Wolters, Albert M. "The Intellectual Milieu of Herman Dooyeweerd." In The Legacy of Herman Dooyeweerd: Reflections on Critical Philosophy in the Christian Tradition. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 1-20.

1
The Intellectual Milieu of Herman Dooyeweerd

Albert M. Wolters

MORE THAN MOST PHILOSOPHERS of international stature, Herman Dooyeweerd's thought stands in need of explanation outside his home country because of widespread ignorance of the intellectual milieu in which he developed his philosophy. The two most significant factors of that milieu—Dutch neo-Calvinism and contemporary German philosophy—are still largely unknown quantities in the world of Anglo-American philosophy. Moreover, people acquainted with one factor are likely to know little of the other.[1] Yet Dooyeweerd cannot be understood without some appreciation of both traditions. Consequently it will be my purpose in this essay to give a brief and stylized sketch of how major themes from Dutch neo-Calvinism, on the one hand, and from German neo-Kantianism and phenomenology, on the other, have impinged upon Dooyeweerd's intellectual formation. In this way, I would hope to make more intelligible some of the problems and categories in Dooyeweerd's philosophy which are often so difficult of access. Many of the themes I raise here the other essays will pursue further.

It may seem that Dutch neo-Calvinism and German philosophy are quite heterogenous factors and cannot really be considered as comparable under the single rubric of *intellectual* milieu. Does the one not refer to a religious and theological movement and the other to a secular and more strictly academic influence? There is no doubt some validity to such an observation, but it is important to note that, from the perspective of Dooyeweerd's own thought, the opposition of "religious" to "secular," or of "theological" to "more strictly academic," is a false one. Instead, it may be more appropriate to speak of neo-Calvinism as the dominant intellectual force on the level of Dooyeweerd's worldview and German philosophy as the primary

intellectual catalyst on the level of philosophy strictly speaking, that is, as a technical academic discipline. In Dooyeweerd's own view, both of these levels are "religious" (Dutch: *geestelijk*) as well as "intellectual," although only the second is intellectual in the strict sense of "scientific" (Dutch: *wetenschappelijk*). Moreover, the two are intimately connected with each other.

Neo-Calvinism

The very conception of an intimate connection between worldview and philosophy is a legacy of the revival of Calvinism which forms the immediate context of Dooyeweerd's life and work. Under the leadership of Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), the prodigious theologian, journalist, and politician who rose to be prime minister of the Netherlands (1901-1905), a small segment of Dutch Protestants undertook an extraordinary program of re-Christianization aimed at every area of culture.[2] Notable among the initiatives taken by these neo-Calvinists—in addition to a new denomination, a new political party, a new daily newspaper, and a new labor union—was the establishment in 1880 of a new university, the Free University of Amsterdam. Kuyper himself became the university's first head and its most prominent professor from the time of its foundation until he became prime minister in 1901.

Kuyper's influence permeated Dooyeweerd's life in every way. Dooyeweerd was raised in Amsterdam in a Kuyperian home, attended a neo-Calvinist classical high school (*gymnasium*) just down the street from Kuyper's Free University, studied at the Free University and earned a doctorate there in 1917, then worked for some years as director of the Kuyper Institute in The Hague, and finally, from 1926 to 1965, was a professor at his alma mater. He was born and raised in the subculture of neo-Calvinism and spent his entire life propagating and working out its basic worldview.

A key concept in this vigorous religio-cultural movement, which for some decades dominated the political and cultural life of the Netherlands, was that of a "Calvinistic world and life view." It was put forward by Kuyper as a banner under which the whole range of neo-Calvinistic cultural initiatives could be subsumed and was, therefore, to be distinguished from Calvinistic or Reformed *theology* which had a more specific relation to the church and the life of faith. According to Kuyper, Calvinism was not just a theology but a total view of all of life and the world which had direct implications for every area of human affairs. It was the task of Calvinists to work out those implications not only in their ecclesiastical and personal lives

"Abraham the Magnificent" — Hahn's classic cartoon of Abraham Kuyper as prime minister of The Netherlands, 1901-05

but also in every other area of culture, including that of the university and scholarship. It was Calvinism as world and life view which provided the transforming vision that undergirded, motivated, and inspired Christian action on every front. Kuyper's critics called it "neo-Calvinism" and Kuyper came to accept the term.

It is not surprising, therefore, that when Kuyper was invited to give the 1898 Stone Lectures at Princeton University he did so under the lapidary title "Calvinism." He explained in his first lecture that it was Calvinism as *worldview* which he had in mind and proceeded in the subsequent lectures to sketch its implications for such areas as politics, science, and art. These *Lectures on Calvinism* as they came to be known,[3] first delivered in English before an American audience, and often reprinted since, constitute a kind of manifesto of what Kuyper meant by "Calvinistic world and life view" and the whole neo-Calvinistic program of Christian cultural renewal.

It should be pointed out that Kuyper used the phrase "world and life view" as one of a series of synonyms, which also included expressions like "life and world view," "life-system," and "world-conception." It can be shown that Kuyper's usage here reflects a cluster of analogous German expressions (frequently found in the philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey, for example) centering around the word *Weltanschauung*, the source of the English term "worldview." Although Kuyper and his followers, including Dooyeweerd, usually preferred the more cumbersome term "world and life view" or its variants, in this essay I shall hereafter use the simpler term "worldview."

What are some of the salient themes of the worldview which Kuyper equated with Calvinism and how do these bear upon Dooyeweerd's philosophy? In my judgment the fundamental theme of a Calvinist worldview, like Reformed theology, is its insistence upon and coherence around a central insight concerning the relation of creation and salvation, of nature and grace. In the formula often used by the theologian Herman Bavinck, Kuyper's successor at the Free University and his intellectual equal within neo-Calvinism, "grace restores nature."[4] This means that Christianity is not alien to natural life but rather seeks to renew it from within in order to reinstate it to its proper creational place and function. "Nature" or "natural life" is here conceived as creation in a very broad, indeed a cosmic sense which embraces the whole range of human affairs, including all of culture and societal life. It specifically includes human reason, philosophy, and the entire scientific enterprise. All of this lies under the curse of sin, but all of it also lies within the redemptive scope of Jesus Christ.

Calvinism, then, according to Kuyper and Bavinck, does not see the gospel as antithetical to created life in its many manifestations nor as parallel or supplementary to it, much less as an evolutionary extension of it—all of which find exponents in other Christian traditions. Rather, it understands the gospel to be the healing, restorative power which redirects and reestablishes the creation according to the Creator's original design.

It is this basic intuition which reappears in Dooyeweerd's work when he proposes that the ecumenical Christian ground motive may be formulated thematically as that of creation, fall, and redemption. Dooyeweerd regards this as the biblical alternative to the pagan, synthetic, and humanistic ground motives which have for the most part dominated Western culture. That formulation can only be understood in the light of the nature-grace relation as conceived in the Calvinistic worldview put forward by Kuyper and Bavinck. The connection is somewhat obscured by Dooyeweerd's antipathy in his later writings to theological formulations and by his later avoidance of the nomenclature "Calvinistic" in favor of more ecumenical designations like "Christian" and "scriptural." A study of his earlier writings makes abundantly clear, however, that the Calvinistic vision of the nature-grace relation, which he described as ***allesbeheersend***, that is, "all-important,"[5] was from the outset fundamental to his life's work. In my opinion, it is not too much to say that this central understanding of creation, fall, and redemption is the key to Dooyeweerd's philosophy and to the entire intellectual project to which he devoted his life.

Closely related to this basic theme in the neo-Calvinist worldview is the emphasis on creational law and creational diversity. If salvation is really re-creation and if re-creation means a restoration of everything to its proper creational place and function, then, Kuyper thought, there must be a norm, or standard, for each kind of thing to which it must be restored and by which it is distinguished from every other kind of thing. It is at this point that the re-creation theme of Calvinism joins with its other dominant theme, God's sovereignty. God is sovereign; therefore, his word is law for all creatures. That law-word constitutes the normative nature and distinctive identity of every kind of created thing, whether that be oak trees, human rationality, or the body politic. Kuyper often used the term *levenswet* to express this idea; everything has its own "law of life," the standard to which it must conform if it is to live or function fully and authentically. This is a law which is given by virtue of creation; Kuyper also refers to it frequently as "creational ordinance."

This same theme of creational law is prominent in Dooyeweerd's thought, and Dooyeweerd derives it directly from the Calvinistic worldview as elaborated by Kuyper. For him, as for Kuyper, creation is defined by law. A fundamental categorial distinction in Dooyeweerd is the correlation of law and "subject" (that which is subject to the law). Together they constitute the basic parameters of reality.[6] Indeed, the "idea of law" (*wetsidee*) has figured centrally in Dooyeweerd's thought from the beginning. He himself coined the phrase "philosophy of the *wetsidee*" to describe his thought, later translated into English (at his own suggestion) as "philosophy of the cosm*onomic* idea."

What is perhaps less obvious at first glance is the continuity between Kuyper and Dooyeweerd on the point of creational diversity. The connection between creation and diversity or pluriformity is basic to the thought of both men. The differences that are given in our experience, whether that be the difference between thought and feeling, between geranium and cactus, or between church and state, are not merely products of evolution or the historical process in the sense that any kind of thing might turn into any other kind of thing in the course of time, but are rooted in creation. Different things are defined by specific "laws of life" and have their identities guaranteed by creational ordinances.[7] This does not negate evolution or history, but provides the ontological structures in terms of which all process can take place.

For Kuyper this idea of creational diversity assumed direct practical significance in the concept of "sphere sovereignty." By this he meant the sociological principle that distinct kinds of societal institutions (e.g., state, family, school, church) or cultural sectors (e.g., commerce, scholarship, art) have their proper jurisdiction limited and defined by the specific nature of the "sphere" concerned. This became the guiding principle for the Christian political party which Kuyper led and provided a rationale for limiting the authority of the state and protecting the distinct rights and responsibilities of institutions like the church and family. Whereas Groen van Prinsterer (1801-76), Kuyper's predecessor as leader of the Christian Anti-revolutionary Party, had defended this principle on historical grounds, arguing that rights and privileges accrued to societal institutions by right of custom and usage, Kuyper took the decisive step of grounding sociological and cultural diversity in creational law. A central aim of Christian cultural action was to respect and reaffirm created boundaries. This was the message of Kuyper's oration entitled *Souvereiniteit in eigen kring* (Sphere sovereignty) with which he

opened the Free University in 1880—a university which was to have its own sovereignty, free from the jurisdiction of both church and state.

In this, too, Dooyeweerd followed Kuyper. It is not too much to say that Dooyeweerd first began to elaborate his systematic philosophy in an attempt to provide a more general ontological foundation for Kuyper's principle of sphere sovereignty.[8] From the beginning he shared with Kuyper the conviction, so fundamental to the neo-Calvinist worldview, that basic diversity was rooted in the nature of created reality and must, therefore, be understood in terms of creational law. Whereas for Kuyper sphere sovereignty had been primarily a sociological principle which provided a guideline in practical politics, Dooyeweerd expanded it into a general principle of ontological irreducibility, applicable also to such categories as life and matter, faith and emotion.

Despite the differences, however, there is a clear thematic unity on this point between the two thinkers. All creatures, not just plants and animals, are created "after their kind" (*Roots*, 43, 70). There is a marvelous variety, an intricate pluriformity, built into the very fabric of the created order, a variety and pluriformity which we must respect and honor, both theoretically and practically. We do violence to creation if we ignore real distinctions or run roughshod over genuine differences.

The principle of created diversity is always present in Dooyeweerd, whether it is explicit or not. It is unmistakable when we hear him applaud, in *Roots of Western Culture*, Kuyper's move beyond Groen in the understanding of sphere sovereignty (*Roots*, 54). But it can be easily missed as the operative connotation when he speaks of letting the biblical "creation motive" have its full effect on our thought, as he often does in *Roots of Western Culture* (*Roots*, 59-61, 64, 70, 123). For Dooyeweerd, the theoretical fruit of the "creation motive" is a heightened awareness of, and appreciation for, *the given diversity of kinds*, especially with respect to the social order (*Roots*, 43, 67, 70, 79, 123, 125, 129, 180). Unless we read him in the light of this key motif of the Calvinist worldview, we are apt to miss the point of his many references to the "creation motive."

There is another related theme in the neo-Calvinist worldview which was particularly significant for Dooyeweerd's thought. This is the idea of the cultural development of creation. Basic to Kuyper's vision and to his whole program of action was a positive appreciation of the historical advance of human culture and society. The development of technology, the building of cities, the differentiation of

societal institutions, the rise of science, the advance of industrialization are all examples of phenomena which are made possible, and indeed called forth, by the potentials of God's good creation. Human civilization, indeed the whole course of history, is a response to God's call for the human actualization of the possibilities and potencies latent in creation. This divine call is what Kuyper understood as the meaning of the paradigmatic command to Adam and Eve in Genesis to subdue the earth, a command which Kuyper himself termed the "cultural mandate" and some of his successors the "creation mandate." The earth, that is, the earthly realm of creation (everything excluding heaven as God's dwelling place), was from the beginning meant to be responsibly developed to God's glory. And no matter how much the many cultural and societal products may be distorted by human apostasy and perversity, Kuyper believed that those products themselves nonetheless possess an intrinsic validity by virtue of creation. Christians could affirm the creational goodness and appropriateness of the university, the nation-state, individual human rights, and the railway—all relatively recent developments in the history of human culture. Such phenomena, though historically new and in many ways associated with the forces of secularization, were not alien to God's purposes in creation but intrinsic to them. What is more, Kuyper believed it is the duty of Christians not only to affirm them (while opposing their distortions), but in fact to advocate and promote their advancement within the context of the coming of the kingdom of God.

Creation, then, in the neo-Calvinistic worldview, was eschatological in an encompassing cultural sense and had implications for a complete philosophy of history. It is this idea which Dooyeweerd worked out in his conception of the "opening process" (*ontsluitingsproces*) of creation and his theory of historical development. Linked with his notion of creational diversity, especially as applied to the social order in the doctrine of sphere sovereignty, this process means that history involves the differentiation and progressive unfolding of the unique creational nature of each social institution and cultural sector. Elaborated in terms of analogies and the pivotal position of the historical aspect, Dooyeweerd gives this basic feature of the neo-Calvinist worldview a highly sophisticated philosophical articulation in his technical philosophy of history.[9]

We turn finally to one other main theme of the worldview advocated by Kuyper: the idea of antithesis. In Kuyper's usage this refers in the first place to spiritual opposition between obedience to God and disobedience to God, between the Spirit of God and the

spirits of This World. In practical terms this means a great divide between those who acknowledge the kingship of Jesus and seek to honor it in every sector of life and those who deny that kingship. The antithesis, therefore, divides believers from unbelievers, although at a deeper level it also divides the hearts of believers since sin is also still found in those who have been born again by the Spirit.[10]

This spiritual opposition, or antithesis, is again closely related to the fundamental theme that grace restores nature and must be understood in terms of it. Nature, God's good creation, is the arena of two opposing forces. There is the force of sin and disobedience to God which perverts and distorts the whole, and there is the force of restoration and renewal in Jesus Christ which seeks to undo all the perversion and distortion in order to reestablish God's original purpose for creation. Those two forces run counter to each other; they are directly antithetical. Moreover, they are both cosmic in scope: both sin and salvation are creationwide.

For Kuyper this meant that the forces of Christianization had everywhere to oppose the forces of secularization—in education, in politics, in journalism, in scholarship, in industrial relations, and so on. The religious antithesis between belief and unbelief, since it was not restricted to a sphere above or alongside the hurly-burly of natural life but was a spiritual contest for that life itself, was rightly expressed in the midst of the ordinary "secular" affairs of created life. This meant that a Christian university must engage in serious academic work which would seek to forge a new Christian direction in the various academic disciplines, not least in philosophy.

Kuyper's vision of a vast spiritual battle taking place in the midst of human affairs had a profound impact on Dooyeweerd's life and thought. Not only did he dedicate himself to the ideal of Christian scholarship, but he understood his philosophizing as participation in a religious antithesis. He repeatedly stresses the unavoidability of such a conception, though he also regularly cautions against conceiving of the antithesis simply as an opposition between different groups of people. The antithesis, ultimately the warfare between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness, is found right in our hearts.

There are many other themes of the neo-Calvinistic worldview which shaped Dooyeweerd's thinking. For example, when he repeatedly speaks in his major work, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, of "earthly reality," we can understand him only if we know that neo-Calvinism divided creation into heaven and earth and that scientific investigation (including philosophy) is limited to the earthly realm. Indeed, the whole infrastructure of Dooyeweerd's

philosophy, the operative assumptions which are often not explicitly discussed, derives directly from the commonly accepted worldview of neo-Calvinism. But enough has been said to substantiate the conclusion of Karel Kuypers, a former student of Dooyeweerd and now himself a respected Dutch philosopher, who wrote on the occasion of Dooyeweerd's death in 1977: "In general we must stress that in [Dooyeweerd's] work the basic ideas of Dr. Abraham Kuyper, which led to the establishment of the Free University, received for the first time a fundamental elaboration in philosophy and theory of science."[11]

Neo-Kantianism and Phenomenology

We turn now to the other major component in Dooyeweerd's intellectual milieu, the factor which is most important for understanding some of the more technical and strictly philosophical features of his thought. After sketching this side of his background, we shall return to the question of how this relates to the influence of neo-Calvinism on Dooyeweerd.

There can be no question but that Dooyeweerd's strictly philosophical orientation from the beginning was toward Germany. It was true in general at the beginning of the twentieth century that Dutch intellectual life, for all its cosmopolitanism, was much more geared to the thought of the German-speaking world than to the French- and English-speaking areas. Dutch intellectuals had easy access to all three—the languages were read by all university freshmen—but there was an especially close tie with the Germanic cousins to the east, notably in theology and philosophy. It is perhaps not too much to say that Holland intellectually was at that time a cultural province of Germany.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the German philosophical scene was dominated by neo-Kantianism, a revival of the philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804).[12] The new movement was a powerful reaction to the regnant materialism and positivism of the mid-nineteenth century. The neo-Kantians, like the positivists, postulated the autonomy of science and reason, but, unlike the positivists, they also stressed the autonomy of the human sciences vis-à-vis the natural sciences and the importance of metaphysical questions in dealing with the broad range of *Wissenschaft* (scholarship). Above all, the sciences themselves, as well as the different sectors of nature and human experience which they investigate, were grounded in and made possible by the structure of human subjectivity. The key words were *transzendental, a priori*, and *begründen* (to ground). To

answer the transcendental question (How is it possible that x exists or is valid? What makes x possible?) is to ground x in an a priori of human experience, in a transcendental logical ego, in something that is constitutive of x even before x enters our experience. In the final analysis, since the world is the world of human experience, the subject "constitutes" the world.

By the time Dooyeweerd was a graduate student, this resurgent Kantianism had captured the philosophy chairs at each of the four major Dutch universities, not counting the miniscule Free University of Amsterdam. Neo-Kantianism, or *Kritizismus* as it was then often called, was as pervasive as analytic philosophy is today in the Anglo-American world. Moreover, the professors at the Free University were inclined to be cautiously sympathetic toward it; after all, neo-Kantianism also did battle with the archenemy positivism and in varying degrees left some legitimate place for religion and faith. Theologian W. Geesink at the Free University, who was also entrusted with the teaching of philosophy, had moved from a more Aristotelian position to one sympathetic to the "critical philosophy" of Kant and his successors. For those interested in the foundational questions of methodology and metaphysics, especially in the humanities and social sciences—we must remember that Dooyeweerd was by profession a legal theorist—it was neo-Kantianism which was blazing new trails.

We know by Dooyeweerd's own testimony that he went through a neo-Kantian phase. In the foreword of his *New Critique* he writes: "Originally I was strongly under the influence first of the Neo-Kantian philosophy, later on of Husserl's phenomenology" (*NC* 1:v). This is confirmed by his early publications which abound in references to the neo-Kantians.

To say that Dooyeweerd went through a neo-Kantian phase is not to say that he was ever an out-and-out neo-Kantian. The autonomous rationality of neo-Kantianism was especially incompatible with the Kuyperian view of the religious nature of all science. Nor was Dooyeweerd ever an epistemological idealist. Yet there were certain neo-Kantian themes and approaches which became part and parcel of his thought and remained so throughout his life.

The most important of these is the transcendental method. Dooyeweerd self-consciously refers to his own philosophy as transcendental philosophy and repeatedly asserts that the key to his thought is found in his "transcendental critique of theoretical thought," a phrase clearly reminiscent of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) and echoed in the English title of Dooyeweerd's

magnum opus. Here "theoretical thought" (rather than "pure reason") is subjected to a *new* (i.e., post-Kantian) critique, and the subject in which it is founded turns out to be not a transcendental *logical* ego but a transcendental *religious* ego, which is equated with the biblical "heart." Kant is severely criticized for his reduced view of human experience, but the method by which experience is philosophically accounted for is clearly inspired by and parallel to the Kantian procedure. Dooyeweerd stops short of suggesting that our experience is "constituted" by the human subject, but he does speak of subjective a prioris which make experience possible. It is this which prompts a sympathetic critic of Dooyeweerd's thought, the South African philosopher H. G. Stoker (b. 1899), to speak of a kind of "meaning idealism" in Dooyeweerd and to fault him for giving undue weight to the transcendental method in philosophy.

Other neo-Kantian themes abound in Dooyeweerd's work. The distinction between "concept" and "idea," for example, is borrowed from Kantianism, specifically from the neo-Kantian legal theorist Rudolph Stammler (1856-1938). The idea of philosophy as a kind of encyclopedic superscience is neo-Kantian in origin. Dooyeweerd shows particular affinities for the neo-Kantianism of the so-called Heidelberg or Southwest German school led by Wilhelm Windelband (1848-1915) and Heinrich Rickert (1863-1936). This comes out in his interpretation of Kant which stresses the significance of the transcendental dialectic and the ultimate legitimacy of metaphysics as well as in many details of terminology, such as the distinction between "norms" and "laws of nature" which echoes Windelband's seminal essay "Normen und Naturgesetze" of 1882.[13]

Dooyeweerd also mentioned that he was for a time under the influence of phenomenology. This is the second major school of German philosophy that we must take into account if we want a picture of Dooyeweerd's intellectual background.

Phenomenology, as a school of philosophy founded by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), is characterized by a turn to the object, an insistence on the independent reality of the objective givens of our experience. Moreover, "object" was very broadly interpreted, so that "experience" came to be interpreted in a much broader sense than was allowed in the sense-data model of empiricism. Moods, dreams, and values became legitimate components of human experience with an ontological status of their own which philosophy should describe and catalogue. Experience became inherently, by definition, "intentional," that is, object-directed. Great care was to be taken not to reduce one kind of experience to another but to let the unique nature

of every phenomenon stand out in its own integrity. Part of this general attitude of antireductionism was Husserl's fight against what he called psychologism, the attempt to reduce thought and reasoning to psychological mechanisms like association. Against this Husserl defended the irreducibility of analytical thought, its own autonomy vis-à-vis psychic processes. Throughout, the spirit of phenomenology was one of respect for the given variety of experience, a wish to honor the world of objects as it actually presents itself in our experience.

Associated with this general attitude was a doctrine of phenomenological method, a procedure which would allow the phenomenologist to abstract from, to "bracket," the reality, or existence, of an object and to come to an intuition of the essence of a thing (Husserl's famous *Wesensschau*). The essential nature of things was in this way to become genuinely graspable.

In Dooyeweerd a number of these themes, or analogies of them, seem to be present. The most important one, in my judgment, is probably the emphasis on the reality of the object. Whereas Husserl appears, in the transcendental reduction to have made the object of experience depend, after all, on a constituting logical ego,[14] Dooyeweerd gives the object, or rather the object function of things, the kind of real ontological status which Husserl seemed at first to presuppose. For Dooyeweerd, not only is greenness a real ontological feature of grass but so is its conceptualizability, its aesthetic qualities, and its economic worth. What Dooyeweerd calls the subject-object relation, the basic relation of naive (i.e., everyday prescientific) experience, appears to be a radicalized form of "intentionality" in the Husserlian sense, an inherently object-directed relation which is defined by the given reality to which it refers.

Related to this is Dooyeweerd's phenomenological respect for the given in all its variety and nuances, with his concomitant aversion to every kind of reductionism. This is a point at which the creation theme from his own worldview background is reinforced by the emphases of phenomenological philosophy, and it is difficult to see where the one influence ends and the other begins.

It is tempting to see also in Dooyeweerd's view of scientific abstraction a legacy of Husserlian phenomenology. It is true that he uses Husserl's term *epochē* (bracketing) to describe the process of modal abstraction which defines the scientific or theoretical attitude of thought and also uses the term "intentional" as opposed to "ontic" to describe the resulting *Gegenstand* relation (*NC* 1:39), but it is unclear how this relates to Husserl's "bracketing" and *Wesensschau*.

Dooyeweerd himself, at least, insists that there is no material parallel (*NC* 2:73).[15]

Whether this be true of the *Gegenstand* relation or not, there can be no doubt that the notion of an immediate grasping, reminiscent of the *Wesensschau*, is an important element in Dooyeweerd's idea of intuition. In Dooyeweerd's philosophy the nuclear moments of the modal spheres, for example, are directly known by intuition—an act which he described in some of his early writings by using the archaic Dutch verb *schouwen*, an obvious cognate of Husserl's *Schau*. A closer analysis would be needed to determine whether the affinity here with Husserl's conception is more than merely verbal.

To complete our sketch of German philosophies significant in Dooyeweerd's milieu, we must mention two thinkers who, like him, went through a neo-Kantian and a phenomenological stage. The thinkers I have in mind are Nicolai Hartmann (1882-1950) and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), both of whom produced seminal works in the 1920s which Dooyeweerd studied intensively during his formative years and which appear to have left their mark on him.

Hartmann was the successor of Paul Natorp (1854-1924) in Marburg, the center of the so-called Marburg School of neo-Kantianism founded by Herman Cohen (1842-1918). In 1921, after some years of silence, Hartmann published a work with the provocative title *Metaphysik der Erkenntnis* (Metaphysics of knowledge)—provocative because the Marburg School interpreted Kant as the enemy of all metaphysics. What was even more revolutionary was that Hartmann, under the influence of phenomenology, bade farewell to the idealism of neo-Kantianism in this work and defended instead a very forthright epistemological realism, thus reversing Kant's Copernican revolution. This was grist for the mill of men like Dooyeweerd, who was making an analogous philosophical pilgrimage—it can be shown that he read and extensively quoted the work shortly after it came out. The significance of this information lies not so much in its epistemological interest as in the fact that Hartmann in this early work also develops the beginnings of what he was later to call his *Schichtentheorie* (theory of levels) and which was to be a cornerstone of his later ontology, especially as elaborated in a major work published in 1935. Now this theory, which posited a number of ontological "levels" or "strata" (*Schichten*) superimposed upon one another in such a way that the next higher in each case rested upon but was not reducible to the one below, is in some striking ways analogous to Dooyeweerd's modal scale. Dooyeweerd has always rejected the suggestion that he was dependent on Hartmann,

arguing that the *Schichtentheorie* was not published until well after he had put his own theory in print (*NC* 2:51), but an examination of Hartmann's *Metaphysik der Erkenntnis* of 1921 leaves room to doubt Dooyeweerd's denial.[16] Whatever the case may be, it is beyond question that Dooyeweerd elaborated his own version of the idea in an independent manner.

The work by Heidegger which Dooyeweerd studied intensively in the 1920s was *Being and Time* (1927). Legend has it that Dooyeweerd read it thirteen times before declaring that he understood it. In any case, his personal copy of the work,[17] by its underlinings and marginal comments, gives evidence of a thorough reading of and interaction with this fundamental work. There is too little documentation, as I see it, to warrant speculating on the possible connections between existentialism and Dooyeweerd's thought, but there is one point which may establish a connection between Heidegger and Dooyeweerd: the idea of cosmic time.[18] Vincent Brümmer has shown that Dooyeweerd introduced his concept of time in the late 1920s, about the time he read Heidegger.[19] Dooyeweerd understood time as a kind of ontological principle of intermodal continuity bearing very little relation to what we call time in ordinary language. The same can be said for Heidegger's conception of time, which seems also to be a general ontological principle of continuity. This similarity merits further investigation and analysis.

There are many other figures in German philosophy which could be singled out as important for Dooyeweerd's development—the names of Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) and Oswald Spengler (1880-1936) have been mentioned in this connection—but we will leave our rough sketch as it now stands.

There is, however, one other name, although a Dutch neo-Calvinist philosopher and not a German one, which should be mentioned when we speak of the philosophical background of Dooyeweerd's thought. This is the name of D. H. T. Vollenhoven (1892-1978)—a name which has been both closely associated with Dooyeweerd's and largely overshadowed by it. It is extraordinary how closely intertwined and similar the lives of these two men were.[20] Yet there are also significant differences. The most important of these for our present purposes is that Vollenhoven had earned a doctorate in philosophy at the Free University in 1918 and published his doctoral dissertation, entitled *De wijsbegeerte der wiskunde van theistisch standpunt* (The philosophy of mathematics from a theistic standpoint), several years before the younger Dooyeweerd developed an interest in philosophy. In the early 1920s when both of them

lived in The Hague and studied Hartmann together and when Dooyeweerd, in constant interaction with Vollenhoven, was beginning to familiarize himself with the philosophical issues in his own discipline of jurisprudence, Vollenhoven had already published a substantial book in philosophy as well as a number of very penetrating articles in which the germs of his later systematic philosophy were already clearly evident. It would be quite mistaken to picture Vollenhoven as a kind of second fiddle to Dooyeweerd's genius. On the basis of Vollenhoven's early publications, a good case can be made for the thesis that he in some significant ways shaped the developing systematic philosophy of Dooyeweerd, especially in relation to the themes of the neo-Calvinist worldview. The beginnings of the notion of analogical concepts, for example, or of the centrality of the heart can be documented in Vollenhoven before Dooyeweerd was active in philosophy. Conversely, Vollenhoven never accepted some of Dooyeweerd's key conceptions, notably the transcendental critique, being as meaning, cosmic time, and the ground motive analysis of Western culture; on these points, he acted instead as an important and continuing philosophical critic of Dooyeweerd's thought.

Neo-Calvinism and German Philosophy

We return now to the question of the relationship between the two broad movements which I have suggested primarily impinged on Dooyeweerd: neo-Calvinism and German philosophy in the early twentieth century. It is clear that motifs from both are intertwined in many ways in his mature thought. Nevertheless, a generalization can be formulated as follows: The underlying worldview of Dooyeweerd's thought stands in essential continuity with the vision of neo-Calvinism, while the philosophical elaboration of that vision is basically constructed with conceptual tools drawn from German philosophy—chiefly neo-Kantianism, secondarily phenomenology.

If this is true, a number of implications present themselves. One is that the significance of Dooyeweerd and his legacy resides more in the impact of the worldview component on his philosophy than in the systematic categories which depend on neo-Kantianism and phenomenology. The uniqueness of Dooyeweerd among twentieth-century philosophers lies in the vigor and persistence with which he carried out the neo-Calvinist program in philosophy. Within the world of philosophy at large, which has so long defined itself in terms of the autonomy of theoretical thought, this uniqueness is also a scandal, so that Dooyeweerd's thought often evokes the charge of being theology and not philosophy at all. Within the world of Christian

philosophers, however, Dooyeweerd's uniqueness is precisely what constitutes his significance for philosophy. If the basic premise is granted that religion is necessarily a central factor in all philosophizing, then Dooyeweerd is a pioneer of heroic proportions in twentieth-century philosophy. Viewed in this light, he may prove to be a worthy modern follower of such Christian giants as Augustine from the early fifth century, whose basic religious inspiration continues to captivate contemporary minds, even when the specifics of his neo-Platonic philosophical categories have little contemporary relevance.

All of this is not to say that Dooyeweerd's systematic philosophy is merely a historical curiosity, an interesting example of how a definite Protestant vision of life arrayed itself in the philosophical accoutrements of the day. The point is rather that Dooyeweerd (like Augustine) is philosophically the most interesting and relevant at precisely those points in his thought where his Christian worldview forges new categories which, though obviously hammered out in terms of and in contact with the philosophical milieu of his day, nevertheless oppose and transform elements within it.

To my mind one of the most significant examples of this kind of Christian philosophical reformation is to be found in Dooyeweerd's conception of the law-subject correlation, especially as this is worked out in his theory of individuality structures. Here the neo-Calvinistic worldview, or (as Dooyeweerd preferred to express it in his later writings) the ground motive of the Christian Scriptures, bears new and important philosophical fruit, pointing a way which can break through such dilemmas as natural law versus historicism and substance versus function. Here Dooyeweerd's concepts of normative principle, normative structure, and historical positivization, worked out in detail in his own special science of jurisprudence, continue to hold promise for fruitful application in other disciplines.

In general, therefore, it is my judgment that Dooyeweerd's ***philosophical*** significance is strictly proportionate to his success in carrying out Kuyper's program of a ***Christian*** reformation of scholarship. In this way the recognition of neo-Kantian and phenomenological themes and categories in his thought, while alerting us to genuine insights in such earlier movements in philosophy, can lead also to the recognition of what is genuinely new and significant in this thoroughly Christian philosopher.

Notes to Chapter 1

* I was enabled to do research on the subject of this essay during my sabbatical in the Netherlands in 1981-82 by a *Bezoekersbeurs* (Research Grant) awarded by the Dutch Organization for Scientific Research (ZWO).

1. There is virtually no literature in English on Dooyeweerd's background. One exception is William Young, *Towards a Reformed Philosophy: The Development of a Protestant Philosophy in Dutch Calvinistic Thought Since the Time of Abraham Kuyper* (Franeker: Wever, 1952). For more on Dooyeweerd and his colleagues, see Bernard Zylstra, Introduction to *Contours of a Christian Philosophy*, by L. Kalsbeek (Toronto: Wedge, 1975), 14-33. See also W. F. de Gaay Fortman et al., *Philosophy and Christianity: Philosophical Essays Dedicated to Professor Dr. Herman Dooyeweerd* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1965).

2. On Kuyper, see P. Kasteel, *Abraham Kuyper* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1938) and McKendree R. Langley, *The Practice of Spirituality: Episodes in the Public Career of Abraham Kuyper* (St. Catharines: Paideia, 1984).

3. Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961).

4. See Jan Veenhof, "Nature and Grace in Bavinck," trans. Al Wolters (Mimeo, n.d.).

5. Herman Dooyeweerd, "The Problem of the Relationship of Nature and Grace in the Calvinistic Law-Idea," *Anakainosis* 1 (1979, no. 4): 13-15. This is the translation of an *excursus* within an article by Dooyeweerd in 1928.

6. The essay by Paul Marshall in this volume treats Dooyeweerd's theory of law and subject.

7. Calvin G. Seerveld's essay explains Dooyeweerd's modal theory.

8. See Marshall's and Seerveld's essays for more on sphere sovereignty.

9. C. T. McIntire's essay discusses Dooyeweerd's philosophy of history.

10. James H. Olthuis's essay discusses Dooyeweerd's views of religion and faith.

11. Karel Kuypers, "Herman Dooyeweerd (7 October 1894—12 February 1977)," in *Jaarboek* of the Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences of the Netherlands (1977), 3.

12. See Thomas E. Willey, *Back to Kant: The Revival of Kantianism in German Social and Historical Thought, 1860-1914* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978).

13. Willey, *Back to Kant*, 135.

14. T. De Boer, *The Development of Husserl's Thought*, trans. Theodore Plantinga (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978).

15. Hendrik Hart's essay discusses Dooyeweerd's notion of naive and scientific thought and experience, as well as the *Gegenstand* theory.

16. Willey, *Back to Kant*, 102ff. For more on Hartmann and Dooyeweerd, see the comments in Seerveld's essay, especially note 48.

17. This copy is presently housed in the Dooyeweerd Collection at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto.

18. McIntire's and Olthuis's essays treat Dooyeweerd's theory of cosmic time.

19. Vincent Brümmer, *Transcendental Criticism and Christian Philosophy: A Presentation and Evaluation of Herman Dooyeweerd's "Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea"* (Franeker: Wever, 1961), 150-51.

20. As for their similarities: both men were born in Amsterdam in the early 1890s, attended the same classical high school and university, resided for a time in The Hague, turned from another field to philosophy (the one from law, the other from theology), accepted appointments to their alma mater in 1926, were founding members of the Society for Calvinistic Philosophy in 1935, retired in the 1960s, and died in their native Amsterdam in the late 1970s. To top it all off, Vollenhoven was married to Dooyeweerd's sister. On Vollenhoven, see *The Idea of a Christian Philosophy: Essays in Honour of D. H. Th. Vollenhoven* (Toronto: Wedge, 1973), which contains an essay by Dooyeweerd on Vollenhoven.