, i.e., the particular and fundamental mode, or manner, in which we experience them. Therefore, we speak of the modal aspects of this experience to underline that they are only the fundamental modes of the latter. They should not be identified with the concrete phenomena of empirical reality, which function, in principle, in all of these aspects"(TWT:6). The fifteen aspects (or modes) are : numerical, spatial, kinematic, physical, biotic, sensitive, logical, historical, lingual, social, economic, aesthetic, juridical, moral, and pistic (NC I:3).

does not mean that these other aspects do not exist.

Dooyeweerd agrees with Kant that the self is functioning analytically when thinking and that the logical aspect is opposed to the non-logical aspects in theoretical thought. However, he thinks that Kant has made a major error by supposing that the logically objectified self (which is merely the logical aspect of our selfhood) makes this *Gegenstand* in isolation. As he says, "the only, but fundamental, mistake in their [the Kantians'] argument was the identification of the real act [of thought] with a purely psychical temporal event, which in its turn could become a 'Gegenstand' of the ultimate transcendental-logical 'cogito'" (NC I:50). The psychical temporal aspect is only one aspect of my thought and my ability to think is only one aspect of myself. When I theoretically self-reflect, a transcendental logical ego does not oppose my thought to itself. When I reflect on myself as a thinker, I (as multi-faceted creature) oppose logical focus of my experience to non-logical aspects. The antithetic *Gegenstand* structure is the structure of theoretical thought but it is not the structure of all of reality and we need to strictly avoid any tendency to reify this relationship.

On the Kantian view, the transcendental logical ego is "the residue of a methodical elimination of all those moments in the concrete 'individual self' functioning in 'time and space' which I can still make into a 'Gegenstand' of the ultimate subjective logical function of thought" (NC I:6). When I critically examine my thinking self, I see that I have opposed my logical function



to all my non-logical functions thereby making my non-logical functions the *Gegenstand* of my logical function. Nevertheless, it is *I* who perform this abstraction and set up this *Gegenstand* relation and I am more than my logical function; I am even more than the sum of my functions.<sup>28</sup> Both theoretical thought and myself as thinker are logically focused but both thought and myself have non-logical aspects that continue to function when I think.

As I have already stressed, the transcendental logical ego does not empirically exist. Now we can see that it is an absolutization of the logical function of a whole self and that the other aspects of the experiencing self are reduced to the logical one. My entire self, which transcends the diversity of my functions and of which the rational is merely one aspect, is always responsible for creating this *Gegenstand*. It is vital to always remember that the splitting up of the aspects of reality and the opposition of the logical to the non-logical aspects is the result of theoretical thinking and is empirically artificial; "this theoretical antithesis does not correspond to the structure of empirical reality" (NC I:40).<sup>29</sup> The transcendental logical ego is the extreme result of an abstraction from the entire self which functions in all its aspects: "it is even isolated to the

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<sup>28</sup>"Our selfhood does not coalesce with the mutual coherence among all functions which we have in the cosmos" (NC I:16).

<sup>29</sup>Dooyeweerd points out that "the theoretical act in which we perform this analysis is, of course, not identical with the abstracted modal structure of the logical aspect...In its theoretical abstraction this modal structure has only an intentional existence in our act of thought, and can be made into the "Gegenstand" of our actual logical function. It is, consequently, not the latter which can be made a "Gegenstand", but only the abstracted, purely intentional, modal structure of the logical function" (NC I:40).

greatest conceivable degree of abstraction, since it is the product of a methodical process of elimination by which the thinker imagines, he is able, ultimately, to set the logical function of thought apart as a self-sufficient activity" (NC I:6). The logical function of thought can never be a self-sufficient activity because it depends upon myself in my entirety.<sup>30</sup> Thought doesn't think; I think. Since reality resists this splitting of modes, thought is tension-laden and has an antithetical structure.

As Dooyeweerd also points out, the integral nature of the self implies that this construction of the transcendental logical ego through analytic abstraction is not itself a purely theoretic matter. No one can arrive at the transcendental logical ego through the use of logic alone. If a person subscribes to the doctrine of the transcendental logical ego, he in his entire self-hood chooses to adopt this conception of the self because he has chosen to submit to reason as the supreme judge. "In the nature of the case, this choice is no act of a 'transcendental subject of thought', which is merely an abstract concept. It is rather an act of the full self which transcends the diversity of . . . aspects" (NC I:20). Even here in its most extreme form, philosophic thought is neither directed by a transcendental logical ego nor is the choice to do philosophy from such a standpoint the result of purely rational reflection without the

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<sup>30</sup>"Philosophical thought, however, cannot isolate itself in its subjective logical function, because it has no selfhood as mere thought...All actuality in the act of thinking issues from the ego, which transcends thought" (NC I:7).

influence of other aspects of the entire human person.

For Dooyeweerd, philosophy is undoubtedly and properly a theoretical activity: "philosophy should furnish us with a theoretical insight into the inter-modal coherence of all the aspects of the temporal world" (NC I:4). Philosophy provides us with one kind of insight into reality but there are more kinds of insights than the theoretical. Friendship or music, for example, provide us with other kinds of knowledge. Philosophy can theoretically analyze social or musical insights but it can never replace them and a philosophical analysis of them should not be identified with the social or musical insights themselves. Moreover, recognition that philosophy is a rational and theoretical activity does not entail the transcendental logical ego. On the contrary, the necessary condition for all knowledge is an entire multi-faceted self. Only entire human beings have knowledge.

### Comparison

On a perfunctory reading, the feminist and Dooyeweerdian criticisms of the transcendental logical ego are quite different, but there are a number of important points where they converge. Both Dooyeweerd and feminist philosophers have a strong dislike for the consequences of the Kantian self and a strong affinity for a holistic, many-faceted self. To paraphrase Morgan's insightful comment, the notion of a transcendent, detached, individual, autonomous ego is a form of conceptual pathology

(SMFT:213). Its use as an ideal in philosophy results in distorted theories, theories that couldn't possibly help us understand human beings or our world better. Theories that presuppose a transcendental logical ego are distorted because they begin with a premise that isn't realistic: humans are not essentially transcendental logical egos. Code, for example, insists that "the problem is that characterizations of this abstract figure lend themselves to a starkness of interpretation which constrains philosophical inquiry while, at the same time, enlisting philosophical positions in support of constraining social and political policies" (SMFT:359).<sup>31</sup> The transcendental logical ego is undeniably stark since it is nothing but pure thought and when it is used as a philosophical ideal, it leads to the construction of social and political policies that are ultimately based on a false conception of self.

We need to be clear here about the purpose of theory, which is to explain and make sense of experience. Hence, any theory which fails in this regard can be rejected out of hand. According to Dooyeweerd, "every philosophic view of empirical reality ought to be confronted with the datum of naive experience [i.e. non-theoretic experience] in order to test its ability to account for this datum in a satisfying manner" (NC I:83). Certainly, Kant is also concerned that his theory explain experience, but he believes that reason alone can set the

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<sup>31</sup>Code cites the tendency in medical ethics to emphasize patient autonomy to the exclusion of every other consideration as an example of a constraining social policy that is the result of a stark interpretation of human beings (SMFT:359).

conditions for experience. I maintain that theory should not conflict with that which it is trying to explain. My disagreement with Kant is that his theory of a transcendental logical ego does conflict with experience.

To the a priori nature of the transcendental logical ego, Dooyeweerd and feminists oppose an empirical self. An empirical self implies that it is, among other things, gendered. Dooyeweerd, being a man of his times, never discussed gender in connection with an empirical self. However, his assertion that only actual, situated humans do philosophy implies that a self cannot transcend gender. If Dooyeweerd is right that I am only able to do philosophy as a whole person, then I am also only able to do philosophy as a woman. The extent to which female and male natures are inherently different is an open question so I am not always sure to what extent my doing philosophy as a woman is different from the philosophy that men do.<sup>32</sup> I am sure, however, that the tradition of philosophy has excluded women and that insofar as it has excluded women, philosophy has failed to adequately explain reality since reality is experienced by both women and men and rational analysis is both a female and male activity. Reading the work of both Dooyeweerd and feminists has made me critical of any philosophic theory that purports to transcend gender or that excludes the experiences of either women or men. Taking seriously Dooyeweerd's assertion that only

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<sup>32</sup>As Grimshaw points out, "conceptions of masculinity and femininity are complex and shifting things; they have varied historically and are not at all monolithic or homogeneous" (PFT:61).

empirical selves do philosophy will allow philosophers to explain why, for example, women as a group have found it difficult to be philosophers because it acknowledges the different socialization of women and the abstracted institutional practices that make philosophy possible.

Both Dooyeweerd and feminist philosophers agree that it is persons who know, not transcendental logical egos. And this implies, according to Code, that "particular capacities and inclinations are neither incidental nor transitory. They form an integral part of a human being's nature as an actively knowing organism and are evident in his or her ensuing knowledge" (ER:101). All along we have intuitively known that we are whole persons and that it is only as whole persons that we can do philosophy or anything else. To believe in a transcendental logical ego goes against our experiences and our deepest intuitions of ourselves as whole and multi-faceted creatures. There is always more to our life than our philosophy and there is always more to our philosophy than the rational.

Both Dooyeweerd and feminists agree that philosophers are neither autonomous in the sense of being free from the non-rational influences nor in the sense of being free from the influence of others. For example, as I pointed out, this paper is a direct result of my personal aspirations and emotions. Furthermore, this paper reflects my Anglo-American philosophic education. I have only been able to write this paper because I have read some of Dooyeweerd's work and some feminist philosophy.

My teachers and my colleagues have shaped my thought to such a large extent that I can never say with any certainty what knowledge is originally mine. Learning is always an on-going communal activity.

What conception of the self must we have in philosophy? Philosophers must realize that they are first and always human beings. We do not come to know our environment through our own unaided efforts; we are nurtured and raised by others (usually our parents).<sup>33</sup> We do not do our thinking in isolation; we belong to a community of knowers; we are taught, criticized, and challenged by our teachers, colleagues, and students; we share our knowledge with one another.<sup>34</sup> We do not acquire knowledge through our rational activities alone; we gain knowledge through every kind of experience (physical, aesthetic, fiduciary, ethical).<sup>35</sup> We are not ahistorical, genderless, aspatial entities and no attempt to be such an entity has succeeded or will ever succeed.<sup>36</sup> I am a Christian, married, young woman living in late twentieth century Canada and it is only as such a person that I can know anything. My entire philosophic work

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<sup>33</sup>See for example Code's "Second Persons", (SMFT:357-382) where she argues that absolute autonomy is an impossibility for humans.

<sup>34</sup>See for example Code's Epistemic Responsibility where she argues that a community of knowers and the interdependence of knowers is necessary for all knowledge.

<sup>35</sup>See for example Sheila Mullett's "Only Connect: The Place of Self-Knowledge in Ethics" where she explores the various kinds of self-knowledge and their contribution to the moral life (SMFT:309-338) and also Code's "Credibility: A Double Standard" where she examines the double standard used when comparing different kinds of knowledge and experience (FP:64-88).

<sup>36</sup>For example, Sherwin argues for a view of the self that acknowledges our situated particularity (FP:13-28) and Ferguson argues against thin conceptions of the self and for a theory that takes into account the many facets of the self (SMFT:339-356).

bears the imprint of who I am; in my choice of topics, in my vocabulary, in my style of writing, in my bibliographic resources. I write this paper because I am committed to both feminism and Christianity. If I were a different person, my work and my knowledge would be different.

Dooyeweerd and feminist philosophers agree that the transcendental logical ego is the absurdly artificial and harmful creation of the philosophic tradition. In order to construct theories about humans and our world that are truthful, I need to acknowledge both that I am a fully situated human and that others are also fully situated. Like every other person who wishes to think philosophically, I can only be myself as I do philosophy which means that my work will always show my own influences, aspirations, and experiences. I can, however, explore what philosophic problems become when seen from my standpoint and I can theoretically analyze my own standpoint. Everyone brings more than their rational selves to philosophy. We must therefore theoretically analyze what these multi-faceted selves come to, rather than pretending that philosophy transcends empirical selves. But the insights from both feminist and Dooyeweerdian thought provide justification for my strong conviction that the best philosophy is done when the philosopher acknowledges that she is an entire human being.



## Chapter 2

### The Relativization of Reason

I still remember in some detail the first philosophy lecture I ever attended. Since it was an introductory course, it was the first presentation of philosophy for most of the class so the professor devoted the first lecture to describing philosophy. He started by analyzing the Greek roots of the word "philo/sophy": love of wisdom and this led into a discussion of wisdom and what Plato meant by the "good life". I still remember this lecture because it was such a powerful experience: what could be more worthwhile than the pursuit of wisdom? In this philosophy course, first year students were required to attend seminars once a week in addition to the three hours of lectures. These seminars were set up (I think) with the realization that philosophy is best carried on in a dialogue rather than a lecture and they also gave students (especially those struggling with the material) a chance to discuss the lectures. I remember many of the seminars with the same clarity that I remember the first lecture; it was here that I was introduced to the traditional problems of philosophy. In a very short period of time, I went from knowing nothing about philosophy to being fascinated by it. Aristotle's assertion that "Philosophy begins in wonder" was certainly true for me.

Even though philosophy was not my major for the first year and a half of university, I continued to take as many philosophy courses as a chemistry major was allowed and my greater interest

in philosophy showed in my marks. I decided that "an education without wisdom is not worth pursuing" (to paraphrase Plato) so I finally switched majors. However, when I began to study philosophy in earnest, the "glory soon faded into the light of common day". I wanted to understand the nature of knowledge so I took epistemology courses and wound up discussing the brown appearances of brown tables and discovered that most of what I "knew" (for example, the truth of Wordsworth's "Ode") did not deserve the dignity of being called "knowledge". I wanted to discuss the foundations of art so I took aesthetics courses and discovered that actual artworks are quite secondary, perhaps even practically irrelevant, to philosophical aesthetics. I was only rewarded for writing papers that reduced aesthetic experiences or epistemic beliefs to logical propositions. I was reprimanded for using the personal pronoun "I" in a paper. As I remarked in Chapter 1, these kind of undergraduate experiences of philosophy led me to think that "real" philosophers think from the viewpoint of transcendental logical egos.

As I explained in the first chapter, my attempts to think like a transcendental logical ego ultimately failed and eventually proved to be philosophically unfruitful. I realize now that disagreements among philosophers as to the nature of philosophy are probably endemic to the discipline<sup>37</sup> and I will discuss some views of the nature of philosophy in the next

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<sup>37</sup>The editors of After Philosophy assert that "agonizing over the 'wherefore' and 'whither', and even the 'whether', of philosophy has been a staple of Western philosophical discourse since the time of Socrates and Plato" (1).

chapter. Nevertheless, what could account for the difference between my early philosophic experiences of pursuing wisdom and my later experiences of transcendental logical egos? Certainly one difference between my two experiences of philosophy was the role played by reason. When I thought that philosophy was the pursuit of wisdom, I saw rationality as merely one way to wisdom; when I saw philosophy as the method for finding the (rational) truth, I (implicitly) accepted the reduction of everything to absolutized reason. Admittedly, my early experiences of philosophy were somewhat romantic. But I think the naively romantic eighteen-year-old knew something about philosophy that the dispassionately sophisticated twenty-two-year-old had forgotten. Namely, that there is more to philosophy than stark rationality; philosophy, as I argued in Chapter 1, is created by entire human beings who have emotions, gender, commitments and who live at a particular time in a particular place. Feminist philosophy has helped me realize that a transcendental logical ego excludes from philosophy anything about which I could be passionate, while Dooyeweerdian philosophy taught me that a transcendental logical ego is impossible to emulate. These two insights complement each other in the realization that only actual humans in their entirety do philosophy. If entire humans are not purely rational, then reason is not exclusive. I lost my fascination with philosophy because rationality became the measure of all things and everything was consequently reduced to the rational. Hence, philosophical aesthetics became a matter of

imposing a priori categories on artworks and epistemology became a matter of foundationalism.<sup>38</sup> I was taught that knowledge is ultimately, if not exclusively, rational.

By reading the work of feminist philosophers who are resistant to such thin notions of self, I realized the legitimacy of my (what were at that time) intuitions that such notions are empirically false. By reading the work of Dooyeweerdian philosophers, I realized that such notions are theoretically invalid. As I asserted in the previous chapter, there is simply no such thing as a purely and exclusively rational subject because our philosophy is influenced by our entire personhood.

In this chapter, I will examine the feminist and Dooyeweerdian proposals to "relativize" reason. In the first section I will discuss how positing a transcendental logical ego is the result of absolutizing reason. Philosophers can absolutize reason without positing a transcendental logical ego as an ideal. However, since the transcendental logical ego is an extreme form of absolutized reason, it is perhaps easiest to see in this ideal how reason has been absolutized and to see its distortive effects in resultant theories. In the second section, I will analyze the feminist reasons for relativizing reason and I will examine the feminist "discovery" of connectedness. Feminist

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<sup>38</sup>In my first epistemology class we primarily used Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology by Jonathan Dancy. He argues that "perhaps the most influential position in epistemology is the one I shall call classical foundationalism" (53). According to classical foundationalism, epistemology "is a research programme which sets out to show how it is that our beliefs about an external world, about science, about a past and a future, about other minds, etc., can be justified on a base which is restricted to infallible beliefs about our sensory states. It is suggested that if we can do this, the demands of epistemology are satisfied. If not, we relapse into scepticism" (54).

philosophers are aware that knowledge is not exclusively rational and much of their work is devoted to elucidating the connections between reason and other aspects of knowledge such as the emotional, the ethical, the physical and so on. Dooyeweerd's theory of the multiple aspects of experience can provide the theoretical support for connectedness. In the third section, I will analyze the non-rational aspects of theory by applying his multi-faceted analysis. The connections feminist philosophers see between various aspects of knowledge can be explained by a theory of multiple aspects. I shall remark in the final section how feminist and Dooyeweerdian thought converge.

#### The Absolutization of Reason

In the previous chapter, I discussed the transcendental logical ego without exploring what assumption makes the positing of such an ideal possible. Given the artificiality of this ideal and the impossibility of emulating it, why does Kant postulate it? In this section I will look at what precedes the postulating of a transcendental logical ego as ideal. What, if anything, is Kant assuming when he answers his question "what are the necessary conditions for any knowledge whatsoever"? What does he see as so self-evident that it doesn't even require any argument?

Kant explicitly describes his project as: "a call to reason to undertake anew the most difficult of all its tasks, namely, that of self-knowledge, and to institute a tribunal which will assure to reason its lawful claims, and dismiss all groundless

pretensions, not by despotic decrees, but in accordance with its own eternal and unalterable laws. This tribunal is no other than the *critique of pure reason*" (CPR:Axi-Axii). In other words, reason alone will criticize itself according to its "own eternal and immutable laws". Reason is both the legislator of its own laws and the supreme court. It is obvious to Kant that any inquiry into the universally valid and necessary conditions of knowledge must be conducted by reason alone which involves a self-critique by reason. This, then, is the answer to the question "what lies beyond the positing of the transcendental logical ego?": that reason has the right to criticize everything, including itself. If reason is self-governing and governs all else, it is autonomous.

Kant's goal is to set philosophy on "the secure path of a science" (CPR:Bvii). In order to achieve this goal, he must eliminate all the empirical and particular elements of his knowledge until he is left with only with that which is a priori and universal because only of the a priori and universal can we be absolutely certain. Kant maintains that "I have to deal with nothing save reason itself and its pure thinking; and to obtain complete knowledge of these, there is no need to go far afield, since I come upon them in my own self" (CPR:Axiv). Kant can observe the operations of reason by reflecting upon himself as he thinks. Through critical self-reflection, reason discovers the transcendental logical ego as the structure of all human minds. The transcendental logical ego is the universally valid and

necessary condition for any knowledge whatsoever.

As I argued in the first chapter, if the transcendental logical ego is a priori, genderless, impartial, and universal, then it is also autonomous. Since it is an ideal of pure reason, then reason itself must be autonomous.<sup>39</sup> The absolutization of reason also involves the exclusion (or as least, the reduction) of the non-rational. For example, Kant acknowledges that "there can be no doubt that all our knowledge begins with experience" (CPR:B1) but his concern is to discover "a priori knowledge, not knowledge independent of this or that experience, but knowledge absolutely independent of all experience" (CPR:B2). *Absolutely independent* knowledge is the result of *autonomous* reason which gives "assertions true universality and strict necessity, such as mere empirical knowledge cannot supply" (CPR:A2). The implicit assumption is that the non-rational (for example, emotion) is not as valuable as pure reason which can give us true universality and strict necessity.

Reason must criticize both itself and knowledge because, for Kant, there is nothing beyond reason in the sense that reason is

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<sup>39</sup>Code argues that Kant is committed to a conception of the autonomy of reason. "He wants to establish the a priori conditions of experience and knowledge. To that end, he maintains that transcendental argument can lead to 'knowledge which is occupied not so much with objects as with the mode of our knowledge of objects in so far as this mode of knowledge is to be possible a priori' [CPR:B25]. The knowing subject for whom such knowledge is possible is any being who can use the term 'I' to identify himself as the subject of experience, any being for whom the formal conditions of knowing can be established. Hence the analysis Kant offers is of the knowledge of a 'standard knower', undifferentiated from other knowers by any of his particular traits or by any of the contingent circumstances in which he might acquire his knowledge. With his doctrine of the transcendental self . . . Kant's concern is not to present a self-aware subject aware of his (or her) own nature, idiosyncrasies, and specificity, nor to define the self as an entity in the world. He is interested in the self only as a limiting point of empirical knowledge. As an aspect of that self, then, reason is autonomous, as it is concomitantly in functioning independently of all particular circumstances, either personal or contextual" (WCSK:113). I agree with Code. However, I disagree that reason is an aspect of the transcendental logical self. Rather, such a self has no aspects otherwise its reason would be relative to its other aspects. It is pure reason and that is what makes it autonomous. I shall discuss this point in further detail in the section on Dooyeweerd's view of reason.

foundational for knowledge. Kant is looking for the ungrounded ground of knowledge and he thinks he has found it in reason.<sup>40</sup> If we begin our critique of knowledge by submitting all of our thought to reason's critical abilities, we will be able to purge ourselves of all "groundless pretensions" and uncritical assumptions.<sup>41</sup> Only reason is truly critical because it alone has no prejudices or biases. All non-logical matters are literally "prejudices" because they *precede* the *judicial* authority of reason.<sup>42</sup> Reason is autonomous in the sense that only reason can give itself "its own eternal and immutable laws"; only reason can be the judge of itself and its activities. Kant asserts that "there can be no manner of doubt that it is always best to grant reason complete liberty, both of enquiry and criticism, so that it may not be hindered in attending to its own proper interests" (CPR:A744). As autonomous law-giver, reason cannot allow itself to be "hindered" by anything outside itself without falling into uncritical dogmatism.

When we contrast Kant's program and method with Dooyeweerd's assertion that only entire human beings do philosophy, we can see

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<sup>40</sup>Hans-Georg Gadamer argues that for philosophers of the Enlightenment, such as Kant, "the only thing that gives a judgment dignity is its having a basis, a methodological justification (and not the fact that it may actually be correct). For the Enlightenment the absence of such a basis does not mean that there might be other kinds of certainty, but rather that the judgment has no foundation in the things themselves - i.e., that it is 'unfounded'. This conclusion follows only in the spirit of rationalism. It is the reason for discrediting prejudices and the reason scientific knowledge claims to exclude them completely" (TM:271).

<sup>41</sup>Certainly, in the realm of thought, reason is sovereign. Kant maintains that "our age is, in especial degree, the age of criticism, and to criticism everything must submit. Religion through its sanctity, and law-giving through its majesty, may seek to exempt themselves from it. But they then awaken just suspicion, and cannot claim the sincere respect which reason accords only to that which has been able to sustain the test of free and open examination" (CPR:Axi).

<sup>42</sup>Gadamer argues that "there is one prejudice of the Enlightenment that defines its essence: the fundamental prejudice of the Enlightenment is the prejudice against prejudice itself" (TM:270).



the internal problems in Kant's project. Kant writes that he deals with nothing save reason and its pure thinking, which he discovers when he reflects upon himself as he thinks (CPR:Axiv). Who is doing this thinking and this reflecting? Kant himself is doing both. But he refers to *his* thinking as something that reason does! Reason does not reason; only people can reason and they necessarily do many other things besides when they reason, such as breathe. Only people can think rationally because only people are thinkers. Kantian thought does not exist apart from Kant himself; far from being autonomous, his thought depends on himself as person with a history, an education, and a culture.<sup>43</sup> To acknowledge the specificity of his thought, however, would deny reason autonomy. Throughout *A Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant uses images of judging, legislating, criticizing, and the like to describe rational activity. He talks as if reason itself is a judge, law-giver, tribunal and ascribes autonomy to it. However, only people are judges and only people can judge; at the same time, they are always more than judges and they always do more than judge.<sup>44</sup>

According to Dooyeweerd, Kant makes two related mistakes. One mistake is identifying his real act of thought with his

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<sup>43</sup>Of course, there is a sense in which Kantian thought does exist apart from Kant himself: Kant is long since dead whereas his theory is alive and well. Thought in this sense (as a theoretical system) is different from "the real act of thinking". In any case Kantian thought did originate with and depend upon an actual historical person even if it has outlived him.

<sup>44</sup>Hendrik Hart describes the problem well. "If we take 'human intelligence' as itself an independent actor, next to other 'actors' like it (faith, the will, sensitivity), we might easily be tempted to view these 'actors' as independent from one another, simply because they are in fact all different. But if we take 'human intelligence' as a noun indicating a specific functional aspect of some acting person, we need to look at the person who acts. And the person acting intellectually, simultaneously acts in other ways. These other ways, in turn, influence intellectual activity" (LHD:159).

rational function (NC I:50). As I argued in the previous chapter, reason is not an agent because it depends upon an actual, empirical thinker. The other mistake is positing the autonomy of reason. Kant in his entire selfhood *chooses* to adopt the transcendental logical ego as ideal because he has chosen to submit to (his) reason as supreme arbiter. He chooses to do so because he believes that autonomous reason can provide universal and necessary knowledge (CPR:A2). Kant never critically examines the theoretical attitude of thought; rather, he starts his critique of the basic conditions of knowledge with the autonomy of reason "as an axiom which needs no further justification" (TWT:5). The positing of a transcendental logical ego is the result of believing that reason is autonomous.<sup>45</sup>

Dooyeweerd asserts that "it has been simply *posited*, that this autonomy follows from the nature of such thought, without justifying this assertion by means of a really critical investigation of the inner structure of the theoretical attitude of thinking itself" (NC I:35). He agrees with Kant that philosophy needs to conduct "a radically critical inquiry into the universally valid conditions which alone make theoretical thought possible" (TWT:4) but such an inquiry is premature (NC I:9) if philosophers do not first analyze the inner structure and nature of this thought itself which requires these universally

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<sup>45</sup>To quote Hart again: "Theoretical reflection is not the rational act of an agent called 'reason'. What has been called reason is no more than the absolutization or reification of human intellectual faculties. But Dooyeweerd held that no such agent exists. There is instead a rational person who in being rational exercises many more functions besides the conceptual ones" (LHD:161).

valid conditions (TWT:4).

Kant does not critically examine his belief that reason has the right to scrutinize itself and legislate its own laws because he assumes that it is the nature of theoretical thought (that is, the activity of reason) to be autonomous. A transcendental logical ego is a consequent of such a belief because autonomous reason cannot allow itself to be influenced by any "prejudices" that would accrue from the individual, particular person doing the thinking. But as feminist philosophers (such as Sherwin) point out, if transcendental logical egos do not in fact exist then the viewpoint of the person doing the theorizing matters (FP:19-21). The transcendental logical ego is only required by the inner structure and nature of theoretical thought if one believes that reason is autonomous. Dooyeweerd writes that "essentially supra-theoretical prejudices were thus treated as theoretical axioms, and no account was given of the fundamental significance of these prejudices for the whole theoretical vision of empirical reality" (NC I:35). Deciding that reason is autonomous is not a theoretical matter; it is a supra-theoretical matter.<sup>46</sup> That is, choosing to make reason autonomous has to do with non-rational influences. For Dooyeweerd, rationalism is the doctrine that reason is autonomous and central to this doctrine is the denial that reason has been absolutized by the thinker.

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<sup>46</sup>"Supra-theoretic" is the term Dooyeweerd most often uses to refer to that which has its roots outside of theory. Perhaps contemporary philosophers would be more likely to use a term like "pre-philosophic" or "pre-theoretic". I try to use the latter terms when I can because they are more familiar; however, the term "supra-theoretic" has a larger scope and I use it when necessary.

Belief in the autonomy of reason is what makes a transcendental logical ego possible. At this point, my concern is simply to point out that Kant (and anyone else who is a rationalist in a Dooyeweerdian sense) has posited the autonomy of reason and that the transcendental logical ego is the result of such a postulate. The working out of such a doctrine (for example, the denial that reason has been absolutized and the place of supra-theoretic matters in philosophy) will be discussed more fully in Chapter 4.

The most valuable insight I have gleaned from studying Dooyeweerd is the ubiquity of absolutized reason in theory and the dangers inherent in such an absolutization.<sup>47</sup> Dooyeweerd knows that when reason is absolutized, as it generally has been in the philosophic tradition, it bars all that is non-rational from the court of philosophy and it sits in sole judgment; there is no higher court of appeal. Reason is not subject to any higher authority and it alone has the task of authorizing everything else. When we embrace the transcendental logical ego as an ideal, we have no choice but to deny the influence of anything non-logical on our knowledge because knowledge is defined as that which conforms to the rules of rationality. "'Pure transcendental thought' is always meant in a logical sense. For the other . . . aspects of the real act of thinking e.g. the psychical or the historical, do not satisfy the

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<sup>47</sup>Indeed, this is the crux of Dooyeweerd's philosophy. Hart writes that "no single philosophical problem so engaged Dooyeweerd's attention as that of rational autonomy" (LHD:158).

requirement of 'pure thought' in the sense which is meant here" (NC I:17). All other aspects of thought are *reduced* to absolutized reason.

#### Connectedness: A Feminist Discovery

What is at stake in the relativization of reason for feminist philosophers? For feminist philosophers, the absolutization of reason is implicated in the devaluation of women. As I observed in the previous chapter, the ideal of reason, as traditionally construed, has excluded the feminine. Feminist philosophers are justifiably critical of the valorization of an ideal that excludes them solely on the basis of gender. I also argued that the model of self that they espouse is radically different from that of the transcendental logical ego. If the transcendental logical ego is in fact masculine, and hence subject to gender, then it is not autonomous.

Feminists go one step further and charge that not only is the transcendental logical ego masculine; the ideal of autonomous reason itself is masculine. They point to the connection between such an ideal and the hegemonically masculine character of the philosophic tradition. The doctrine that autonomous reason is gender-neutral is fallacious; there is recently a wealth of evidence that discloses the connection between rationality and

masculinity and thus challenges the autonomy of reason.<sup>48</sup> If it is true that reason is masculine and hence subject to gender, then it is not autonomous. However, the recognition that reason is not autonomous because it is subject to gender will not automatically result in the inclusion of women. Even if patriarchal philosophers admit that reason is identified with masculinity, they can still deny that women should also be identified with reason. The exclusion of women is more complicated because it is included in the devaluation of the non-rational by absolutized reason.

How is the philosophic exclusion of women related to the reduction of the non-rational? Lloyd cogently argues that in the philosophic tradition, reason has been associated with maleness and thus valorized whereas the non-rational has been associated with femaleness and thus devalued.

What is valued - whether it be odd as against even numbers, 'aggressive' as against 'nurturing' skills and capacities, or Reason as against emotion - has been readily identified with maleness. Within the context of this association of maleness with preferred traits, it is not just incidental to the feminine that female traits have been construed as inferior - or, more subtly, 'complementary' - to male norms of human excellence. Rationality has been conceived as transcendence of the feminine; and the 'feminine' itself has been partly constituted by its occurrence within this structure (MR:104).

In traditional dichotomies, the masculine is associated with reason (and universality and strict necessity) whereas the feminine is associated with the non-rational (and particularity

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<sup>48</sup>To name just two books that examine the relationship between philosophy and maleness, see The Man of Reason by Lloyd and Philosophy and Feminist Thinking by Grimshaw.

and mere contingency).<sup>49</sup> Moreover, masculinity and reason are valued whereas femininity and the non-rational are devalued. Hence, the feminine and non-rational are concomitantly discredited.

When reason is absolutized, it devalues the non-rational. As an undergraduate, I soon caught on that the (unspoken) assumption in our discipline is that reason reigns supreme in the realm of knowledge. Throughout the tradition of philosophy, we have been taught that human beings are *essentially* rational with the consequence that all other facets of humanness have been devalued and suspect. Our non-rational aspects we hold in common with animals but reason is what makes us truly human; therefore, it is the pinnacle of human abilities. I was taught that philosophers never give credence to experiences; only what is rationally objective (grounded) deserves the title of knowledge. I was taught that I must never let myself intrude into my work.

If you believe that pure rational thought is the quintessence of philosophy, then you will also believe that the non-rational has minimal philosophic use. Epistemology decides what counts as knowledge according to the rules legislated by reason. As Code points out, the distinction between knowledge (reason) and experience (the non-rational) "acts to discredit any putative claims to knowledge that do not fall within the purview

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<sup>49</sup> Many feminist philosophers examine the dichotomies of traditional philosophy where the (valorized) masculine is opposed to the (devalued) feminine. See for example, Lloyd MR; Donna Wilshire "The Uses of Myth, Image, and the Female Body in Re-visioning Knowledge" (GBK:92-114); Alison M. Jaggar "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology" (GBK:145-171); Grimshaw PFT; Code WCSK; Sandra Harding SQF.

of a carefully, but arguable unjustifiably, stipulated scope of the term" (FP:65).<sup>50</sup> Insofar as reason is male, it also devalues the feminine. So, at the same time women are devalued because of their association with the non-rational, women are precluded from gaining knowledge, insofar as they are women, because reason is masculine.<sup>51</sup>

There are two ways to solve this problem. You could accept the absolutization of reason with the consequent devaluing of the feminine and simply argue that women should not be identified with the devalued parts but should be identified with reason as are men. This is the strategy of liberal feminists. In this argument you wouldn't take issue with the attempt to absolutize reason. Rather, the locus of disagreement would be in the identification of women with context, contingency, and particularity. Many contemporary feminist philosophers reject this strategy (as would I) because they contend that the liberal feminist argument accepts masculine standards and values (such as rational autonomy, necessity, universality, and so on) which is

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<sup>50</sup> Notice the similarity between this remark and the already cited quote from Dooyeweerd that pure transcendental thought is always meant in a logical sense because the other aspects of thought (such as the psychical or the historical) do not satisfy the requirement of pure thought (or knowledge) in the sense which is meant here (NC I:17).

<sup>51</sup> For example, see Code's "Credibility: A Double Standard" where she argues that traditional views of knowledge assume that women can only have access to experience and thus "lack the capacity to acquire the methodological tools held to be prerequisites for all potential knowers. . . . When one notes what it is that currently predominant methodological strictures render unworthy of the label [of knowledge], one must wonder whether female experience is really at fault, or whether epistemological assumptions themselves are in need of closer scrutiny" (FP:65). Code here is using the traditional dichotomy of experience and knowledge to illustrate her point. I do not think it is legitimate to oppose experience to knowledge; such a dichotomy is evidence of absolutizing reason.



an implicit devaluing of women again.<sup>52</sup> If we only affirm the ability of women to be rational without challenging the valorization of reason (which excluded us in the first place), we reaffirm the masculine as norm. To absolutize reason is to make the same mistake as many men have traditionally made. In this argument, women are not valued *qua* women but only insofar as they are like men. For a women to be a philosopher she must become more masculine.

The second way to address this problem is to relativize reason and revalue the non-rational, instead of struggling to accommodate women into a traditionally masculine ideal . More and more feminist philosophers are no longer content to accept the philosophic status quo by restricting their arguments to the acceptance of women as equals in the philosophic realm. Instead they are challenging the valorization of reason which excluded them. They assert that they have something to offer philosophy because they are women and not in spite of the fact they are women. They argue that reason is not autonomous because non-rational factors play a role in knowledge acquisition.

Feminist philosophers have begun to relativize reason (that is, put it in its proper perspective) by pointing out that all kinds of non-rational factors have their bearing on knowledge and

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<sup>52</sup>For example, in Feminist Politics and Human Nature, Alison M. Jaggar argues that "liberal feminism rests on an abstract conception of human nature that minimizes the importance of such 'accidental' properties as class, sex, color and age. It focuses on a commitment to so-called human values that obscures the real conflict of interest between the oppressors and the oppressed and especially between women and men. Viewed from the standpoint of women, liberal feminism is not impartial, comprehensive nor conformable with the experience of many groups of women. It is therefore inadequate as a feminist theory" (388). See also the criticisms of Grimshaw PFT:19-21; Lloyd MR:103-4 especially; Sherwin FP:15; Elaine Storkey WRWF:59-70.

philosophy and hence challenging the absolutization of reason and the consequent notion of the transcendental logical ego.<sup>53</sup> Here I begin to flesh out how Dooyeweerd's assertion that we do philosophy with our entire being can help women reclaim philosophy by challenging some of the odious features of the philosophic tradition. We can finally get rid of the transcendental logical ego; not only by appealing to actual experience, but by theoretically showing how the rational is but one aspect of ourselves. Once we have rejected this abstracted, autonomously rational self, we can create theories in which the presence and influence of our integrated, embodied selves are acknowledged. As the editors of *Feminist Perspectives* caution, women "require nothing less than new models of the self, in terms of which moral [among other kinds of] imagination, empathy, and feeling are taken at least as seriously as autonomy, rationality, and detachedness long have been taken" (9). Morgan argues she would expect such models literally to *incorporate* the non-rational into an integrated, other-connected self (SMFT:224). If these requirements are to be met, it will mean allowing the non-logical aspects to play their rightful role in theory.

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<sup>53</sup>For example, if (masculine) reason has been construed as opposite to (feminine) body, then "contemporary feminists, in response, have begun to explore alternatives to traditional, mind-centred approaches to knowledge, revisioning the body's role in intellectual insight and insisting on the centrality of the body in the reproduction and transformation of culture" (GBK:4; see in particular Susan R. Bordo, "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity: A Feminist Appropriation of Foucault" GBK:13-34 and Muriel Dimen "Power, Sexuality, and Intimacy" GBK:34-51). Knowledge has many aspects. Code, for example, argues at length for acknowledging the moral aspect; our responsibility to know well is the theme of her book, *Epistemic Responsibility*. Jaggar writes that emotions are necessary and helpful for the construction of knowledge; she concludes her article by saying "this proposed account of theoretical construction demonstrates the simultaneous necessity for and interdependence of faculties that our culture has abstracted and separated: emotion and reason, evaluation and perception, observation and action" (GBK:165). Knowing is never an emotionally neutral experience; Keller often writes of the emotional experience of science and maintains that the cognitive claims of science grow out of an emotional substructure" (RGS:96).

Many feminist philosophers are opposed to dichotomies since dichotomies, at the very least, have prevented women *qua* women from having access to philosophic knowledge.<sup>54</sup> Alternatively, these philosophers share a search for integration (SMFT:1). According to Marsha Hanen, feminist theory works toward integration on a number of levels. For example, "feminist theory not only issues in but almost presupposes a parallel reworking both of epistemology and morals, and an intertwining of the two into a kind of equilibrium where neither has primacy" (SMFT:10) and a feminist ethics "stresses relations among persons, concrete situations and the interconnectedness of economic, social, and political considerations" (SMFT:12). She writes: "my concern has been that philosophical thinking has been carried out in compartmentalized ways without apparent realization that one cannot think adequately about morality, or knowledge, or personhood in isolation from any of the others" (SMFT:14-5). In short, feminist philosophers argue that traditional philosophy is impoverished by its insistence on absolutizing reason to the detriment of other aspects of knowing. Code writes that "knowledge is a lesser product than it might be in consequence of having drawn its methodological boundaries so as to exclude experiential, emotional, practical, and subjective elements" (FP:78). The challenge feminist philosophers pose to the tradition of philosophy is not only to include women but to

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<sup>54</sup>The editors of Feminist Perspectives describe their collected essays as "a collective endeavour to create a philosophical universe where the male/female dichotomy is seen to be as pernicious and constraining in its effects as are all of the other dichotomies discussed here and throughout this volume" (10).

enrich our theoretical lives by acknowledging and examining the connections between the rational and the non-rational aspects of knowledge.

### Irreducible Aspects: Dooyeweerd's Discovery

Dooyeweerd's critique of the transcendental logical ego, which I described in the previous chapter, is at root a critique of absolutized reason. His criticisms cannot be satisfied by merely eliminating the transcendental logical ego from theory while continuing to absolutize reason.<sup>55</sup> He argues against the absolutization of reason (and against the consequent ideal of the transcendental logical ego) by analyzing the pervasiveness of the entire self in any philosophical activity and by showing that reason is simply one aspect of our entire selves as human beings. Even something that can be primarily characterized by being rational, such as theory, has non-rational aspects. In the previous chapter, I examined Dooyeweerd's theory of the multiple aspects of experience in order to explain how the positing of the transcendental logical ego is theoretically invalid. In this section I will examine Dooyeweerd's theory in greater detail in order to explain how reason is relative. Specifically, I will show how theory has more aspects than the rational.

For Dooyeweerd, it is the nature of the theoretical attitude

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<sup>55</sup>"Absolutized reason" and "transcendental logical ego" are two names for the same thing; specifically, the transcendental logical ego is one form of absolutized reason. I make a distinction here between the two because I want to acknowledge that a philosopher can absolutize reason without positing a transcendental logical ego.

of thought to make distinctions and connections. As such, it is a logical or analytic activity. However, it is not merely logical. The theoretical attitude of thought may be primarily characterized by its logical functioning but it functions in other aspects as well. According to Dooyeweerd, the act of thinking by a real person involves not only the logical aspect but all the other aspects.<sup>56</sup> When we philosophize, we create theories. Theories are logically explicit expressions of our thought, but a close analysis will reveal that they are not *absolutely* logical;<sup>57</sup> they also manifest other aspects.<sup>58</sup> When we talk about theories we cannot help using analogies that are borrowed from another aspect of reality such as mathematics or biology. The fact that we need to use metaphorical language in theory means that we are dealing with a multi-faceted reality.<sup>59</sup>

For example, Wilshire uses an interesting analogy to describe the different kinds and sources of knowledge. Since theory is a species of knowledge, I think it is legitimate to use this analogy of knowledge to begin to examine the biotic aspect

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<sup>56</sup>In theoretical thought, "we oppose the logical, i.e. the analytical function of our real act of thought, to the non-logical aspects of our temporal existence. The latter thereby becomes 'Gegenstand' in the sense of "opposite" (Widerstand) to our analytical function. These non-logical aspects, as well, belong to our real act of thought in its temporal concreteness and are consequently not to be sought exclusively outside the full temporal structure of the latter" (NC I:39).

<sup>57</sup>For a very comprehensive analysis of the various aspects of theories, see Marinus Dirk Stafleu's Theories At Work. The following discussion is indebted to his study.

<sup>58</sup>Dooyeweerd would say that the other aspects are analogically present (NC II:55-72).

<sup>59</sup>In her description of Mary Hesse's work, Elaine Botha asserts that "the fact that metaphorical redescriptions of the primary domain of the explanandum in science leads to a deepening of understanding and an extension of insight into certain structural aspects, must be attributed to the 'new way of seeing' which metaphor makes possible. This does not only constitute a figurative or symbolic manner of speaking about the primary subject, but actually refers and truly describes some aspects of the structure of the primary domain" ("Metaphoric Models and Scientific Realism", South African Journal of Philosophy, 5.3, 1986, 83).

of theory.

This system [epistemology] needs to be rethought and re-visioned, for in my experience knowledge, or a healthy awareness of the world, comes from many kinds of knowing working together or taking turns, with no one kind ultimately more valuable than any other. Knowledge is, in a sense, like diet, for many food ingredients - vitamins, amino acids, minerals, proteins - must also work together to provide us with proper nourishment. With knowledge, as with diet, each component or ingredient is essential to goodness; no one manner of knowing - not disinterested cognition, intuition, inspiration, sensuous awareness, nor any other - is sufficient unto itself to satisfy our need to know ourselves and the world (GBK:92).

This analogy works because knowledge, although it is not primarily biotic, has an organic aspect. Moreover, she recognizes the fact that knowledge consists of more than the rational and yet, it cannot be exclusively identified with any other particular aspect. Although theories do not grow the way children do, they contribute to the growth of knowledge. A fruitful or fertile theory solves old problems and spawns new ones. As in a living organism, the function of the parts of a theory are determined within the context of the whole theory and the relationships between the parts is characterized by interdependence. A theory is an organic whole that matures, develops, and evolves just as living creatures do. As humans metabolise food, so theories transform data. In the generation and growth of theories, we can see their organic functioning.

The point is not simply that we can readily use images drawn from biotic functioning when speaking of theories which are primarily rational. The point is that these metaphors refer to something real in theories; namely, that they have an organic

aspect. In fact, it would be *impossible* to fully describe theories *without* using such organic metaphors. The reference to organic reality *internal* to theory is real and ineradicable. In the section on Kant in this chapter, I devoted a great deal of energy to arguing that theories do not think but only humans think. I think that part of the reason it has been so easy in the tradition of philosophy to confuse theories with the theorizer is precisely because theories have an organic aspect. When I said that Kant's theory has outlived him,<sup>60</sup> I was not "merely" using a figure of speech. Theories do not live in the same way humans do. But theories do live or die.

Briefly, theories function in all the aspects of reality. Making distinctions and seeing similarities relies on the numerical aspect since we can only distinguish the parts of a whole if there is both diversity (the parts) and unity (the whole). A theory has scope, range, and extension; when we speak of having rational grounds for a theory, we are referring to its spatial aspect. The logical movement involved when we note that a conclusion follows from its premises reveals the kinematic aspect of theories. When we acknowledge the relative explanatory power of competing theories, their weight and force, we disclose their physical aspect.<sup>\*</sup> We talk about a theory giving us insight into a problem because it requires the perception of conceptual relationships and this feel for an argument is a logical kind of sensory activity. Philosophers rightly admire historically

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<sup>60</sup>See footnote 43, page 53.

astute arguments that take account of previous problems and try to progress beyond their predecessors; in its historical aspect, we see where a theory came from and how it fits into the larger, ongoing tradition of knowledge. We talk about the grammar of logic, the vocabulary of science, and the discourse of philosophy; theories reveal their linguistic function in communication and clarity. Theories also have a social aspect. The growth and development of theories depend on interactions with other theories and theorizing is a communal endeavour. We acknowledge that theories are either rich enough or too impoverished to deal with certain problems. According to Ockham's razor, a theory should use the smallest number of statements possible to achieve its purpose; the economic aspect ensures that a theory receives its strongest possible formulation. Early in our education, philosophy students are taught to recognize an elegant argument; certainly, theories that attractively manifest their aesthetic aspect are also often very convincing. Arguments are valid or invalid and a theory must do justice to the phenomena thereby revealing their juridical aspect. We refer to a theory as charitable if it takes seriously the problems that other theories address and the solutions they offer. A theory also functions morally in the commitment its theorizer makes to know as well as possible. Finally, theories function fiducially because they ultimately seek to be true.

It is imperative to note that the non-logical aspects of theory are *not* aspects of rationality. Rationality is itself



just an aspect of reality, a functional dimension of human experience. According to Dooyeweerd, each aspect is irreducible and all aspects are in an inseparable, mutual, and coherent relationship.<sup>61</sup> If the non-logical aspects of theory were not irreducible, we would be able to exhaustively explain them by reference to reason. In reality, they cannot be completely explained in terms of reason. A theory is primarily rational but it is not only rational; the preceding analysis of theories reveals that the other aspects function analogically in a primarily rational theory.<sup>62</sup> For example, although we can see the economic aspect of a theory in the application of Ockham's razor, we also know that economic reality itself is not the same thing as a theory. Conversely, we can see that an economic act has a logical aspect; economic activity involves making distinctions between various kinds of goods and deciding the relative value of each. Valorizing reason results in the devaluation of the non-rational because it cannot account for the non-logical aspects of theories. Dooyeweerd argues that all absolutizations "result in the attempt to reduce all other modal aspects of our temporal horizon of experience to simple modalities of the absolutized aspect" (TWT:20). As a matter of fact, analysis would have nothing to "pull apart" if everything

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<sup>61</sup>See Hart's Understanding Our World (Section 3.3) for arguments for the irreducibility of aspects. In particular, he suggests three questions that are helpful to ask ourselves in order to find mistakes of a reductionist nature: "Is there a special discipline investigating the matter with which I am concerned? Is reduction a possible ground for the paradoxical results I keep getting? Is the constant failure in coming to terms with some reality due to an inappropriate treatment of it - perhaps a reductionist treatment?" (134-5).

<sup>62</sup>Dooyeweerd argues that "...analogy doubtless refers to an inter-modal coherence of meaning between the aspects" (NC 11:55).

were simply an aspect of the logical.<sup>63</sup> The fact that we can make distinctions between the rational and the non-rational implies that the non-rational cannot be reduced to the rational; the non-rational cannot be understood solely in terms of the rational. Reason is relative because it cannot be explained in terms of itself alone without reference to the other aspects. I find Dooyeweerd's theory of the multiple aspects of experience particularly persuasive because it is able to account for the coherence and richness of our experience.

### Comparison

Once again, feminist and Dooyeweerdian philosophy are dissimilar at first glance. Nevertheless, Dooyeweerd's theory of the multiple aspects of reality and feminist arguments for connectedness have similar results in their attempt to relativize reason and its role in philosophy. Both Dooyeweerd and feminist philosophers perceive the different aspects of theory and they are dissatisfied by attempts to reduce these different aspects to reason. As well, they abhor the absolutization of reason and the consequent reduction or exclusion of the non-rational from theory. The feminist distaste for the absolutization of reason stems from women's awareness that it excludes and devalues women and their experiences. Dooyeweerd's aversion to the absolutization of reason is the result of his conviction that

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<sup>63</sup>Dooyeweerd writes that "...logical or analytic diversity supposes a cosmic diversity of meaning which is at the basis of all analysis". Moreover, "...logical analysis would have nothing to distinguish apart from a previously given cosmic diversity of meaning" (NC I:39).

theoretical thought is not autonomous.

Nevertheless, I am continually struck by the resemblance feminist theory bears to Dooyeweerdian modal theory. I will cite just three examples where the similarities between them are explicit. In "The Need for More than Justice", Annette Baier suggests that "justice is only one virtue among many, and one that may need the presence of the others in order to deliver its own undenied value" (SMFT:41). According to Dooyeweerd, any aspect, such as justice, is meaningless apart from the other aspects (NC I:17). Second, in "Love and Knowledge", Jaggar argues that emotion, observation, perception, evaluation, and action are as necessary to theory construction as reason and that "each of these human faculties reflects an aspect of human knowing inseparable from the other aspects. Thus, to borrow a famous phrase from a Marxian context, the development of each of these faculties is a necessary condition for the development of all" (GBK:165). According to Dooyeweerd, the different aspects are irreducible and inseparable; they cannot be properly understood except in their interdependence.<sup>64</sup> Third, Code's insistence on good intellectual character is her realization that theory has a moral aspect; "knowing well is a matter as much of *moral* as of epistemological concern" (FP:73).

In order to do justice to both feminist philosophy and Dooyeweerdian philosophy, I must acknowledge that the feminists

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<sup>64</sup>Dooyeweerd contends that "every aspect can unfold its proper...meaning only in this total coherence which expresses itself in its own inner structure" (TWT:9).

quoted above (for example) do not have a modal theory in mind and that Dooyeweerdian theory does not explicitly take account of gender. Nevertheless, I don't think that these differences imply a mutual exclusion or preclude a complementary understanding of the two. It was through reading feminist and Dooyeweerdian philosophy that I began to realize that I did not have to purge my philosophic theorizing of all but the purely rational.

Indeed, if feminists and Dooyeweerd are right, I can't make my philosophic activity purely rational. And once I understood Dooyeweerd's theory of the multiple aspects of reality, I began to see analogies everywhere. Such a theory can be of inestimable help to feminist philosophers as they seek to enrich and deepen philosophic insights. Feminist philosophers are already well aware of the echoes of other aspects in knowing; a theory of the multi-faceted character of reality will only serve to further differentiate the echoes and generate even richer knowledge.

My study of Dooyeweerdian philosophy has been enhanced because feminist philosophy has taught me that I have something to offer the communal task of philosophy as a woman; it has broadened my insight into the Dooyeweerdian assertion that only entire (gendered) humans do philosophy. My involvement with feminist philosophy has been enriched because Dooyeweerd's philosophy has taught me that I am right to feel outraged by the devaluation of the non-rational; it has broadened my insight into the non-rational aspects of philosophic knowing. Together, Dooyeweerdian and feminist work have enabled me to recapture my

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wonder in philosophy.

## Chapter 3

## The Contextualization of Philosophy

As an undergraduate philosophy student, I was required to take four historical survey philosophy courses. One of the great philosophers we studied in the third of these courses was Leibnitz. I remember being very proud of myself for forcing myself to read *Monadology* despite my great boredom and even though I could have feigned familiarity with the text in class. I was, however, worried about my boredom with this text (among others) because I wondered how I could ever be a "real" philosopher when I was indifferent to so many of the philosophic "greats". I knew I could never force myself to read Leibnitz unless it was required for a class or even hope to understand his work unless it was explained to me in a lecture. How was I going to become a serious academic if I didn't even enjoy reading the texts in my field?

At the same time I was reading Leibnitz, I was also reading feminist philosophy for the first time. I had been reading feminist theory for several years already (for example, *The Second Sex*, *The Female Eunuch*) but I was interested to know whether or not there was such a thing as feminist *philosophy*. By doing some research and deliberately looking for feminist philosophy, I found *The Sceptical Feminist*. I no longer agree with much of this book but I remember devouring it at the time; as a matter of fact, reading it interfered with my required Leibnitz reading. Unfortunately, the philosophy department

didn't offer a course in feminist philosophy (indeed, there was only one tenured woman on faculty!) and there was no women's studies program. Perhaps if there had been, I would not have had to worry about my apparent inability to sustain interest in traditional philosophic works since I had no trouble sustaining interest in feminist philosophy.

I hadn't made the connection between these two very different experiences of reading philosophy until now. I now realise that it's not that I was uninterested in philosophy; I simply had no interest in reading philosophy that had no apparent connection to my own life. Perhaps if the professor had explained what was at stake for Leibnitz in his theory of monads, I would have found a way for myself to enter into and engage the text. I was taught, however, that such an explanation, whatever else it might be (history or sociology or psychology), was not philosophy and thus, philosophically irrelevant. A philosopher's work should be able to stand apart from its historical context and the philosopher's own particularities. In contrast, I was fascinated by feminist philosophy because it was relevant to me, because it had a context both in the non-philosophic work I had been reading and in my own life. What I learnt through these experiences is that decontextualized philosophy bored me.

Alasdair MacIntyre could be describing my philosophic education when he writes: "Rationality requires, so it has been argued by a number of academic philosophers, that we first divest ourselves of allegiance to any one of the contending theories and

also abstract ourselves from all those particularities of social relationship in terms of which we have been accustomed to understand our responsibilities and our interests. Only by so doing, it has been suggested, shall we arrive at a genuinely neutral, impartial, and, in this way, universal point of view, freed from the partisanship and the partiality and onesidedness that otherwise affect us" (WJWR:3). As an undergraduate, I was adamant that I would not do philosophy of religion or philosophy of feminism. I felt that being too obviously Christian and/or too obviously feminine would marginalize me philosophically. I also implicitly accepted the judgment that Christian philosophy and feminist philosophy aren't the real thing; they aren't pure philosophy because they are biased in favour of particular social groups.

When I began to study philosophy in earnest, I lost much of the wonder that led me to philosophy in the first place. As a philosophy student, as I've said earlier, I tried to imitate a transcendental logical ego with dismal results. The absolutization of reason in traditional philosophy reduced everything that was important to me to some facet of rationality; if it couldn't be reduced it was philosophically unimportant. No wonder I had doubts about my ability to be a "real philosopher" - I couldn't admit to my true interests because they weren't "philosophic" enough and I had to struggle to maintain my interest in a philosophy that resisted my every attempt to see it in context. Consequently, by the time I entered graduate school,



I had some serious doubts about my interest in (main-stream) philosophy. I wasn't ready to give up on philosophy, however, because I still occasionally had experiences when I felt sheer elation as I discovered for myself some new insight, when I felt the passion of a profound discussion with other students.

As a graduate student, however, I have discovered that philosophy is only worth doing for me if it is integrated with my faith and with my feminism. That is, my study has to arise out of who I am and what my interests are; I cannot take the viewpoint of the detached and disinterested transcendental logical ego. Gradually, I began to realise that there is more than one way to do philosophy. I began to realise that I could legitimately do philosophy about things that interest me. Dooyeweerdian and feminist philosophy have taught me a new way of doing philosophy, one in which philosophy is contextualized in my life. Indeed, this kind of philosophy demands that I am self-aware about my commitments and about where I stand when I theorize. Feminist philosophy has taught me that my supra-theoretic commitment to the equality of women is a legitimate standpoint from which to do philosophy. Dooyeweerd has taught me that philosophy always has a context and hence, always requires that the philosopher chooses where she will start her philosophic reflection. We cannot deny that philosophy has a context by locating its starting point in autonomous reason. These Dooyeweerdian and feminist insights have renewed my interest in the discipline and have shown me a way of making room for myself

in the philosophic tradition.

In this first section, I shall argue that absolutizing reason leads to the decontextualization of philosophy. It decontextualizes philosophy since autonomy requires that philosophy be independent of its context in the academic community and independent of the context of its own theorizer. In the second part, I shall discuss a feminist view of philosophy. I will analyse the reasons why feminist philosophers reject the decontextualization of philosophy and argue for a holistic contextualized philosophy. In the third section, I will examine Dooyeweerd's view of philosophy as invariably contextualized by its theorizer and her circumstances. More specifically, I will analyse his view of the role of Archimedean points in philosophy. Finally, I shall remark how Dooyeweerdian and feminist philosophy converge in their arguments for the contextualization of philosophy.

### The Decontextualization of Philosophy

So far I have argued that Kant (as representative of traditional philosophy) has absolutized reason. I have further argued that the transcendental logical ego is the result of postulating the autonomy of reason. Now I will argue that such an absolutization and its consequent transcendental logical ego lead to the decontextualization of philosophy because to absolutize is to take out of context.

To be autonomous means to be independent, self-governing.<sup>65</sup> Philosophically, for reason to be autonomous means that reason must be subject to no authority but itself and it has the right to authorize everything else. If reason is absolutely autonomous, then reason is the measure of all things. Conversely, to have a context means to be influenced by surroundings and circumstances. Only that which is unaffected by context and which sets the context for all else is absolutely autonomous.

I want to apply what I learned from my experience with Leibnitz, namely, that I can better engage a philosophic text when I see it in context. Hence, I must look at the context in which Kant asserts the autonomy of reason; it is too easy for a student like me, with a traditional philosophic education, to accept the autonomy of reason as self-evident. But thanks to my reading of Dooyeweerd and feminist philosophers, I now question whether such a belief is as self-evident as I was taught. Certainly Kant's work has a historical context. What value does Kant see in absolutely autonomous reason? Why does he think that reason has the right to criticize everything, including itself?

In Kant's time, metaphysics had fallen into a sorry state: "it seems almost ridiculous, while every other science is continually advancing, that in this [metaphysics], which pretends

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<sup>65</sup>Keller offers the following description of autonomy as traditionally defined: "autonomy...takes on the familiar definition of free and unfettered self-government, of independence of others and one's environment" (RGS:101). Jaggar argues that the concept of autonomy is central to a liberal conception of rationality and "central to the concept of autonomy is the idea of self-definition, a reliance on the authority of individual judgment" (FPHN:44).

to be wisdom incarnate, for whose oracle everyone inquires, we should constantly move round the same spot, without gaining a single step" (PFM:4). Unlike the other sciences, metaphysics had no generally accepted method that people believed would, when applied, infallibly lead to certain conclusions. The credibility of philosophy was suffering from its own internal antinomies and Hume's empiricist attack. Kant describes the circumstances in which he absolutizes reason as full of despair. "Weary therefore of dogmatism, which teaches us nothing, and of skepticism, which does not even promise us anything . . . there remains but one critical question on the answer to which our future procedure depends, namely, 'Is metaphysics at all possible?'" (PFM:21). Kant surveys the philosophic tradition and sees that it is replete with antinomies and disagreements. He is disillusioned with this tradition of dogmatic rationalism because, instead of leading to irrefutable knowledge, it is riddled with internal contradictions and it spawns virulent disagreements among its practitioners (CPR:Bxv).

Scepticism is one possible response to such a state of anarchy and uncertainty. Kant rejects scepticism, however, because all it can teach him is that certain knowledge is impossible. Unlike dogmatic metaphysics which is mere (uncertain) speculation or scepticism which is negative, Kant is searching for clear and certain knowledge (CPR:Axv). He maintains that "the world is tired of metaphysical assertions; it wants [to know] the possibility of this science, the sources from

which certainty therein can be derived, and certain criteria by which it may distinguish the dialectical illusion of pure reason from truth" (PFM:126). In this short passage, certainty is mentioned twice. Kant is seeking absolutely necessary knowledge that cannot be doubted by the sceptic or contended by the dogmatist. In the midst of the battle that is eighteenth century metaphysics, he attempts to set philosophy on the secure path of a science so that the dispute may cease, the sceptic might be convinced, and the building of a body of knowledge might begin.

Instead of accepting the philosophic tradition of dogmatic rationalism<sup>66</sup>, he looks to the natural sciences where there appears to be a sure method that is widely accepted among scientists and that leads to a growing body of knowledge that is also widely accepted. In a historical context of great uncertainty, Kant wants to give philosophy the same certainty that other sciences are perceived to have which means that philosophy must seek its own method that will generate a certain body of knowledge whose truth cannot be denied by any rational person. Philosophy is to be modelled on (successful) mathematics and the natural sciences which accept no authority but that of reason.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Gadamer maintains that "in general, the Enlightenment tends to accept no authority and to decide everything before the judgment seat of reason... the possible truth of the tradition depends on the credibility that reason accords it. It is not tradition but reason that constitutes the ultimate source of all authority" (TM:272).

<sup>67</sup>According to Gadamer, "that authority is a source of prejudice accords with the well-known principle of the Enlightenment that Kant formulated: Have the courage to make use of your own understanding" (TM:271); "it takes tradition as an object of critique, just as the natural sciences do with the evidence of the senses" (TM:272).

What can guarantee this certainty for philosophic knowledge? We must find a starting point that everyone can agree on; we must go back to the very foundations and origin of our knowledge. We must strip away everything that is contingent until we are left only with the absolutely necessary which no one can deny.<sup>68</sup> As I argued in Chapter 1, this extreme abstraction leaves us with a transcendental logical ego. Philosophers differ from each other in numerous ways; but their ability to reason remains a constant and all philosophy begins with reason. Rorty writes that "epistemology sees the hope of agreement as a token of the existence of common ground which, perhaps unbeknown to the speakers, unites them in a common rationality" (PMN:318). Evidently (for Kant) pure reason transcends the differences among thinkers. Only a priori, impartial, and universal knowledge will quell all disagreements because it must be accepted by all thinkers. In the words of MacIntyre, "rational justification was to appeal to principles undeniable by any rational person and therefore independent of all those social and cultural particularities which the Enlightenment thinkers took to be the mere accidental clothing of reason in particular times and places" (WJWR:6). Pure autonomous reason, abstracted from all contingencies, will provide us with undeniably certain and necessary knowledge.

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<sup>68</sup>This is also Descartes' project. In the introduction to *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, Lewis White Beck asserts that Kant himself "began as a follower of Cartesian and Leibnizian rationalism" (ix). This is the tradition with which Kant is disillusioned. After all, "metaphysics, for the followers of this tradition . . . was an a priori rational science with a degree of certainty comparable to that of pure mathematics" (PFM, ix) and it hadn't kept its promise to give philosophic knowledge mathematical certainty. However, instead of rejecting the project, Kant tries to do a better job than Descartes did.

We can see that, on Kant's view, reason must be decontextualized in order to be autonomous. It must be abstracted from its accidental social and cultural peculiarities and then absolutized. What does this mean for philosophy? If reason is absolutely autonomous, then reason must be unaffected by anything outside itself. In turn this means that philosophy, as the discipline of unfettered rationality, must be unaffected by the vicissitudes of history, particularity, individuality, and so on. Philosophy, as the discipline of rationality, sets the conditions for all knowledge whatsoever and judges all putative claims to knowledge. Rorty argues that "Kant . . . managed to transform the old notion of philosophy - metaphysics as 'queen of the sciences' because of its concern with what was most universal and least material - into the notion of a 'most basic' discipline - a *foundational* discipline. Philosophy became 'primary' no longer in the sense of 'highest' but in the sense of 'underlying'" (PMN:132). Philosophers view their discipline as independent of other disciplines. Indeed, it is more than independent; it is the judge, the critic, the tribunal of knowledge. To quote Rorty again, Kant "enabled philosophy professors to see themselves as presiding over a tribunal of pure reason, able to determine whether other disciplines were staying within the legal limits set by the 'structure' of their subject matters" (PMN:139). In short, philosophy, too, is taken out of its context amongst the other disciplines and elevated to the position of metacriticism (PMN:166).

At worst, philosophy, as the discipline of rationality, has been granted the status of being independent of other disciplines and of its theorizer and his/her situatedness. The philosophic tradition has taught us that only its theories provide the true view of life and the world. At best, philosophers have granted other disciplines or pre-theoretic experience legitimacy in their own fields, but have continued to claim autonomous independence for reason in the field of philosophy. Mainstream philosophy has scorned the potential help and data that knowledge from other disciplines or from everyday experience could give philosophy.<sup>69</sup>

The absolutization of reason is an attempt to make philosophy, insofar as it is the discipline of pure reason, the ultimate context for knowledge and culture. Philosophy cannot admit that reason has a context (and hence, it also has a context) without losing its cherished status as the guardian of rationality. Rorty asserts that one of the roles that philosophers assume "is that of the cultural overseer who knows everyone's common ground - the Platonic philosopher-king who knows what everybody else is really doing whether they know it or not, because he knows about the ultimate context (the Forms, the Mind, Language) within which they are doing it" (PMN:317-8).

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<sup>69</sup> For example, Rorty maintains that "only the assumption that one day the various taxonomies put together by, for example, Chomsky, Piaget, Levi-Strauss, Marx, and Freud will all flow together and spell out one great Universal Language of Nature . . . would suggest that cognitive psychology had epistemological import" (PMN:249). Code, on the other hand, disagrees (ER:100). She draws on Piaget's cognitive psychology in constructing her epistemology. She argues that "this line of thought - explicating the cognitive and social nature of knowing subjects - might best be characterized as a move toward developing a 'socialized' approach to epistemology, grounded in (cognitive) psychological accounts of 'human nature'. It involves the belief that theory of knowledge is well advised to proceed in close connection with cognitive psychology in its efforts to understand specifically human methods of constructing knowledge out of experience of the world" (ER:115).



Philosophy prides itself on being the starting point for all of culture and knowledge.

For those who worship reason, such as Kant, decontextualizing philosophy is the only way to do philosophy. Any other kind of theorizing has limited validity at best. Philosophy that is independent of its theorizer and other circumstances (and hence impartial and universal) is seen as powerful because it can judge all knowledge of all people at all times everywhere. The discipline of rationality cannot be foundational if it is dependent on anything outside itself lest it be charged with circularity. Philosophy cannot be foundational for knowledge if it in turn depends upon a contingent theorizer or upon its tradition. We shouldn't underestimate the gravity of the threat contextuality poses for philosophy. The only alternative to such a view of philosophy seems to be scepticism or dogmatism; if philosophy isn't foundational then what is its use?

As I showed in the previous chapter, Dooyeweerd argues that Kant simply assumes the autonomy of reason whereas reason is in fact relative to other aspects of reality. Moreover, he argues that no philosopher can simply assume the autonomy of reason and he gives two inter-related reasons to support this argument. First, he claims that, historically, philosophers have different conceptions of the autonomy of reason; there is no agreement as to its meaning (NC I:35). Second, he asserts that autonomous reason has been powerless to keep its promise to deliver us from

controversy (NC I:36-7). These two criticisms of the assumption of the autonomy of reason are based on the enduring existence of philosophic disagreements. Philosophers continue to have differing conceptions of autonomous reason and postulating autonomous reason as a starting point for philosophic reflection has not lead to an undisputed body of knowledge.<sup>70</sup>

Kant claims that philosophy "can be brought to such completion and fixity as to be in need of no further change or be subject to any augmentation by new discoveries" (PFM:115). Unfortunately, philosophy (and a society built on these Enlightenment ideals) is in the same (perhaps even more) sorry state now as it was in Kant's time. As MacIntyre ruefully notes, "modern academic philosophy turns out by and large to provide means for a more accurate and informed definition of disagreement rather than for progress toward its resolution" (WJWR:3). Dooyeweerd agrees with Kant that if reason truly were autonomous, then there would be no disagreements among philosophers, or at least they would be able to settle their arguments in a purely theoretical way (NC I:36-7). But this is far from the actual situation in philosophy. Our experience of incommensurability does not refute Kant's belief that reason is autonomous but it does make the autonomy of reason problematic; it can no longer

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<sup>70</sup> MacIntyre argues that "fundamental disagreements about the character of rationality are bound to be peculiarly difficult to resolve. For already in initially proceeding in one way rather than another to approach the disputed questions, those who proceed will have had to assume that these particular procedures are the ones which it is rational to follow. A certain degree of circularity is ineliminable. And so when disagreements between contending views are sufficiently fundamental, as they are in the case of those disagreements about practical rationality in which the nature of justice [for example] is at stake, those disagreements will extend even to the answers to the question of how to proceed in order to resolve those same disagreements (WJWR:4).

unproblematically be assumed to be the universal starting point of philosophy.

### Feminist Philosophy

Given that philosophy is decontextualized in the sense that it sees itself as independent of other disciplines and independent of its own theorizer, why are feminist philosophers opposed to decontextualization? Given that the decontextualization of philosophy has traditionally been seen as increasing the power of philosophy, why do they see it as inimical? Many contemporary non-feminist philosophers (for example, Gadamer, MacIntyre, Rorty) argue against the decontextualization of philosophy because they claim that it is both impossible and harmful to attempt. While feminists would agree with these reasons, women also have a reason of their own for questioning the decontextualization of philosophy.

My primary argument for the feminist critique of traditional philosophy in the last chapters has consistently been as follows. Absolutizing reason involves the reduction of other non-rational aspects to reason. The other non-rational aspects of knowledge and life are devalued and suspect because they are subjected to the criteria of reason. Since absolutized reason requires that the non-logical aspects be expunged in order that reason might be autonomous, philosophy (as the discipline of reason) is taken out of its context. At the same time, women are identified with the devalued and suspect aspects whereas men are identified with

valorized reason. Therefore, women *qua* women are excluded from philosophy. The whole point of decontextualizing philosophy was to make it impartial and universal. However, feminist philosophers argue that decontextualizing philosophy has the opposite effect. In reality, decontextualized philosophy is biased, partial, and particular because it takes the male point of view, thereby excluding women.<sup>71</sup>

There are two ways to rectify this injustice and to include women (*qua* women) in philosophy. As I explained in Chapter 2, liberal feminists argue that women are just as rational as men and should be identified with reason as men are.<sup>72</sup> This argument involves accepting the absolutization of reason (and the consequent decontextualization of philosophy) and restricts the feminist challenge to the identification of women with the non-rational. It also involves the acceptance of masculine norms and standards. This argument has sometimes succeeded in gaining access to philosophy for some women. However, women are not admitted on their own terms; they must become more like men in order to be accepted as philosophers.

I must note that the preceding criticism of the liberal feminist argument does not necessarily require an essentialist understanding of either masculinity or femininity. The point is not what the essential male nature (e.g. rational) or female nature (e.g. emotional) is. The point is that reason has been

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<sup>71</sup>I shall return to this claim in Chapter 4.

<sup>72</sup>The first work of feminist philosophy I read, The Sceptical Feminist, was liberal feminism.

valued *because* it has been attributed to men. For example, if it had been widely believed that men were more emotional than women, then it would be emotion (and not reason) that is valorized.

Grimshaw argues that:

what I think is most interesting about male attitudes to women in philosophy is not that they can be aligned with any particular sort of philosophical view or theory. Rather, it is the many *different* forms that misogyny or contempt for women can take, the many *differing* sorts of philosophical theories in which women are relegated to second place. Women have figured as second-class citizens, as inferior, as objects of the sort of idealisation which is associated with devaluation in ways which are incompatible with each other and in theories which are inconsistent with each other (PFT:69).

Reason/philosophy have been rendered in the tradition as transcendence of the feminine, regardless of what the feminine means. Arguing that women have essentially the same nature of men will not include them in philosophy *qua* women; it will simply mean that, like men, women must transcend the feminine in order to do philosophy.

Or you could reject the absolutization of reason (with its consequent degrading of the non-rational) and argue that philosophy should never have been decontextualized in the first place. On this view you argue that no one (not men) or no thing (not reason) can be identified with necessity and universality and you relativize the value ascribed to necessity and universality. Feminist philosophers usually choose this argument because it affirms women *as* women and restores legitimacy to the devalued aspects. Instead of agreeing with traditionally male standards that context, contingency, and particularity are to be

avoided at all costs, they maintain that all knowledge is in some way contextualized and particular.<sup>73</sup> Feminist philosophers assert the legitimacy of the devalued aspects because theories based on the exclusion of the devalued and suspect aspects have resulted in distorted theories; for example, they have excluded women. As I argued in Chapter 1, any theory that cannot account for the experiences of (at least) half the human race is seriously flawed.

A pathological focus on philosophy's analytic task to the exclusion of its integrative task decontextualizes philosophy. Hanen's view on this point is worth quoting at length. "To see the philosophical enterprise too narrowly is to distort it. This is true both of the tendency to treat philosophy in abstraction from other areas such as science or art, and also of the tendency to focus narrowly on particular problems in philosophy without seeing their interconnections. Views of human nature, knowing, morality and politics must inform and be informed by one another; and this is something that feminist philosophers know, even if they do not always make the point explicit" (SMFT:17-8).<sup>74</sup> Feminist philosophers argue that philosophy cannot be taken out of its context and that attempting to do so is deleterious for it

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<sup>73</sup>Even science is in some way contextualized and particular. Harding argues that "natural science is a social phenomenon. It has been created, developed, and given social significance at particular moments in history in particular cultures. Many of the claims made by feminist critics about how white, modern Western men of the administrative/managerial class tend to conceptualize social phenomena can be directly applied to the story of natural science as it is handed down in the history and philosophy of science, in science texts, and by the 'greats' of modern science" (SQF:84).

<sup>74</sup>I would add that this is something Dooyeweerdian philosophers know, even if they don't always make the point explicit since it is an implication of their belief that reason is only one aspect of ourselves as human beings and only one aspect of thought.

excludes women and yields only partial insights.

Hanen decries the belief of mainstream philosophers that they alone are the guardians of rationality. Whereas feminists have stressed interdisciplinarity and the connections of knowledge (as Sherwin argues, FP:20) and tried to use that knowledge to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their material, "philosophers have typically thought that no one else is capable of doing philosophy, and, worse, that feminist theorizing is not philosophy" (as Hanen maintains, SMFT:17). Philosophers have thought themselves capable of teaching those in other fields (and the average person on the street) to think more clearly and get their conceptual dwelling in order but the philosopher-king is himself in no need of help from experts in other fields. Hanen astutely points out that "recognition of connectedness, not only among people but also of knowledge, is essential to achieving any reasonably whole picture; and focus on narrow specialisms will necessarily yield only partial insight" (SMFT:17).<sup>75</sup> She argues that we must acknowledge context (that is, the connections among people and knowledge) because decontextualization results in less knowledge rather than more. Taking philosophy out of its context only allows us to take account of the standpoint of the transcendental logical ego

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<sup>75</sup>Sometimes the convergence and similarity between Dooyeweerdian and feminist thought is astounding! Dooyeweerd writes that the various "isms" are the result of absolutizing one aspect of reality and then "the attempt must constantly be made to reduce all other aspects to mere modalities of the absolutized one" (NC, I:46). At best, such "isms" can only result in partial truths. However, Dooyeweerd asserts that "there exists no partial truth which is sufficient to itself. Partial theoretical truth is truth only in the coherence of the theoretical truths, and this coherence in its relativity pre-supposes the fullness or totality of truth" (NC I:116).

(which is really a hegemonically male point of view, as Sherwin notes FP:19) whereas acknowledging the context of philosophy enables us to take account of the differing perspectives of different knowers.

One of the implications of rejecting the decontextualization of philosophy is acknowledging that philosophers have different starting points for their theorizing other than the autonomy of reason.<sup>76</sup> Kant sees the autonomy of reason as a self-evident place to begin philosophy because it is common ground for all humans who want to think theoretically; it is so common that he even denies that he has chosen a place to stand. However, as I argued in Chapter 1, female philosophers find themselves in the position of being continually compelled either to question the universality and impartiality of the autonomy of reason or to renounce their own womanly experiences which are excluded by the autonomy of reason. Feminist philosophers do not deny that they can think rationally but they put very little faith in our common ability to reason to save us from disagreements and controversy. Instead they embrace the diversity of knowledge that is an inevitable part of human life and self-consciously choose their starting point in the liberation of women. Feminist philosophy is pervaded by attempts to see what traditional philosophic problems look like when seen from a point of view that is

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<sup>76</sup>Code argues that "affective, social, and historical 'location' are integral parts of cognitive activity; and there is no neutral observation point from which this evaluative process [of subjective factors] can be undertaken, for all would-be knowers, epistemologists among them, are subject to the same constraints [i.e. having a context or 'location']" (ER:112-3).



different from the traditional one of autonomous reason.

Unlike many mainstream philosophers, feminists are willing to admit that they have self-consciously chosen a starting place for their philosophy.<sup>77</sup> They even go one step farther. They argue that philosophers shouldn't try to escape having a starting point in philosophy because, as I argued in Chapter 1, ignoring our particular perspective does not eliminate the fact that we have a perspective. When we try to pretend that we are taking the neutral standpoint of "any rational man", we prevent ourselves from philosophically examining our perspective and what it entails for our argument.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, they argue that philosophers shouldn't bemoan our inability to do "perspectiveless" theory because the contextualization of philosophy enriches rather than diminishes its power. The standpoint of "any rational man" has not saved us from contentious controversy. Autonomous reason has not been so powerful as we have been led to believe; disagreements in the philosophic realm are as prevalent and intense as ever. Its inability to account for the experiences of (at least) marginalized and oppressed people deals a fatal blow to its claims to be omniscient.

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<sup>77</sup>See Sherwin in particular for a discussion of the importance of viewpoints in philosophy (FP:19-20). "So, while philosophers seek objective truth, defined as valid from any possible viewpoint, feminists consider it important to look to the actual point of view of the individual speaking" (FP:19).

<sup>78</sup>Code maintains that "acknowledging that there is selectivity in knowledge, based upon subjective factors, forces a more, rather than a less, rigorous examination and analysis of knowledge claims so that the consequences of subjectivity can be evaluated as such" (ER:112).

## Dooyeweerdian Philosophy

Why does Dooyeweerd see the decontextualization of philosophy as destructive? I have argued in the previous chapters that Dooyeweerd contested the autonomy of reason and I have also argued that the decontextualization of philosophy is one of the implications of absolutizing reason. Insofar as he disputes the autonomy of reason, Dooyeweerd would also dispute its consequences. Furthermore, the contextualization of philosophy is an implication of his assertion that only whole human beings do philosophy; at least this assertion implies that philosophy is contextualized in the sense of being influenced by its theorizer's circumstances and commitments which in turn means that it is also influenced by its theorizer's knowledge of other disciplines. In particular, however, Dooyeweerd denies the decontextualization of philosophy because it implies that there is a neutral, undeniable starting point for all theoretical thought.

In the section on Kant I argued that, in an effort to avoid prejudice and hence contingency of every kind, Kant begins his critique of knowledge with reason alone. Kant maintains that reason alone is his starting point which will enable him to put philosophy on the sure path of a science because it is a starting point that no one can deny. Autonomous reason as the starting point for philosophy is a matter of objective theoretical truth, "valid alike for everyone who wants to think theoretically" (NC I:14). I also argued that Dooyeweerd analyzes reason and shows

that starting with reason alone is problematic because the autonomy of reason is undermined by the lack of a universal conception of the ideal of reason among philosophers and the prevalence of radical differences between philosophers.

Dooyeweerd goes on to argue that a philosopher's starting point for theorizing is outside of theory itself; that is, it is *supra-theoretical*. I shall discuss the details and implications of this argument in Chapter 4. For now I am content to simply argue that every thinker chooses a starting point which may or may not be autonomous reason.

When discussing starting points, Dooyeweerd often used the term "Archimedean point". The actual use of the term "Archimedean point" is archaic but, simply put, it refers to where you choose to stand, your starting point or position, when you do philosophy. Dooyeweerd's argument regarding Archimedean points is relevant to this discussion because your starting point will determine whether or not you can see that you have chosen a place to stand and whether or not you see contextualization as a valuable thing for philosophic theorizing. The Archimedean point is the underlying point of view which governs a philosopher's work. For example, Kant's starting point for philosophy is in reason itself because he sees reason as the origin of all knowledge and knowable reality. But his particular starting point will not allow him to see that he has chosen a starting point at all; believing that reason is autonomous entails the view that there is no alternative legitimate standpoint.

However, if autonomous reason is simply one possible starting point among many others, then it is not autonomous and it has no claim to universal validity. You can see the problem this generates: we are thrown back into our old crisis of disagreements with no possibility of an impartial, universal judge to settle our disagreements.<sup>79</sup> On Kant's view, we need an undeniable and universal starting point to which we can appeal so that uncertainty in philosophic knowledge might be banished.

Although philosophers may no longer talk of Archimedean points, they continue to be concerned with the same issue when they search for the grounds (or lack thereof) of knowledge. In the Enlightenment concern for autonomy (in an effort to achieve certainty), many philosophers decided to be subject to nothing and no one except their own reason. This meant that reason had to be free from every non-rational influence; that is, it had to be without context because context is contingent. Those who follow in the Enlightenment tradition are unable to see this as a choice, however, because they have a prejudice against prejudices. As I explained in Chapter 2, anything that precedes the judicial authority of reason is a prejudice. For these philosophers, choosing to start with reason is not a choice because reason, autonomous and decontextualized, is the bare

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<sup>79</sup>Underlying the conception of autonomous, absolute, decontextualized, universal reason is the conviction that there is an absolute, universal order, which we can know through the use of our reason (or, for Christians, that there is the word of God which we can know through divine revelation and its infallible propositions). For many philosophers, essences, natures, laws, and so on are absolute and without context and philosophy searches out this framework. Sometimes this is referred to as a permanent neutral framework (Rorty) or as a wide reflective equilibrium (Nielsen). I disagree that there is such an order for philosophy to search out because I think that this notion of order is another form of absolutized reason. However, this thesis is too short to adequately deal with this point.

minimum; there is no other choice. Reason, wholly stripped of its context, is without prejudice. However, as Dooyeweerd points out, if reason is not autonomous, then deciding to be subject to reason alone is as much a choice as choosing to be subject to God's will or to the liberation of women or to anything else. Starting philosophic thought with reason alone is not inevitable.

Unfortunately, philosophers cannot agree on what this ideal of impartial reason entails. Thus it is not universal and so, it has failed to deliver us from disagreements. In these postmodern times, we fool ourselves when we believe that reason is an indisputable and unproblematic starting point for theoretical thought. Dooyeweerd's main concern in his talk about Archimedean points is to show that everyone chooses a starting point, whether or not their particular starting point requires them to deny that they have chosen a starting place. If reason is autonomous, then we wouldn't have to choose a starting point for philosophic reflection; there would be no other choice. Given that reason is not autonomous, the choice of a starting point is an inescapable and inevitable part of philosophy. The necessity of choosing a place to stand when we do philosophy does not mean that we *cannot* choose reason; it means that we can only choose reason as our starting point by absolutizing it.

If philosophy cannot be decontextualized, then what is the context of philosophy? For Dooyeweerd, philosophy is undoubtedly and properly a theoretical activity: "philosophic thought in its proper character, never to be disregarded with impunity, is

theoretical thought directed to the *totality* . . . of our temporal cosmos" (NC I:4). It is an integral activity that tends toward the whole. Moreover, recognition that philosophy is a rational and theoretical activity does not entail the absolutization of reason; that is, such recognition does not mean that we must choose our starting point for philosophic reflection in reason. It is easy, when we have chosen reason as our starting point, to be reductive about the other non-logical aspects of reality because making reason our starting point involves absolutizing it at the expense of the non-rational.<sup>80</sup> As I argued in Chapter 2, reason is only one aspect of theory, although theory (unlike belief for example) might be characterized by being rational. The other aspects of theory cannot be reduced to reason and do not disappear simply because we have chosen reason as our starting point. This then is part of the philosophic context: that reason exists in relationship with the non-rational aspects.

Philosophic analysis distinguishes different aspects when we consider reality and these aspects are indissolubly related and irreducible to one another. The special sciences individually study a single aspect of reality (NC I:85; TWT:8). For example, physics studies the kinematic aspect, mathematics the numerical, psychology the sensory, and so on. Philosophy, however, is not a

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<sup>80</sup>As Dooyeweerd warns, "whoever does not want to fall into the uncritical error of logicism, should admit, that the logical aspect of thought itself is enclosed within the modal diversity and the inter-modal coherence of meaning - and at least in that respect - has no philosophic advantage above the other aspects" (NC I:81). Rationalism (logicism) involves the belief that reason is independent of other non-rational aspects; absolutizing reason is a privileging of the rational function at the expense of others. According to Dooyeweerd, reason is no more than an aspect and as such, it only exists in relation to other aspects.

special science; rather, philosophy attempts to gain theoretical insight into the relationships between all the aspects of reality (NC I:4).<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, philosophy as theoretical knowledge "exists in an inter-modal synthesis of meaning between the logical aspect of thought and the modal meaning of an a-logical aspect of experience which has been made into a 'Gegenstand'" (NC I:153). As a rational activity, philosophy "ana-lyzes" things; that is, it separates things into their parts. As theoretical thought directed to the totality of reality, philosophy is integrative and holistic.<sup>82</sup> In other words, Dooyeweerd acknowledges that philosophy is both integrative and "dis-integrative". Philosophy, as the discipline that deals with the rational aspect and seeks theoretical insight into a total view of reality, has no advantage above the rest of the disciplines and thus, it is not independent of other disciplines. Moreover, philosophy is always done by whole persons and thus it is not independent of its theorizer. Philosophy is contextualized by its theorizer and by the connectedness between the rational and non-rational aspects and between the various disciplines.

### Comparison

If the Enlightenment tradition of philosophy is right that reason is autonomous, then there is likely no room for either

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<sup>81</sup>I shall return to this theme in the Epilogue.

<sup>82</sup>This is another point of convergence between Dooyeweerdian and feminist thought. According to Hanen, integration is a central theme in feminist philosophy. See "Introduction: Toward Integration" SMFT:1.

women or Christians in philosophy insofar as they are feminine or religious because both of these are prejudicial concerns and contingent contexts that limit the scope, power, and authority of philosophy. For both feminists and Dooyeweerd, the contextualization of philosophy makes room for them in the discipline because it allows them to deal with their gender and religious concerns respectively since such concerns will no longer be viewed as prejudicial concerns but as an unavoidable part of philosophy.

Both Dooyeweerd and feminist philosophers agree that decontextualizing philosophy illegitimately devalues non-rational aspects. They agree that the context of philosophy is not purely rational and that the non-rational aspects inevitably affect theorizing. They also concur that philosophy is affected by its theorizer and her context; this is what it means to do philosophy with your entire being and not simply with your rational ability. Reason never exists except in the context of an entire human being and philosophy never exists except in the context of an historical tradition that continues in an academy of scholarship. Lastly, their thought converges in their assertion that there is no Archimedean point outside of a context and no standpoint that is universal.<sup>83</sup> Code argues that "the concept of a neutral observer is quite at odds with human cognitive experience;. . .

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<sup>83</sup>For example, Sondra Farganis maintains that "there can be no...Archimedean point outside history that allows privileged scientists [or philosophers] to stand above the fray and see reality in a totally 'true' way" (GBK:217); Ynestra King cautions us about searching for "a single Archimedes point for revolution" because "there is no such thing" (GBK:134); and Jaggar argues that it is impossible "to identify the Archimedean standpoint of a disinterested and detached spectator" because "there is no epistemological standpoint 'outside' social reality" (FPHN:378).



knowers are involved in what they know, and knowledge is a product of this involvement. Knowledge is always acquired from a certain perspective" (ER:112).

I conclude that since the ideal of the autonomy of reason as a basic orientation for philosophic reflection has failed to meet its own criterion of rescuing us from disagreements and has moreover suppressed, ignored, and misrepresented the experience of those who do not fit the category of "any rational man", we are justified in rejecting it. Such a conclusion does not fill me with despair. On the contrary, I was filled with despair at my inability to purge myself of my context and to adopt the standpoint of the transcendental logical ego. I doubted my chances of ever becoming a "real philosopher" because I was too Christian and too feminist. I was only able to sustain my interest in philosophy by reading works that had to do with my own particular context and I had implicitly accepted the judgment that neither religious nor feminist philosophy are "real philosophy". Dooyeweerdian and feminist philosophy enable me to be honest about my own starting point and to philosophically examine the implications my starting point in divine revelation and in the liberation of women has for my philosophic endeavours.

## Chapter 4

## The Re-Vision of Philosophic Matters

My experience with Leibnitz that I described at the beginning of the last chapter taught me that I can better engage a text if I look at its context. But I also learnt that there is a close relationship for me between my interest in a subject and my ability to learn and achieve. For example, *Monadology* is not an easy text to read. Often, I would have to go over the same section twice in a struggle to understand it. I doubt whether I remember much of the text or the lectures; I am not at all confident of my ability to carry on an informed conversation about Leibnitz. However, *The Sceptical Feminist* was not light reading either. And yet, I couldn't read it fast enough. Despite the difficulty of certain passages, my attention never wavered. I still remember many of Radcliffe Richards' arguments and her sometimes startling conclusions. Why the discrepancy between these two experiences? Although it is difficult to compare two very different texts as regards degree of difficulty, I don't think it is fair to say that *Monadology* is more complicated than *The Sceptical Feminist*. Nor is the discrepancy due to my rational ability: despite my lack of interest and my struggle to understand, I did quite well in my class that included Leibnitz.

I think that the difference has to do with something quite "non-philosophic". My motive for reading Leibnitz was to pass my requirements for a philosophy degree as well as possible. My

motive for reading Radcliffe Richards was to help me think through some feminist arguments and to help understand what I faced as a female in this society. The latter motive was more directly related to the action of reading the text. Moreover, reading the feminist text was something *I* decided to do, not something imposed on me by the University.

Strictly speaking, none of this has much to do with philosophy. Or does it? I believe that I was capable of being competent in my grasp of both texts but I only got a really firm grasp on the feminist text. My interests, motives, values, and so on affected my intellectual ability to engage the text.

Let me try to explain further. As a high school student I did equally well in the sciences and the arts. When I went to university I decided to be a chemistry major with a view to applying for medical school. My marks in the sciences my first two years were, although passable, quite dismal. I knew that my problem wasn't academic ability; I had already proved my ability in high school. It had to do with interest. I spent more time on my (optional) philosophy courses than I did on my (required) science courses and it showed in my grades. It wasn't a case of being better at the humanities than the sciences. I thought that if I wanted to go to medical school enough I would simply force myself to do chemistry. However, because I found chemistry so boring it actually did become harder than philosophy. I discovered that you can only force yourself to learn to a certain extent; for example, I have earned respectable marks in several

required courses, such as Leibnitz or symbolic logic, despite my boredom with their subject matter, but I doubt my ability to write a doctoral dissertation on either topic.

A more relevant example of supra-theoretic factors in philosophic exercises is this thesis. Conceptually, I have grown quite distanced to the traditional way of doing philosophy and I feel more at home in the Christian and feminist approach to philosophy that I have recently discovered. In keeping with this new commitment of mine, I have chosen this topic on the similarities between Dooyeweerdian and feminist philosophy and I have chosen to write differently. I eschew impersonal, dispassionate language so I try to emphasize what *I* think and I try to share some of my experiences that influence this writing.

Since I was alienated by the tradition of philosophy because it excluded my gender and my faith and because I was unable to completely succeed at emulating a transcendental logical ego, I thought that working with this (re)new(ed) commitment would be easier. It hasn't been. During the writing of this piece of work I have gradually become conscious of how resistant I am to writing *this* way about *this* topic. In short, I can no longer accept my old education but I am still afraid to go with this new way of doing philosophy. I still, on some level, accept the judgment that I was taught by my first philosophy teachers that feminist or Christian philosophy is second-rate and inferior to traditional philosophy. I still feel uncomfortable using these kinds of personal examples in a philosophy paper. It's

agonizingly difficult to challenge and criticize the way I was first taught to do philosophy, especially since as a graduate student I still consider traditional philosophers my teachers with the power to judge my work.

Given that this is so, what does it have to do with this piece of work as a piece of philosophy? Well, it would never have been written if I hadn't decided to take a chance on something new. Considering my previous philosophic education, being myself may well prove to be just as difficult as trying to imitate a transcendental logical ego. But the insights from both feminist and Dooyeweerdian thought encourage me in my effort to find a place for myself in the tradition of philosophy. Writing this thesis is not just an intellectual enterprise and though my motives and my non-rational influences are not traditionally considered philosophic they will have a bearing on the end result. The discovery that has been really new for me in the course of this Master's degree is that these things affect the work I do whether or not I acknowledge them. I have discovered that my work is more honest and more comprehensive when I admit to non-rational influences in my study of philosophy and when I try to work out what that comes to rather than fight the losing battle of trying to expunge them. Dooyeweerdian and feminist thought provide ways for me to integrate myself in my philosophic work whereas traditional philosophy does not.

In the first section, I shall argue that traditional philosophy cannot deal adequately with what it has judged

philosophically irrelevant but is affected by it nonetheless. In the second section, I shall argue that the feminist assertion that the personal is political implies that no area of life can be judged private (personal) and hence, inadmissible in the public (philosophic) realm. In the third section, I shall argue that Dooyeweerd's theory of supra-theoretical motives provides a theoretical framework for non-rational influences on philosophy. Since for Dooyeweerd life is religious, philosophy as part of life is also religious. Lastly, I shall compare feminist and Dooyeweerdian thought in this area.

### The Rationalistic Exclusion

It goes without saying that Kant, like any philosopher, is concerned to discover as much knowledge as possible and to create theories with as much explanatory power as possible. He claims that "I have made completeness my chief aim, and I venture to assert that there is not a single metaphysical problem which has not been solved, or for the solution of which the key at least has not been supplied" (CPR:Axiii). His method involves positing the transcendental logical ego, absolutizing reason, and decontextualizing philosophy. However, Dooyeweerd and feminist philosophers have made various criticisms of all three strategies and they argue that, for various reasons, his attempt fails. Nor do they think that the solution is to do a better job of it next time: to be more rigorous in applying his method.

Paradoxically, Kant's attempt to create better theories that

can account for more of reality (or his attempt to at least know with more certainty the scope and boundaries of our knowledge) results in theories with less explanatory power, rather than more. As I argued in Chapter 2, the absolutization of reason involves a reduction of the non-rational to the rational. Non-rational, for Kant, refers to whatever is not universal, necessary, or impartial. If we make reason absolute and take philosophy (as the discipline of autonomous rationality) out of context, then we will judge only some special matters to be worthy of philosophic examination and scrutiny whereas those that deal with the "merely contingent or personal" will be considered undeserving of the attention of philosophy. Kant writes that "transcendental philosophy is therefore a philosophy of pure and merely speculative reason. All that is practical, so far as it contains motives, relates to feelings, and these belong to the empirical sources of knowledge" (CPR:B29). Philosophic matters deal with the a priori, the universal, the necessary. As Rorty says, "philosophers usually think of their discipline as one which discusses perennial, eternal problems - problems which arise as soon as one reflects" (PMN:3). If reason is absolute, then non-rational aspects can be subsumed under reason. If philosophy can be decontextualized then its context does not need to be accounted for. Kant argues that "philosophy is the science of the relation of all knowledge to the essential ends of human reason . . . and the philosopher is not an artificer in the field of reason, but himself the lawgiver of human reason" (CPR:B867).

Since autonomous reason purportedly transcends the vicissitudes of individual human life, such empirical contingencies are beneath the notice of philosophy.

My reflection to this point indicates that traditional philosophy is either unable or refuses to deal with certain human experiences because they are not viewed as the appropriate subject matter for philosophy. My criticism is not that philosophers are limited by their field. Rather, I am critical of philosophic theories which ignore or suppress the experience of women, the supra-theoretic commitments of their theorizer, and so on. Reason is valorized and philosophy promotes its standards to be the standards for all of culture. Traditional philosophy cannot admit that it is influenced by pre-theoretic commitments. For example, a patriarchal philosopher can pretend that his misogynist assumptions do not affect his theories. Thus, he can produce misogynist ideals under the guise of being neutral and bias-free. Even those philosophers who consider "philosophy of x" to be quite respectable often deal with their subject matter by reducing it to its logical aspect and judging it by the criteria of rationality.

The fear is that if we admit that entire human beings, (who have emotions, supra-philosophic commitments, and vested interests, among other things), do philosophy then philosophy will lose its cherished status as autonomous law-giver. If we concede that considerations other than the purely rational have a legitimate role in philosophy and thus there is no need to purge



them, then philosophy will fall into chaos, disrepute, and relativism - as if it hasn't already - because everyone will ignore the laws of rationality.<sup>84</sup> If we grant the situatedness (contextualization) of philosophy, then philosophy will lose its objectivity and universality. According to Dooyeweerd, the outraged question of the adherents of the autonomy of reason is: "what would become of the 'objectivity', of the 'universal validity', of the controllability of philosophic thought, if philosophy were to bind itself to presuppositions which go beyond its own immanent boundaries?" (NC I:14). Traditional philosophers are not open to the challenges posed to them by Dooyeweerd and feminist philosophers to examine the role of the non-rational in theory<sup>85</sup> because they see it as an attack on the scientific character of philosophy itself (NC I:12-3).

Both Dooyeweerd and feminist philosophers reject traditional philosophy because they find it lacking; specifically, it lacks the resources to deal with their religious and feminist concerns respectively. They both offer alternatives because they think that their respective theories are more adequate in terms of explaining reality, at least from their own perspective. And they are suspicious of any theory that claims universality since

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<sup>84</sup>Code writes that acknowledging that the sex of a knower might be epistemically significant creates a great deal of anxiety in the philosophic academy. "For many philosophers, such a suggestion would undermine the cherished assumption that knowledge can - and should - be evaluated on its own merits. More seriously still, a proposal that it matters who the knower is looks suspiciously like a move in the direction of epistemological relativism. For many philosophers, an endorsement of relativism signals the end of knowledge and of epistemology" (WCSK:2). Code argues that a measure of relativism is actually an empowering position. I shall return to this claim in the section on feminism.

<sup>85</sup>Of course, other philosophers such as Gadamer, Kuhn, Heidegger, Rorty, Polanyi, and so on pose very similar challenges to the tradition of philosophy. I do not deal with them, however, because the focus of this thesis is Dooyeweerdian and feminist thought.

theories that make such claims have often turned out to be particular to traditional philosophers. My point is that Kant's attempt to make philosophic knowledge universal, impartial, and certain fails to be precisely those things because he does not acknowledge that he is neither universal, nor impartial.<sup>86</sup> If we really want to create better theories, we need to re-vision the boundaries of philosophic thought so that we might account for supra-theoretic interests, religious allegiances, and political commitments.

Traditional philosophy claims that we can rid ourselves of particularities. Theoretically, according to traditional philosophy, everything can be questioned. Philosophy can turn its acute and penetrating gaze upon any object, no matter how insignificant and trivial, and help us understand it better. No principle or method or concept is sacred; everything can be questioned, destroyed, and rebuilt--except for reason itself. Reason (and its scope) is the one thing we are not allowed to question in traditional philosophy; it is the one thing that is non-negotiable. When something is put in this unassailable position, it has become a matter of faith.<sup>87</sup> Absolutizing reason

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<sup>86</sup>Code argues "an obsession with the autonomy of reason that manifests itself in a conception of knowers as isolated and essentially self-sufficient beings, who are self-reliant in knowledge seeking, has characterized mainstream epistemology throughout a long and fairly consistent history. Standard representations of knowers are studiously neutral in their obliteration of specificity in the name of objectivity. Yet the class-, race- and gender-blindness of this assumed neutrality is by no means benign. In suppressing specificity per se, this neutral stance necessarily suppresses the effects of gender, race, class, and innumerable other specificities in shaping its own fundamental presuppositions" (WCSK:268).

<sup>87</sup>For example, Hart argues that "if some vision or ideal functions as both an ultimate authority and a destiny-guiding perspective, we may be talking about visions that can with good grounds be called divine and spiritual" (SCWT:3). Someone who puts his faith in reason will, of course, resist calling this commitment to reason religious because reason judges religion to be a prejudice. A commitment, however, becomes religious when its authority is ultimate. Hart observes that the Bible defines one's god by the attitude one has to

is something that has caused all kinds of trouble in the philosophic tradition. Instead of having richly powerful theories, we have distorted theories that ignore the marginalized such as women, racial minorities, and so on. Yet this absolutization is one thing philosophers refuse to give up. They transform it but they do not relinquish their faith in it. I think this is why Dooyeweerd and feminists meet with such an icy reception from the tradition of philosophy since they dare to question autonomous reason's supposed impartiality, universality, necessity (although I suspect that many of them too put a good deal of faith in reason).

Kant wants to stay within the bounds of reason alone in his critique of knowledge so he decides to expunge his specificity by postulating a transcendental logical ego. Instead of preventing his philosophic work from being affected, it is more subtly affected; he is unaware of his own pre-theoretical prejudices. He can't even emulate his own ideal of remaining impartial; he is strongly committed to autonomous reason and his goal is rational autonomy. Choosing reason as a starting point for philosophic reflection is not a rational matter; it is a religious choice in the sense that you decide what you will put your faith in.<sup>88</sup> Kant's choice to put his faith in reason was not itself a primarily rational choice because at the time of his choice he

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something (SCWT:4).

<sup>88</sup>Rorty claims that "'Philosophy' became, for the intellectuals, a substitute for religion. It was the area of culture where one touched bottom, where one found the vocabulary and the convictions which permitted one to explain and justify one's activity as an intellectual, and thus to discover the significance of one's life" (PMN:4).

was not yet governed by reason. His choice to trust reason was a *pre-judice* because it preceded the *judicial* authority of reason. Perhaps it can be argued that everything Kant did after this momentous choice was governed by reason but previous to that choice, they were not purely rational acts. Deciding what to put your trust in can never be an exclusively or primarily rational act because it is a matter of faith.

### The Feminist Re-Vision

In Chapter 1, I asserted that "re-vision"<sup>89</sup> is a central theme of feminist philosophy: an exploration of how the problems of philosophy might be transformed if they were considered from a radically different perspective (FP:3). Although in theory any subject can benefit from philosophic examination, historically very little attention has been given to traditionally feminine concerns such as housework or rape or childrearing. According to Jaggar, "although apparently gender-neutral", the traditional dichotomies such as mind and body, reason and emotion, fact and value, and public and private "justify a social system that perpetrates the subordination of women to men. For instance, they exclude from political [philosophic] consideration precisely that 'private sphere' into which women historically have been relegated" (FPHN:388). My suspicion is that such concerns have

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<sup>89</sup>Feminist philosophy owes this term to Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision" (OLSS:33-49). I am aware of the gender implications of vision as a metaphor (Wilshire, GBK:95-6). Nevertheless, I use it because it has played an important role in feminist theory and because I agree with Wilshire that it can be reclaimed provided we are aware of its association with the valorized side of traditional dichotomies.

also been considered too trivial for the attention of professional philosophers.<sup>90</sup>

This brings me back to my fear of being marginalized by studying feminist philosophy. Serious and respectable philosophers work on universally human questions. No one explicitly told me that feminist questions were not universally human but I knew that they weren't because we never discussed women or their concerns in any of my undergraduate philosophy courses.<sup>91</sup> Questions concerning women belong in the private domain; philosophic questions belong in the public. Code argues that "since rationality, a sound grasp of theoretical principles, and highly developed mental capacities have long been touted as the prerequisites for entry into the public domain, it follows that those more preoccupied with particularity and the practical should occupy themselves with private matters" (FP:77). Rich writes that female academics choose to study subjects as remote as possible from their self-interest as women lest they appear "unscholarly" or "subjective" (OLSS:138). However, when male academics do research on subjects in which they have a vested self-interest, they are not considered unscholarly or subjective because their self-interest is hidden by calling the subject of

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<sup>90</sup>See in particular Grimshaw's introduction (PFT:1-5). As an undergraduate, she was taught that the view of women that "great" philosophers in the tradition had "was never a question for consideration" (1). She goes on to argue that "it is not hard at all to find evidence of the ways in which philosophers have devalued women, spoken of them contemptuously, relegated them to inferior and subordinate status. It is, however, extremely hard to find much in the way of discussion or recognition of this fact in mainstream philosophy" because "it has sometimes been assumed that questions about women were not really 'philosophical'"(1-2).

<sup>91</sup>Even in discussions of abortion in my undergraduate courses, there was no recognition of the fact that it is only women who have abortions and no recognition that the relatively powerless position of women might effect the issue of abortion.

their investigation "human".<sup>92</sup> Feminist philosophy has taught me to question two facets of this experience. Is the work of such traditional philosophers truly universal and human or is it particular and masculine? Are (traditional) women's issues (such as abortion or housework or gender) only the concern of women or does the fact that women are given sole responsibility for struggling with these invisible, trivial issues enable patriarchal philosophers to do their purportedly neutral and universal work?<sup>93</sup>

Jaggar argues that if it is true that the personal is the political, that "men systematically dominate women in every area of life", then "there is no distinction between the 'political' and the 'personal' realms: every area of life is the sphere of 'sexual politics'" (FPHN:101). There can be no area of reality that is unsuitable for philosophic examination and no impartial (gender-neutral) examination of it. Rich writes that "in denying the validity of women's experience, in pretending to stand for 'the human', masculine subjectivity tries to force us [women] to name our truths in an alien language, to dilute them; we are

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<sup>92</sup>For example, Keller recounts that "a former professor of mine, having heard of my work on gender and science, asked me to tell him just what it was that I have learned about women. I tried to explain, 'It's not women I'm learning about so much as men. Even more, it is science.' The difference is important, and the misunderstanding (not his alone), revealing. The widespread assumption that a study of gender and science could only be a study of women still amazes me: if women are made rather than born, then surely the same is true of men" (RGS:3).

<sup>93</sup>Dorothy E. Smith argues in Feminism and Methodology that "at almost every point women mediate for men the relation between the conceptual mode of action and the actual concrete forms in which it is and must be realized, and the actual material conditions upon which it depends." Furthermore, using a modified form of Marx's concept of alienation, she argues that "the more successful women are in mediating the world of concrete particulars so that men do not have to become engaged with (and therefore conscious of) that world as a condition to their abstract activities, the more complete man's absorption in it, the more effective the authority of that world and the more total women's subservience to it. And the more complete the dichotomy between the two worlds, and the estrangement between them" (90).

constantly told that the 'real' problems, the ones worth working on, are those men have defined, that the problems we need to examine are trivial, unscholarly, nonexistent. We are urged to separate the 'personal' (our entire existence as women) from the 'scholarly' or 'professional'" (OLSS:207). The problem does not only exist at the level of the exclusion of feminine topics from philosophic attention; it is problem with the entire system of dichotomies.

The feminist argument for a re-visioning of what is to be considered philosophically relevant is an implication of their broader argument against traditional philosophy. Men and masculinity are associated with the valorized half of dichotomies (rational, universal, necessary) whereas women and femininity are associated with the devalued side (irrational, particular, contingent). Once again there are several ways philosophers can attempt to remedy this charge made by feminist philosophers that the tradition of philosophy has excluded the concerns and perspectives of women.

According to the liberal feminist argument, you could rectify these unjust associations by arguing that women should be identified with the more valued characteristics as are men, while accepting these dichotomies with their relative values. However, as I argued in Chapter 3, accepting traditionally masculine standards involves an implicit devaluing of women again. According to a related argument you could simply delete the misogynistic comments of traditional philosophers and let those

philosophers who are interested in examining traditionally feminine topics, such as housework, do so. This sort of solution accords well with many traditional philosophers as they tend to be liberal on such matters as the status of women (as I noted in Chapter 1) and as they claim that philosophy has no subject matter per se but can be applied to any topic. However, this isn't a real solution because accepting the status quo will do very little to address the injustice done to women and the distortion done to philosophic theories. As I argued in Chapter 1, misogyny is incorporated into the very way we do philosophy and it cannot be overcome by simply deleting sexist language.

A slight variation of the above argument is to retain the rational structure of the tradition of philosophy while adding "feminine" attributes to it. However, as both Code and Lloyd warn, it is dangerous to simply affirm the value of traditionally feminine qualities and "paste them on" to the tradition of philosophy, thereby creating an androgynous composite (FP:81, MR:104).<sup>94</sup> We would then be raising femininity to the status of a norm and thus reaffirming the existing polarizations of feminine and masculine qualities by (implicitly) assenting to traditional sexual stereotypes and dichotomies.<sup>95</sup> Uma Narayan

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<sup>94</sup>A similar argument is often made against simply affirming the value of Christian ideals and adding them onto the tradition of philosophy. McIntire writes, that Dooyeweerd's "entire work was an empirical effort to understand the character of our world by means of the insights of the Christian religion. He wished to produce, thereby, a philosophy in which Christian insights were not an addition but an integral and identifying characteristic of the thought" (LHD:xv).

<sup>95</sup>Raising femininity to the status of a norm involves some form of essentialism because it presupposes that we know what femininity is. Even worse, traditional femininity has been shaped in contrast to masculine standards. For example, Lloyd says that it is natural to affirm the positive value of the feminine when we discover that the feminine has been downgraded; "but with the kind of bias we are confronting here the situation is complicated by the fact that femininity, as we have it, has been partly formed by relation to and



contends that the integration of women's contribution to the domain of philosophy "will not merely widen the canvas but result in a shift of perspective enabling us to see a very different picture" (GBK:256). In other words, the feminist goal is not simply to expand the domain of philosophy but to re-vision it.

The other way to rectify the traditional exclusion of women and the feminine is to reject the status quo which reifies dichotomies and bestows the honour of inclusion in philosophy on one half while excluding the other half. Feminist philosophers reject the status quo by asking the following three questions. Why should masculinity be identified with the valorized half of the traditional dichotomies and femininity with the other half? Why should one half of the dichotomies be valorized and the other half degraded? Why should we subscribe to any dichotomies at all? The editors of *Feminist Perspectives*, for example, recognize the need "to be able to see traditionally separate branches of philosophy as informing one another without one being dominant, and philosophy itself as not separate from other disciplines, from lived experience, or from efforts to create a better society" (20). This solution does not merely consist of bringing traditionally feminine concerns under the rubric of philosophy. It involves re-visioning the entire scope of philosophy in an effort to create a more humane and integral philosophy.

If feminist philosophers are right that philosophy benefits

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differentiation from, a male norm" (MR:104).

by the elimination of dichotomies, then it follows that philosophers will have to include many things that were previously considered outside the scope of philosophy such as context, motives, goals, and they will have to consider the place of philosophy in the whole of life.<sup>96</sup> I think that one of the greatest contribution that feminist philosophers have brought to philosophy is their steadfast refusal to ignore the influence of our pre-theoretic presuppositions and our non-philosophic goals when doing philosophy. For example, many feminist critiques of philosophy begin with the question "who benefits by this supposed neutrality and universality of philosophic theories?". Looking at traditional philosophy from that perspective allows us to see that the tradition is misogynistic and that patriarchal philosophers have a vested interest in excluding women while purportedly constructing impartial (that is, purely rational) theories because it allows them to keep their status as the guardians of rationality and the overseers of culture.

Traditional philosophy wanted to give us absolutely certain knowledge by trying to transcend perspective. Instead, such an attempt distorted theories and narrowed the scope of philosophy by confining its attention to the a priori, the universal, and the necessary. Feminist re-visioning involves acknowledging and

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<sup>96</sup>For example, many of Keller's essays in Reflections on Gender and Science are an attempt to "focus on the personal, emotional, and sexual dimensions of the construction and acceptance of claims to scientific [philosophic] knowledge" (9) which uncovers "the personal investment scientists [philosophers] make in impersonality; the anonymity of the picture they produce is revealed as itself a kind of signature" (10). She further argues that "scientists [philosophers], as human actors, find some pictures or theories more persuasive and even more self-evident than others in part because of the conformation of those pictures or theories to their prior emotional commitments, expectations, and desires" (10).

analyzing the standpoint of the theorizer which, paradoxically, results in a broadening of the scope of philosophy because every standpoint must be acknowledged.<sup>97</sup> Because feminist philosophers are not required by a commitment to autonomous reason to deny that everyone has a perspective, they are able to take account of many perspectives. Grimshaw argues that feminism makes a difference to philosophy because "women, in doing philosophy, have often raised new problems, problematised issues in new ways and moved to the centre questions which have been marginalised or seen as unimportant or at the periphery" (PFT:260). Feminist philosophers transform philosophy and its scope through a re-visioning which rejects the dichotomies, false universalizing, and pretended impartiality that are tied to the acceptance of absolutized reason.

#### Dooyeweerd's Re-vision

Why does Dooyeweerd think that is it necessary to re-vision the scope of philosophy? Given that every philosopher has pre-theoretic motives, let us look at one of the major pre-theoretic commitments Dooyeweerd brings to his philosophy. For Dooyeweerd, religion is not just an aspect, function, division, or part of our experience. Rather, it is the whole of life (LHD:157);

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<sup>97</sup>Code puts it somewhat differently. "There are advantages to endorsing a measure of epistemological relativism that make of it an enabling rather than a constraining position. By no means the least of these advantages is the fact that relativism is one of the more obvious means of avoiding reductive explanations, in terms of drastically simplified paradigms of knowledge, monolithic explanatory modes, or privileged, decontextualized positions. For a relativist, who contends that there can be many valid ways of knowing any phenomenon, there is the possibility of taking several constructions, many perspectives into account. Hence relativism keeps open a range of interpretive possibilities. At the same time, because of the epistemic choices it affirms, it creates stringent accountability requirements of which knowers have to be cognizant. Thus it introduces a moral-political component into the heart of epistemological inquiry" (WCSK:3).

humans are religious creatures and they always serve a god. As Hart puts it, "Dooyeweerd's roots in the Calvinian tradition provided him with the conviction that human life in its totality is integrally religious, that our choices and decisions are molded and motivated by religious forces, by our relationship to what we believe to be ultimate" (LHD:144); hence, the Calvinian slogan, "life is religion". Human beings always put their faith in something and make an ultimate commitment to it.<sup>98</sup> To maintain that human beings are not religious creatures (in the Dooyeweerdian sense) is to maintain that humans are capable of living with absolutely no final or ultimate commitment to anything or anyone. Even sceptics admit that, in practice, no one can live while doubting everything and relying on nothing (although they do maintain that one can do so theoretically).<sup>99</sup> It follows then that Dooyeweerd also believes that philosophy, as a part of life, is rooted in a religious commitment.

According to Dooyeweerd, the choice of a place to stand, or of an ultimate perspective, or of a final point of view (or, in his words, of an Archimedean point) is not a philosophic matter; it is a religious matter because it means choosing our position in the face of the ultimate origin and destiny of reality and of

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<sup>98</sup> Hart argues that "when Rorty explicitly rejects not only God, but also what 'doubles' for God, he strongly suggests that our divinities acquire their status not so much in what we explicitly allow or self-consciously articulate, but in how we relate to something" (SCWT:4).

<sup>99</sup> According to Hume in An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding, for example, it is as impossible to live in practice as a sceptic as it is to theoretically refute scepticism. "The great subverter of...the excessive principles of skepticism, is action, and employment, and the occupations of common life. These principles may flourish and triumph in the schools, where it is indeed difficult, if not impossible, to refute them. But as soon as they leave the shade, and by the presence of the real objects which actuate our passions and sentiments are put in opposition to the more powerful principles of our nature, they vanish like smoke and leave the most determined skeptic in the same condition as other mortals" (167).

ourselves (NC I:8-9). A place to stand is not found rationally in abstraction but existentially in a concern for the ultimate questions of life. The religious nature of this choice, however, does not preclude a philosophic examination and explication, although it does mean that reason is not the ultimate judge of this decision unless we have chosen to make a religious commitment to reason. We can only be critical of supra-theoretic motives to the extent we are aware of them. The scope of philosophy must be revised so that we can analytically examine these motives instead of making an impossible attempt to free ourselves of them.

Dooyeweerd's *Gegenstand* theory makes a significant contribution to the communal and on-going task of philosophy since it leads to his discovery of supra-theoretic motives. These are the motives that we have prior to philosophy and that lie outside the boundary of the theoretical enterprise and yet affect our philosophic theorizing nevertheless. Deciding where to start your philosophic reflection, Dooyeweerd argues, is dependent upon your pre-philosophic motives. If it is true that only the entire person with all her particular experiences, interests, goals, motives, and so on can do philosophy, then it is also true that her philosophy will be affected by these pre-philosophic (and supra-theoretic) factors.

In Chapter 1, I argued that the *Gegenstand* of our thought is the result of opposing the logical function of our thought to a non-logical aspect of reality that we wish to analyze (NC I:39).

However, since "this theoretical antithesis does not correspond to the structure of empirical reality" (NC I:40), the question now is, according to Dooyeweerd, "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 I:45). If we want to avoid absolutizing one side of the *Gegenstand* and reducing the other side to it, we cannot choose our starting point for the synthesis in either the logical or the non-logical side. So any synthesis will have to originate outside the *Gegenstand* which means outside of theory (NC I:46). Hart writes that "in order to overcome this antithesis (i.e. the synthesis needed to form a *logical* concept of a *nonlogical* *Gegenstand*), we require a theoretical view of the unity and totality of the world [NC I:47]" (LHD:I49). A theoretical view of the unity and totality of the world requires self-awareness in philosophy because only my entire self transcends the antithetic *Gegenstand* relationship (NC I:51); it is *I* who set up the *Gegenstand* relationship. In philosophic reflection, the human self returns to itself and "this actual return to oneself in the reflecting act of thought must finally transcend the limits of philosophical thought" (NC I:7) because, even in philosophy, we are more than our philosophical thought. We are always entire human beings. For Dooyeweerd, self-reflection is necessary for philosophy but self-reflection cannot be limited to logical, analytic reflection. Self-awareness requires religious awareness of our own and the world's origin

(NC I:55). We must reflect on the ultimate question of where we stand when we do philosophy. In other words, what is our driving force (motive) when we do philosophy?

Dooyeweerd concludes that "both self-knowledge and knowledge of the absolute origin or pseudo-origin, exceed the limits of theoretical thought and are rooted in the 'heart' or religious centre of our existence" (NC I:55). Elevating philosophy to a point of departure makes philosophy religious, rather than philosophic, in nature because it becomes something in which we put our faith rather than a theoretical view of the totality of reality. Philosophy which is governed by an acknowledged faith is free to be truly philosophic; philosophy which seeks to be a point of departure is forced to be religious.

This is another way to put the difference between Kant (as representative of the philosophic tradition) and Dooyeweerd. Kant maintains that only reason is truly critical because it has no prejudices or biases; the only way to purge ourselves of prejudice is to submit everything to the judgment of reason. Dooyeweerd asserts that only when we are self-conscious of our prejudices or biases can we be truly critical because then we can theoretically analyze them and the implications they have for our philosophy. For example, given that I am a Christian, my faith will influence my philosophic work in terms of the theories that I will accept or reject, or the kinds of criticisms I will make of others' work. Refusing to acknowledge my faith as a presupposition does not prevent my faith from exercising

influence on my work; it simply prevents me from being philosophically critical of it, as well as from being open to that which influences me philosophically.

Those who refuse to acknowledge that it is necessary to make a decision as to the starting point of philosophic reflection mask its presence by calling it a self-evident starting point. For example, Kant found himself assailed by the sceptics on one side and by the internal antinomies of dogmatic metaphysics on the other side so he *decided to put his trust in reason* to save philosophy from this disorder. But as I argued in Chapter 1 and the first section of this chapter, deciding to trust reason is not itself simply and purely a rational choice. It is a religious choice; that is, it indicates a final and ultimate trust in human (rational) abilities. This is an implication of Dooyeweerd's assertion that only entire human beings do philosophy: *"this choice [of a place to stand] is no act of 'transcendental subject of thought', which is an abstract concept. It is rather an act of the full self which transcends the diversity of . . . aspects. And it is a religious act, just because it contains a choice of position . . . in the face of the Origin of meaning"* (NC I:20).

In Chapter 3, I examined the reason why those who subscribe to the autonomy of reason cannot see that they choose their starting point. Now I will more specifically examine why those who have chosen to put their faith in autonomous reason cannot see that this choice is a *religious* choice. They do not deny



that they have made a commitment to reason; but they see their faith in reason as a rational matter, and not as a religious matter.<sup>100</sup> Kant assumes that reason can be the ultimate starting point for philosophy and, because autonomous reason dictates that one must not put one's faith in anything until one has been authorized to do so by reason, Kant obediently fails to see that he has put his faith in reason. To him, choosing to submit to reason is self-evident. But how can reason authorize putting faith in reason if we have not already assumed that reason is absolute? Traditional philosophy hoped to remain within the immanent boundaries of thought by positing a transcendental logical ego. For traditional philosophers, the most basic question we can ask is "what are the necessary conditions for knowledge?". However, as Dooyeweerd so perceptively demonstrates, to ask this question already presupposes a choice of the starting point for philosophic reflection.<sup>101</sup> Choosing to start with a transcendental logical ego already takes us beyond the boundaries of thought because it makes a choice regarding the starting point for theoretical reflection and assumes a knowledge of the human self.

Personally, I am critical of Kant's (or anyone else's) faith in reason because I think that "autonomous reason" has failed to

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<sup>100</sup>In his debate with Kai Nielsen, Hart says that Nielsen "considers his commitment [to reason] to be exempt from his objections precisely because in his commitment to reason, his position seems rational rather than creedal" (SCWT:5).

<sup>101</sup>Dooyeweerd argues that "the epistemological problem: What are the limits to our knowledge? presupposes, in fact, some insight into the meaning of knowledge as necessarily related to the ego" (NC I:9). He thinks that the prior question is "What is the origin of our knowledge and of knowable reality?" (NC I:10).

deliver its adherents from controversy and uncertainty; indeed, our entire society is beginning to see the folly of clinging to Enlightenment ideals.<sup>102</sup> Dooyeweerd also thinks that a faith in reason is misplaced. However, the primary point of his analysis is that philosophers should admit to their pre-philosophic (religious) commitments. Hart writes that "he [Dooyeweerd] was confident of his claim that he had proven that theory rests on extra-theoretical foundations, but then he left open, as a matter of religious choice, which content one should give to these foundations [NC I:56]" (LHD:153).<sup>103</sup>

Restricting the sovereignty of reason to theory does not weaken the force of Dooyeweerd's criticism. Even when it is admitted that reason is perhaps not the only standard in life, rationality continues to hold absolute authority in the realm of philosophy and this commitment to reason loses nothing of its religious character by being confined to philosophy.<sup>104</sup> It is not enough to recognise that we are fully differentiated human creatures in most areas of our lives while tenaciously clinging

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<sup>102</sup>Hence, the current publication of books like After Philosophy; the critiques of feminist philosophers; and the critiques of non-feminist philosophers like Rorty and MacIntyre.

<sup>103</sup>Dooyeweerd writes that "every philosophical current should try to solve them [philosophic problems] from its own starting-point, but this starting-point should no longer be camouflaged by the multi-vocal dogma concerning the autonomy of theoretical thought" (TWT:55-6).

<sup>104</sup>Dooyeweerd writes: "the proclamation of the self-sufficiency of philosophic thought, even with the addition of 'in its own field', is an absolutization of meaning [that which is relative]. Nothing of its idolatrous character is lost by reason of the thinker's readiness to recognize, that the absolutizing . . . which he performs in the theoretical field is by no means the only rightful claimant, but that philosophy should allow the religious, aesthetic or moral man full freedom to serve other gods, outside the theoretical realm. The philosopher who allows this freedom to the non-theoretician is, so to speak, theoretically a polytheist. He fights shy of proclaiming the theoretical God to be the only true one. But, within the temple of this God, no others shall be worshipped! . . . Even on the immanence-standpoint the choice of the Archimedean point proves to be impossible as a purely theoretical act which prejudices nothing in a religious sense" (NC I:20-1).

to a purely rational ego in our lives of theory. In our postmodern times, the edifice of autonomous rationality is collapsing and it is too much (and too harmful) to hope that reason can escape relativization as long as it stays within the limits of philosophy.

### Comparison

There are many similarities between Dooyeweerdian and feminist thought although they may not be obvious at first glance. In response to the question posed at the beginning of the first section, "what will happen to philosophy if we take account of non-philosophic factors?", we can answer that we will at least be aware of our deepest and ultimate commitments and the role they play in our philosophic work. These presuppositions are going to affect our theoretic work whether we are aware of them or not. Dooyeweerd's claim that entire human beings do philosophy implies, if true, that non-philosophic factors will play an unavoidable role in the construction of theory. The assertion of the editors of *Feminist Perspectives* that "what a person is affects what that person can know, which in turn structures and restructures what she is, giving rise, then, to altered modes of being" (FP:6) just proves his point that your philosophy depends on whom you are. Both Dooyeweerd and feminists agree that theory is never neutral. For Dooyeweerd, theory is religious in the sense that it involves choosing a

standpoint in relation to the origin of knowledge and reality and making a commitment to this choice. For feminists, theory is political in the sense that every aspect of life is affected by gender; there is no neutral standpoint. Philosophy prides itself on being truly critical; Dooyeweerd points out that it cannot be critical of presuppositions it refuses to acknowledge. And Code, Mullett, and Overall, for example, recognize that "such presuppositions shape both the structure and the content of any treatment of substantive issues; they must be unmasked if progress is to be made either in philosophical discussion per se, or in the socio-political praxis to be based upon this re-visioned philosophical approach" (6). Unlike traditional philosophy which claims that impartiality should and can be achieved, Dooyeweerd claims that the choice of the standpoint can never be an unprejudiced, theoretical act (NC I:21) and Sherwin claims that feminist philosophers admit to bias in their perspectives (FP:20). Unlike traditional philosophy which claims that the theorizer is irrelevant, Dooyeweerd maintains that only entire human beings do philosophy (NC I:5) and Sherwin maintains that feminist philosophers routinely pay attention to the perspective of the theorizer as well as her theory (FP:19).

No feminist proposes in her plea for interdisciplinarity that the philosopher do the work of the biologist or the novelist, the theologian or the politician *qua* philosopher; Dooyeweerd does not advocate discarding philosophy for religious

world and life views. Nevertheless, both feminist<sup>105</sup> and religious concerns are deemed illegitimate matters by traditional philosophers because they are not "philosophic enough". Neither Dooyeweerdians nor feminists embrace a relativism which says that any approach is as good as any other or that there is nothing more to be said when we uncover our pre-theoretic commitments; the rules of rationality will still continue to hold. But if we are going to get anywhere philosophically, we must begin to admit that the rules of rationality do not have the only or final say. There are other criteria for philosophical theories: for example, the inclusiveness of our philosophy (does it exclude half the human race?), the result of our theories (does it justify and perpetrate oppression?), the role of empirical experience in our philosophy (does it take into account and give voice to the lived experience of minorities?), the honesty of our theories (do they acknowledge the supra-theoretic commitments of the theorizer) to name just a few. For Christians (in particular), who have had to deny their religious allegiance in order to remain within the tradition of philosophy, the readiness of feminists to be honest about their non-theoretical concerns in philosophy is a welcome change. For women (in particular), who were never well-represented by the tradition of philosophy anyway, such an opening up in philosophy to the influence of that which is non-philosophic can only be a good thing.

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<sup>105</sup>See Sherwin's article for a poignant examination of the reasons for the dismissal of feminist work as "not philosophic" (FP:15-6 in particular).

## Epilogue

Reasons for the Similarity Between  
Dooyeweerdian and Feminist Thought

I have argued for the points where I think Dooyeweerdian and feminist philosophy converge. The question to be asked now is: why are Dooyeweerd's Christian philosophy and feminist philosophy so similar? Indeed, feminist philosophers who are not Christian and Christian philosophers who are not feminists might be uncomfortable with any discussion of similarities between their theories. I want to be clear that while I have been arguing that there are points of convergence between Dooyeweerdian and feminist thought, I am not arguing that Dooyeweerdian theory is feminist or that feminist theory is Christian. Certainly, you can be a Dooyeweerdian philosopher without being a feminist or a feminist philosopher without being a Christian. The starting point for Dooyeweerdian philosophy in divine revelation and the starting point for feminist philosophy in the liberation of women are very different.<sup>106</sup> Given these differences in starting points, what can account for the similarities between the two?

I contend that these two philosophic systems are similar because they are both rooted in perspectives on life that have total implications. *Being* a Christian and *being* a woman are

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<sup>106</sup> Although their ultimate starting point remains in divine revelation, many Christian feminists argue (as I would) that if we take divine revelation seriously we must advocate the liberation of women; see, for example, Letha Scanzoni's and Nancy Hardesty's *All We're Meant to Be*; Storkey's *What's Right With Feminism*; and Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen's *Gender and Grace*. Nevertheless, some Christians would vehemently deny that divine revelation advocates the liberation of women and are anti-feminist and some feminists vehemently assert that divine revelation is misogynistic and are anti-Christian.

themselves matters of totality.<sup>107</sup> What does it mean for a perspective to be total? A perspective has total implications when it provides the most basic framework from which we see the world, when it becomes our world view.<sup>108</sup> For example, in addition to being a Christian and a feminist, I also have brown eyes. It is true that I can never study philosophy except as a brown-eyed person. Eye colour, however, is not a significant enough factor to have total implications for my life; it does not shape my world view to the extent that my gender or faith does.<sup>109</sup> A perspective is total in scope when it purports to answer questions about ultimate matters: who am I? (what is human nature?), where am I? (what is the nature of the universe?), what's wrong? (how do I understand evil?), and what's the solution (how can I overcome evil?).<sup>110</sup> These are questions that no one can avoid.<sup>111</sup> Both feminism and Christianity claim

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<sup>107</sup>This is why I need to integrate my Christian faith and my feminism (Introduction) if I was to avoid compartmentalizing myself again as I was forced to do by traditional philosophy.

<sup>108</sup>Dooyeweerd defines world view as a "pre-theoretical view of totality" (NC I:128).

<sup>109</sup>Code argues that "it would seem that such incidental physical attributes as height, weight, or hair color would not count among factors that would determine a person's capacity to know (though the arguments that skin color does count are too familiar" (WCSK:11). "But in cultures in which sex differences figure prominently in virtually every mode of human interaction, being female or male is far more fundamental to the construction of subjectivity than are such attributes as size or hair color" (WCSK:11-2). I would add that if, however, we lived in a society that ascribes as much significance to eye colour as our current society ascribes to gender, then it would play a significant role in philosophy.

<sup>110</sup>Compare the questions asked by two Christians, Brian J. Walsh and J. Richard Middleton in The Transforming Vision (35) to the definition of a total perspective given by Leslie Stevenson in Seven Theories of Human Nature (9). They are remarkably similar.

<sup>111</sup>Stevenson begins his book by asking: "What is man? This is surely one of the most important questions of all. For so much else depends on our view of human nature. The meaning and purpose of human life, what we ought to do, and what we can hope to achieve - all these are fundamentally affected by whatever we think is the 'real' or 'true' nature of man" (STHN:3).

to answer these questions.<sup>112</sup> It is true that there are differences among feminists and among Christians as to the answers they would give. However, the variability in the answers does not negate the point that feminists, despite their different answers, all answer these questions with an emphasis on gender and Christians, despite their disagreements, answer these questions by appealing to divine revelation.

Feminist philosophy is rooted in a world view that sees gender as primary and Dooyeweerdian philosophy is rooted in a world view that sees religious commitment as primary. Being a woman gives you a perspective that will make a difference to every aspect of your life, including philosophy. As Code argues, gender is not a role that can be taken on and off at whim (FP:82). In a comparable way, being a Christian, insofar as it encompasses your ultimate beliefs about reality, will make a difference to how you see every aspect of your life. Dooyeweerd says that faith "is the central sphere of human existence, which gives life as a whole its ultimate orientation" (SS:2). Your gender and your faith (whatever they are) shape your world view, including your perspective in theory. This is the whole point of the Dooyeweerdian and feminist argument for the contextualization of philosophy: that philosophy always depends on the perspective

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<sup>112</sup>For studies dealing specifically with a (Reformed) Christian world view see Walsh's and Middleton's The Transforming Vision; and Albert M. Wolters' Creation Regained. See Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen's "Christian Maturity in Light of Feminist Theory" where she deals with a variety of feminist world views; Storkey writes about different strands in feminism with these four questions in mind (WRWF); Jaggar analyzes the differences between feminists in terms of "their basic assumptions about human nature" (FPHN:12, 21-23) although she does not explicitly use the term "world view"; and Harding discusses the implications of the "curious coincidence" of African and feminist world views in Chapter 7 (SQF) although she does not define "world view".



of the philosopher.

Like everyone else, feminists are faced with ultimate questions. Sherwin, for example, asserts that "feminist philosophy does not just offer new truths, or new perspectives in these relativistic philosophic times. I believe that feminism demands a distinct way of doing philosophy and challenges the very practice most philosophers pride themselves on having mastered" (FP:16). I would add that the reason she thinks that feminism demands a distinct way of doing philosophy is that she also thinks that gender so thoroughly affects every aspect of life.<sup>113</sup> I agree. To be fair, however, the insight that gender permeates all of life, including theory, is not an obvious point. Or at least, it's not obvious to non-feminists. As a matter of fact, non-feminists can insist that gender is about as significant for world views and philosophy as is eye colour. In reply, feminist philosophers can present good empirical evidence for their claim that gender affects all of life.<sup>114</sup>

In a similar way, supra-theoretical, religious commitments do not obviously pervade every aspect of life. So, for example, the empirical evidence presented by feminist philosophers to support the claim that gender affects all of life, including theory, will not convince anyone whose religious assumptions forbid the acceptance of the ubiquity of gender. Someone who has

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<sup>113</sup>Jaggar writes that the feminist critique of "women's position in contemporary society demonstrates that every aspect of social life is governed by gender" (FPN:21).

<sup>114</sup>See for example Harding's discussion of empirical refutations of gender-free research in science in Chapter 2, SQF.

made a commitment to gender-free, autonomous reason will only come to see that philosophy is in fact influenced by gender when such a claim is argued in his own terms; that is, when it can be shown that traditional (masculine) philosophy cannot even live up to its own standards of transcending gender. Such a realization may cause the non-feminist to give up his belief in the power of philosophy to transcend gender. Alternatively, however, he may deal with this realization by arguing that gender-biased philosophy is "bad philosophy" and, ideally, "good philosophy" can be gender-neutral.<sup>115</sup> In other words, he may incorporate feminist insights into his philosophy without abandoning his faith in autonomous reason. The feminist philosopher would have to deal with the underlying commitment to autonomous reason because religious commitments cannot be refuted by purely theoretical arguments.<sup>116</sup>

In response to the question posed at the beginning of this section, "why are Dooyeweerdian and feminist philosophy similar", any answer will have to deal with the fact that they both

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<sup>115</sup>Some feminists believe that this is the goal of a feminist critique of philosophy. Harding acknowledges a similar point in regards to science: "researchers attempting to account for the 'puzzling' presence of sexism in science, for the possibility of women's experience generating and legitimating important new kinds of description and explanations, and for the importance of politics in feminist research have ingeniously figured out how to fit their epistemological accounts into this procrustean bed with a little trimming here, a little reinterpretation there, and the constant insistence that skeptics just 'look and see' how the empirical evidence supports the degendered claims over the traditional gendered ones - as the evidence indeed does. Their main rhetorical weapon is to claim that the sexist and androcentric claims are just the consequence of 'bad science'...Of course, few thought to question this kind of 'bad science' that was, in fact, the norm in anthropology, sociology, some areas of biology, psychology, [philosophy], etc., until the recent women's movement" (SMFT:79).

<sup>116</sup>Lynne S. Arnault argues that we need to re-vision the traditional view of "reality in terms of hierarchical binary oppositions" between masculinity and reason on the one hand and femininity and the non-rational on the other hand. She concludes her essay with the insight that "besides possessing theoretical value, this deconstructive approach also has practical strategic value: a paradigm shift is more likely effected, or at least assisted, not by trying to make one's opponents 'see the light,' but - as Thomas Kuhn has argued - by exposing the problems generated internally by the old paradigm and by exploiting the sense its adherents may have that something has gone wrong with the old paradigm" (GBK:203).

presuppose a perspective that has implications for the totality of life. Stevenson says that "world views claim not only assent but also action; if one really believes in . . . [one's world view], one must accept that it has implications for one's way of life" (STHN:7). Dooyeweerdian and feminist philosophy are so distinct from traditional philosophy because feminist and Christian perspectives have a total scope. The very fact that there is such a thing as Dooyeweerdian philosophy and feminist philosophy is due to the fact that faith and gender make a difference to theory. If they didn't make a difference, these philosophers could not create systems of philosophic thought that are based on faith or gender.

If Dooyeweerdian and feminist philosophy are both shaped by the total perspectives of their theorizers, then it is also true that any philosophy is shaped by the total perspective of its theorizer.<sup>117</sup> What is the relationship between world views and philosophy? Philosophy is as much a theoretical enterprise as any other academic discipline. However, whereas a special science such as physics or sociology is concerned with one particular aspect of reality, philosophy is concerned with the relationships between all aspects of reality. When we theoretically abstract some aspect from the totality of reality in order to study it, we have to know what it is we are abstracting from. Dooyeweerd says that "the theoretical vision

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<sup>117</sup>This is precisely what traditional philosophy has tried to avoid through the elimination of every particularity and what Dooyeweerd and feminist philosophers have argued cannot be done.

of the mutual relationships and coherence of the aspects in every case implies a theoretical vision of reality" (NC I:47).

Philosophy is a theoretical vision of the totality of reality (NC I:4). As such, it operates like Kuhn's paradigms.<sup>118</sup> But philosophic paradigms are shaped by our world view, by the answers we give to the ultimate questions.<sup>119</sup>

A philosopher like Kant thinks that we can simply answer the question "what are the limits and conditions of our knowledge?" without prior reference to what we think the totality of reality is. But Dooyeweerd shows that this is impossible because Kant's answer presupposes (recognized or not) a view of humans as essentially rational creatures and a view of our world as structured by the categories of human reason. Each and every philosophy is rooted in a world view. This total perspective in which philosophy (as a theoretical perspective of totality) is rooted is not itself theoretical; we have a view of the world before we theorize about it. It is these non-theoretical total perspectives that Dooyeweerd and feminists argue should be acknowledged in philosophy because it is going to exert influence on our philosophy whether or not we acknowledge it. Kant thought that his answer is neutral and undeniable; yet it too presupposes a certain view of totality.

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<sup>118</sup>For example, see Keller's discussion regarding the philosophic paradigms underlying scientific communities (RGS:129-138).

<sup>119</sup>Dooyeweerd argues that "there has never existed a science that was not founded on presuppositions of a religious nature, nor will one ever exist. This is to say in effect that every science presupposes a certain theoretical view of reality which involves an idea of the mutual relationships which exist between its various aspects, and that this idea, on its own part, is intrinsically dominated by a central religious motive of thought" (SS:16).

## Marginalization

I have argued that Dooyeweerdian and feminist philosophy are similar because being a Christian and/or a woman both presuppose total perspectives or world views. Then I argued that what I have been calling traditional philosophy also presupposes a total perspective because all humans have a world view. There is no difference between Dooyeweerdian, feminist, or traditional philosophy in this respect; every philosophic system is rooted in a world view. I have also been arguing that, while Dooyeweerdian and feminist philosophy are similar, they are both significantly different from traditional philosophy. I must conclude that the fact that every philosophy requires an underlying total perspective is not sufficient to explain the similarities between Dooyeweerdian and feminist philosophy. Since a total perspective is what they *share* with traditional philosophy, the simple fact that every philosophic system presupposes a total perspective cannot account for the *difference* between them and traditional philosophy. Therefore, there must be something else that Dooyeweerdian and feminist philosophy have in common and thus can account for their similarity. And this commonality must not be shared with traditional philosophy if it is to account for their difference from traditional philosophy.

Traditional philosophy is mainstream. It sets the canon for what is commonly recognized as philosophy. In contrast,

Dooyeweerdian and feminist philosophy are marginalized.<sup>120</sup> If traditional philosophy sets the centre for what constitutes philosophy, then Dooyeweerdian and feminist philosophy are on the margins of this circle. In terms of traditional hierarchial dichotomies, both religion and women have historically been relegated to the private realm whereas philosophy occupies the public realm. But both Dooyeweerd and feminists argue that faith and gender respectively cannot be kept out of philosophy.<sup>121</sup>

Traditional philosophy can only maintain its hegemony as long as it can assert two things: first, that our pre-theoretic views of the totality of reality must not influence theory and second, that this theory itself does not presuppose a pre-theoretic view of totality. If traditional philosophy can maintain that theory cannot be influenced by any non-theoretic matter, then it can also rule the influence of gender or faith (among other things such as race and class) to be inadmissible. At the same time, traditional philosophy must insist that this view that philosophy cannot be influenced by the non-theoretic does not itself depend on a pre-theoretic view of totality on pain of circularity. Dooyeweerd and feminist philosophers argue

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<sup>120</sup>It is widely accepted that the work of feminist philosophers is still marginalized by the dominant tradition of philosophy. It might be argued by some that the same is not true of Christian philosophy, particularly since the tradition of philosophy has historically included the work of philosophers who hold to some of the beliefs of the institutional church (for example, Augustine or Aquinas). Nevertheless, especially since the Enlightenment, the discipline of philosophy has had a prejudice against religion (For example, Gadamer asserts that "Enlightenment critique is primarily directed against the religious tradition of Christianity-i.e. the Bible" TM:272). Any philosopher who attempts to be explicitly Christian in her philosophy is looked at askance. At least within the current philosophic realm, Christians who try to integrate their faith and philosophy are marginalized; after all, Dooyeweerd (who produced excellent philosophy) and his students remain virtually unknown. In any case, contemporary philosophy can be characterized as secular.

<sup>121</sup>Hence, the feminist slogan "the personal is political" and Dooyeweerd's conviction that "life is religion".

against both claims. They assert that all philosophy is influenced by the pre-theoretic (that is, it is gendered and it is shaped by religious motives respectively) and that traditional philosophy is itself influenced by the pre-theoretic (that is, it is masculine and it requires a commitment to autonomous reason respectively).

The fact that both Dooyeweerdian and feminist philosophy are marginalized by these two assertions of traditional philosophy is the reason for their similarity. When faced with the hegemony of traditional philosophy, any theorist will have to challenge that which keeps her marginalized; that is, in this case, the assumption that philosophy (including traditional philosophy) can be unprejudiced by supra-theoretical matters. Dooyeweerd and feminist philosophers seek to make room for themselves in philosophy by challenging that which excludes them. Of course, their respective starting points and motivations for their critiques are different since women are excluded on the basis of gender and Christians on the basis of religion.

In chapter 1, I mentioned that being outside the dominant community allows you to see assumptions that members of the community cannot see.<sup>122</sup> Since Dooyeweerd and feminists do not share the perspective that underlies traditional philosophy, they can see that it is exactly that: a perspective. As long as a person shares the dominant perspective, it is easy for him to believe that he doesn't have a perspective (particularly if his

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<sup>122</sup>See footnote 17, page 25.

perspective requires that he overlook having a perspective). He can believe that he simply sees reality as it is because his perspective on reality remains unchallenged. Insofar as a philosopher is a woman or a Christian, her acceptance of the perspective presupposed by traditional philosophy cannot be unproblematic since this perspective is in direct conflict with her perspective as a woman or as a Christian.

I am simply making explicit the argument that underlies the previous chapters. Dooyeweerd and feminists both think that traditional philosophy produces distorted theories. They also think that their respective perspectives allow them to generate more adequate theories. Does this imply that only Christians or women can produce good philosophy? I don't think that we're forced to draw that conclusion. The theories of traditional philosophy are distorted because they exclude so many people. Being one of the excluded people simply makes it easier to see that these theories have excluded someone (and of course, you also have less at stake in the continuation of traditional philosophy). It is not necessary to be either a Christian or a woman in order to be aware that Christians and women both have a distinct point of view that make a valuable contribution to philosophy; nor is it necessary to be part of a marginalized group in order to avoid marginalizing anyone else.

It may be surprising to find similarities between Dooyeweerdian and feminist philosophy given their different starting points and motivations for challenging traditional



philosophy. However, considering that they are both marginalized by traditional philosophy, it is not so improbable to find that there are a number of commonalities between the criticisms of traditional philosophy they make or the alternatives to traditional philosophy they offer. Consequently, they both realize that the way to make room for their insights in the tradition of philosophy is to argue for the theoretical analysis of pre-theoretical perspectives on the totality of reality.

What I find exciting as I study the points of convergence between feminist and Dooyeweerdian thought is that feminist and Christian philosophers might have common philosophic interests because they are both marginalized groups with an interest in challenging the philosophic status quo. Ironically, it's not hard to find misogynistic attitudes in the work of Christians or anti-Christian attitudes in the work of feminists.<sup>123</sup> I suggest, however, that there are compatible lessons to be learnt from Dooyeweerdian and feminist philosophy. Their respective philosophic insights imply that no perspective (and hence, no philosophic theory) can encompass the experience of everyone; having a perspective with total implications is not the same thing as having the total picture.<sup>124</sup> Just because I cannot have

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<sup>123</sup>Without excusing either Christians or feminists, there are historical/social/political reasons for this antipathy (see in particular Storkey, WRWF). Christians are part of a larger, generally sexist society and feminists are understandably suspicious of people who belong to an institution that is often unashamedly misogynistic.

<sup>124</sup>Code warns that "the main assumption to be countered is that there can be a single, monolithic philosophy that yields access to the Truth, and that all rival discourses should be dismissed or suppressed as diversions from the true path" (WCSK:305-6). Dooyeweerd asserts that "every philosophical reflection is a fallible human activity and a Christian philosophy has, as such, no privileged position in this respect"; moreover, "no philosophy can prosper in isolation" (TWT:54).

the total picture, however, is no reason to have a perspective that excludes or denigrates others. Feminist philosophers have learned that marginalizing any group or individual results in distorted theories, and thus they try to be open to perspectives other than their own, including the perspectives of people who differ with respect to sexual orientations, race, and class.<sup>125</sup> To be consistent, they cannot then marginalize people with a Christian perspective. If Dooyeweerdian philosophers truly believe that only entire persons do philosophy, then they must explicitly analyze the role gender plays in their own theories. To be consistent, they must ensure that their theories do not espouse sexism under the guise of purportedly transcending gender. Such mutual openness does not preclude the possibility of serious disagreements between the two. It does, however, preclude the exclusion of one by the other and encourages the possibility of each benefitting from the other's different and unique insights.

I recognize that there are many differences between Dooyeweerdian and feminist theory. And I am often painfully aware of the differences between myself and my peers in both (non-feminist) Christian circles and (secular) feminist circles. Nevertheless, I experience my commitments to the following of Jesus and to the liberation of women as quite compatible. I also find that my study of the points of convergence between

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<sup>125</sup>In Beyond Methodology, Liz Stanley and Sue Wise conclude that "feminism directly confronts the idea that one person or set of people have the right to impose definitions of reality on others. Feminist research and researchers should attempt to avoid doing the same thing in research situation" (281).

Dooyeweerdian and feminist philosophy allows me to be both a Christian and a feminist as I study philosophy. Consequently, Dooyeweerdian and feminist philosophy give me new hope that I can continue my study of philosophy. I also have reason to be hopeful that Dooyeweerdian philosophers and feminist philosophers will be able to see the benefits of each other's insights in their struggles to open up philosophy.

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