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Dooyeweerd on Religion and Faith

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HERMAN DOOYEWEERD'S THEORIES of religion and faith are basic to his philosophy and together provide two of the prime characteristics of his thought. He warrants more of a hearing on these topics than he has generally received in theological and philosophical circles. His work joins with that of many others of our time—Paul Tillich, Mircea Eliade, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Langdon Gilkey, David Tracy, Donald Evans, Michael Polanyi, James Fowler—in giving attention to faith as a genuine, irreducible human capacity.¹

Dooyeweerd's views of religion and faith can be basically articulated in two proposals. First, spirituality—being religious—is as broad as life itself. Rather than being a carefully limited enterprise for the nurturing of the soul in special settings and at special times, religion is a way of life that people engage in with their full existence and at all times. Service (or disservice) of God is what life is all about: life is religion. Second, faith is *one* of the fundamental modes of being religious; a *sui generis* mode of human experience, belonging to the order of creation, in which the intrinsic spirituality of all of life receives explicit and concentrated focus.

In this essay I want, first of all, to present Dooyeweerd's theories of religion and faith as elaborated primarily in *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*. Next, I will explore their possible contribution in a broader context and, then, conclude by suggesting some avenues of revision in order that his views may become more helpful in future discussions. In particular I would suggest releasing them from the problematic distinctions between supratemporal and temporal on the one hand and Word-revelation and creation-revelation on the other.

Spirituality of Creation

For Dooyeweerd the whole of created reality is dependent on the Creator God and reveals its creaturely nature through its “universal character of referring and expressing” (NC 1:4). Everything and every aspect of everything refers beyond itself toward the central and religious fullness of meaning which he calls the “heart” and onward to its Divine Origin. This is what Dooyeweerd calls the “transcendental direction.” Simultaneously, everything and every aspect of everything also expresses the fullness of the Divine Being. This is what he calls the “foundational direction.” It is this two-directional character of created reality as radically dependent on God and totally responsible to God which Dooyeweerd wishes to capture in his classic statement: “Meaning is the being of all that has been created and the nature even of our selfhood. It has a religious root and a divine origin” (NC 1:4). Dooyeweerd’s use of “is” in this sentence is crucial and captures precisely his belief that creation does not carry meaning as some second-level addendum.² Creation does not exist as such (in some form or at some level) as “nature,” “substance,” or “fact,” thereafter acquiring meaning, purpose, and value either through its relation to God or through human subjectivity. Creation *is* meaning, completely, thoroughly, to its root. Constitutive of the warp and woof of creation is its radical dependence on and intrinsic connection with the Creator God, and that *is* meaning. This is Dooyeweerd’s philosophical translation of the declaration in Romans 11:36 that all things are of God, through God, and unto God.

It is significant to note that the main modifier that Dooyeweerd employs, in addition to “referring” and “expressing,” for indicating the meaning character of reality is “restless.” Invoking a famous saying of Augustine, “Our hearts are restless and the world is in our hearts,” Dooyeweerd talks of the “restless mode of existence” (NC 1:11, 97). For a long while “restless” seemed to me an apt way to describe the dynamic ongoing character of reality. Now I think it misleading and confusing to describe the good creation made by God as “restless.” Restlessness with its negative connotation of lack of peace and health would seem more aptly to describe the character of the fallen creation, rather than the intrinsic character of created existence.

The meaning character of reality is constituted and delimited, for Dooyeweerd, by the law of God which is “the universal boundary (which cannot be transgressed) between the Being of God and the meaning of His creation” (NC 1:99). That law requires and makes

possible the "love and service of God and our fellow-creatures with our whole heart" (NC 1:101). Indeed all of creation, through the human heart, is subject to the divine law.

Religion and the Supratemporal Sphere

Dooyeweerd understands religion to be the "connection between the meaning of creation and the being of the *Archē* [Origin]" (NC 1:104). In its basics, says Dooyeweerd, the very nature of created reality is "connection," or relatedness, to God. Philosophically, this is denoted by the terms "meaning" and "religion." Both terms connote expression from and reference to God. Perhaps, as has been suggested, "meaning" emphasizes more expression from rather than reference to God.³ In any case, religion, as in *religere* or "tieback," emphasizes mainly the reference to God.

In the referential or transcendental direction, religion is defined as "the innate impulse of human selfhood to direct itself toward the true or toward a pretended absolute Origin of all temporal diversity of meaning" (NC 1:57). This is Dooyeweerd's usual definition. But on occasion he makes clear that the "expressive" character of reality is also religious in nature. The "religious centre of our existence" necessarily "expresses itself in all modal aspects of time" (NC 1:58).

Dooyeweerd develops his view of religion in terms of a distinction between a supratemporal unity and a temporal diversity. The significance of the supratemporal/temporal schema is apparent throughout the *New Critique*; indeed he tells us, "The idea of cosmic time constitutes the basis of the philosophical theory of reality in this book" (NC 1:28). For Dooyeweerd, the unity and totality of the fullness of meaning is supratemporal, that is, transcendent, distinct, and separate from the diversity of meaning which is temporal and coextensive with the empirical cosmos (NC 1:16). Both the supratemporal unity and the temporal diversity are within created reality. To indicate their relation he uses an evocative metaphor. The unified fullness of meaning separates like sunlight through the prism of time into a rich variety of modes of meaning (NC 1:102). Whereas the law is the boundary between God and creation, time is the boundary between the "supra-temporal central sphere of human existence" through which divine revelation comes (NC 1:33) and the temporal diversity of meaning of empirical reality. According to Dooyeweerd, the fullness of meaning "is not actually given and cannot be actually given in time" (NC 1:106). Rather the temporal coherence of meaning presupposes its deeper identity in a supratemporal religious unity (NC 1:79). It is important to note that this supratemporal religious

unity or “absolutely central sphere of human existence,” as Dooyeweerd also calls it, is identified as the seat of religion (NC 1:57).⁴ Although religion expresses itself in time for Dooyeweerd, its character is basically supratemporal.

According to Dooyeweerd, this central sphere—what the Scriptures call the “heart”—plays the pivotal role in the movement of the temporal diversity of meaning through the religious fullness of meaning toward God and vice versa (NC 1:5). God, says Dooyeweerd, “has expressed His image in man by concentrating its entire temporal existence in the radical religious unity of an ego [the heart] in which the totality of meaning of the temporal cosmos was to be focused on its Origin” (NC 1:55; see also NC 2:549, 3:783). In his language, heart is synonymous with soul, spirit, self, selfhood, ego, I-ness, and they all denote human supratemporal unity. Body, by contrast, is human temporal diversity. For Dooyeweerd, in other words, the human body is “the field of free expression for the human spirit, i.e., for the religious centre of human existence” (NC 3:88).

Although Dooyeweerd radically rejects all the traditional forms of dualism which divide the human being into two clusters of higher and lower modes, he does treat the heart (or soul, or selfhood), which he considers “simple,”⁵ “indivisible,” “undivided,” and even “immortal,”⁶ as supratemporal and separate from the temporal, diverse, and mortal body. In 1939 he talked about an “eternity-condition” (*aevum-toestand*) as belonging to the “created structure of our [supratemporal] selfhood.”⁷ When in volume one of the *New Critique* (1953) we read the rhetorical question, “How could man direct himself toward eternal things, if eternity were not ‘set in his heart’?” (NC 1:31), and when in the third volume (1957) we read that “temporal things are perishable, they do not have a supra-temporal selfhood” (NC 3:65), it appears that he continued to hold this view. Thus, according to Dooyeweerd, cosmic time separates creation into the two realms of the temporal and the supratemporal. Corresponding with this, Dooyeweerd divides law into two separate and distinct senses, the central law (NC 1:11, 63) and the cosmic temporal law (NC 1:174, 507). We have to do with the law “in its central religious unity and its temporal diversity” (NC 1:99).⁸

Dooyeweerd introduces another important distinction between the “Divine order” and the “Divine Word-revelation.” The “Divine order” refers to the law in its two senses of supratemporal unity and temporal diversity. The “Divine Word-revelation” serves as the definitive interpreter of the “Divine order” (NC 2:334). Dooyeweerd echoes a traditional theological distinction between the universal

revelation in “nature” (i.e., creation) and the particular revelation in Scripture, but he explicitly refuses to limit the meaning of Word-revelation to Scripture per se. In a key passage he writes:

God revealed Himself at the creation of the cosmos in the religious root and the temporal meaning-coherence of the world. He created man after His own image. He gave expression to His Divine fulness of Being in the whole of His creation, as a totality of meaning. From the very beginning, however, this revelation of God in the nature of the cosmos was borne and explained by the Word-revelation. (NC 2:307)

Dooyeweerd is saying that, even before the Scriptures and even before the fall, the divine order of natural revelation needs interpretation or direction from the Word-revelation as preredemptive special verbal communication. “Only in faithfully listening to the Divine Word is the true meaning of God’s revelation in ‘created nature’ revealed to man” (NC 2:307). If such interpretation does not take place, if the “central revelational principle of creation” is “isolated from the Word-revelation,” it leads to a state of apostasy (NC 2:323).

The Word-revelation comes to the supratemporal heart, the central religious sphere, through which it acts to direct and interpret the divine order in its temporal diversity. When Dooyeweerd views the supratemporal heart in relation to its Origin (*Archē*), Dooyeweerd emphasizes its created *structure* according to the divine order, enabling it to receive the directive Word-revelation. When he views it in relation to temporal diversity, he emphasizes its religious *direction* as open to, addressed, and led by Word-revelation (NC 2:307).

In Dooyeweerd’s view, God’s Word-revelation in the heart is a power (*dynamis*) which activates and motivates human temporal existence. This power occurs in community and binds the heart of one together with the hearts of all members of the community. The widest community is what he calls “the religious community of mankind” (NC 1:174). But there are other specific communities, all of which are “maintained by a common spirit, which as a *dynamis*, as a central motive-power, is active” in the human heart. His usual term for the *dynamis* is “religious ground-motive” (NC 1:61).

Since the fall, Dooyeweerd believes, there are two basic religious ground motives, “two central mainsprings operative in the heart of human existence” (NC 1:61). There is the dynamic of the Holy Spirit and the dynamic of the spirit of This World. The ground motive of the Holy Spirit is the one revealed by the divine Word-revelation and which he identifies as “the motive of creation, fall, and redemption

by Jesus Christ in the communion of the Holy Ghost" (NC 1:61). The worldly spirit appears in two forms in Western civilization: he calls one the "form-matter motive" of ancient Greece and the other the modern "motive of nature and freedom" (NC 1:61-62). A fourth ground motive, originally the "nature and grace" motive of the medieval period, entails a synthesis between the central motive of the Word-revelation and one of the two worldly motives (NC 1:65).

The religious ground motives are crucial to Dooyeweerd since, as the spiritual driving forces operating from out of the supratemporal heart, they govern and direct all the temporal expressions of life. Indeed, out of the central sphere of the heart "the dramatic conflict between the *civitas Dei* [City of God] and the *civitas terrena* [City of This World] takes its *issue* in the history of the world" (NC 1:32).⁹

Before moving on to explore Dooyeweerd's view of faith, it is important for purposes of completeness to note that he also employs the supratemporal/temporal scheme to distinguish the "transcendent *corpus Christi*" (body of Christ) from "its immanent temporal manifestations" (NC 3:509). This distinction, in his view, corresponds to the more traditional *ecclesia invisibilis/ecclesia visibilis* (invisible church/visible church). In the same pattern, "particular grace directly concerns the supra-temporal root of mankind, whereas common grace remains restricted to temporal life" (NC 3:523).

Faith as a Sui Generis Function

The stage is now set for exploring the place and function of faith in Dooyeweerd's theory. In his view, it is by means of faith as a human function that the supratemporal unity of meaning and the temporal diversity of meaning are connected. The function of faith is like a terminal between the supratemporal heart and all the other aspects of temporal reality. Indeed, without faith this temporal reality cannot exist because faith is the means by which humans immediately relate to the Origin of temporal existence. It functions as "the opened window of time through which the light of God's eternity should shine into the whole temporal coherence of the world" (NC 2:302).

In other words, faith is both distinct from religion and expressive of religion. Faith is one specific kind (*sui generis*) of function, next to other kinds of human functions like sensitivity, justice, and clarity, which expresses the central *dynamis* of religion in the particular way of faith. In technical terms, Dooyeweerd calls this the "pistic mode" which is related to other modes in this theory of modal aspects. All the other aspects express the central religious *dynamis* in their specific ways.¹⁰

As an aspect, faith has the specific function of orienting human life directly and immediately to the heart wherein temporal diversity finds supratemporal unity and orientation to the origin which is God. For Dooyeweerd it is that immediate connection to the human heart that makes the faith function unique. It is the only function that points above time without the intermediary of the functional impact of other modes. Dooyeweerd describes the specific modal meaning of faith as an "original transcendental certainty, within the limits of time, related to a revelation of the *Archē* which has captured the heart of human existence" (NC 2:304). True faith is "ultimate certainty in time with respect to the sure ground of one's existence" (*Roots*, 93; see also *Twi*, 138). The key words are "transcendental certainty" and "ultimate certainty."

For good or evil, faith is directly open to religion, "driven on directly by impulses from the religious root of human existence" (NC 2:293). The religious ground motives operating in the heart direct the faith function which in turn determines the "direction of the opening-process in the earlier [modal] law-spheres" (NC 2:294). With its special proximity to the heart through which the Word-revelation comes, faith is open immediately to the Word-revelation. All of this means that the aspect of faith is exceptional (NC 2:310). The faith function both mediates the dynamic of the religious ground motives to temporal reality and leads all other aspects of temporal reality in their drive to the religious root and Origin of existence. Likewise, faith gives us access directly to both the Word-revelation and the universal divine order, whereas all the other modal aspects are oriented directly to the divine law-order and only indirectly via faith to the Word-revelation.

This view of faith as unmediated openness to both the religious heart and the divine Word-revelation does, however, raise a serious problem for Dooyeweerd. What happens when faith "is not activated . . . by the Spirit of the *civitas Dei*" (NC 2:297)? How can Dooyeweerd talk of faith in such instances? According to Dooyeweerd, there are people for whom the function of faith operates but in a way that is "closed to the light of God's Word" (NC 2:308). This is "false" faith. But if faith, by definition, is openness to divine Word-revelation, it would seem to make no sense to talk of closed faith. Faith is openness or it is not faith.

Although the problem is very real for Dooyeweerd, he does not draw the conclusion that closed faith is a contradiction in terms. In fact, following the theologian Abraham Kuyper and in direct challenge to Karl Barth (NC 2:298-303), Dooyeweerd emphasizes

again and again that the function of faith, implanted in this human nature at creation, is the same in Christians and non-Christians. The structure of faith belongs to the order of creation (the divine order) and could not, as such, be affected by sin (*Twi*, 137). Dooyeweerd thinks that Kuyper's recognition of faith as an irreducible and universal human function broke new ground, ground on which Dooyeweerd wants to build. If faith were not a function common to all humans, closed faith could not be the opposite of the Christian faith. It would, he says, "belong to an entirely different order and could have no point of comparison with the belief in Jesus Christ" (*NC* 2:301). And Dooyeweerd wants to fight vigorously any such idea of a mystical, out of this world, irrational Christian faith.

In spite of this, Dooyeweerd's definition of this common human function of faith still raises the question whether only Christ-believers have faith. He recognizes the problem and attempts to resolve it by trading on his idea that faith has a dual orientation to both Word-revelation and the universal divine law-order. In a false faith, the function of faith is closed only to the Word-revelation, while the divine order of faith remains open to the supratemporal religious center. Even in such closed faith this created structure continues in place and unbroken. Humans, by virtue of being human, search in faith for ultimate certainty. But since the revelation in the divine law-order cannot be truly understood apart from the Word-revelation, closed faith looks for an absolute ground in the creation itself.

Dooyeweerd acknowledges that he uses closed in a special sense. Instead of the word meaning restricted in its development to the substructure, closed now means false: "In its closed sense the true direction [of faith] to the Absolute Origin has been reversed in the absolutizing of what has been created" (*NC* 2:309). False or closed faith absolutizes the creaturely, deifying nature and making virtually impossible the entire opening process of history (cf. *NC* 2:297-315).

This, however, by no means solves the problem for Dooyeweerd. In fact, it reveals its magnitude even more clearly. Although, according to Dooyeweerd's explanation, no development of culture beyond the "primitive" is possible for closed faith, it is obvious that considerable development of non-Christian culture has occurred in history. Dooyeweerd agrees: "It is simply impossible to deny that in various [non-Christian] religions after a period of a primitive and diffuse belief in nature there is an opening-process of *pistis* [faith]" (*NC* 2:319-20).

For Dooyeweerd, such opening becomes possible when humans become conscious of the freedom to transcend organic attachment to

nature and by means of faith devise idols in the image of deified aspects of human personality (cf. NC 2:322). By absolutizing the distinctly human features of existence, humans promote the development of culture in relation to those features. Dooyeweerd explains the possibility of such development in immediate connection with the emergence of various peoples from "a more or less primitive stage of civilization" (NC 2:320). Such unfolding is dependent on and presupposes the achievement of a certain minimal stage of cultural development (cf. NC 2:179).

Dooyeweerd's solution, however, remains problematic. His account of the opening up of culture in relation to non-Christian faiths seems to make good sense. The questions return, however, since in Dooyeweerd's view such cultural opening is itself integrally related to and dependent on the leading of faith. With a closed (i.e., false) faith, how does the historical opening process get started in its direction to the fullness of meaning and to God as Origin? And how could Dooyeweerd explain the reality that closed faiths have often shown more cultural-historical disclosure than true faith? Moreover, Dooyeweerd's special use of closed as false in reference to faith also creates difficulties in dealing with the Christian faith. Terminologically, he is unable to talk of underdeveloped or maldeveloped Christian faith as closed. A closed, undeveloped true faith becomes a contradiction in terms.

Dooyeweerd recognizes his problems, but seems to regard them as a limited matter basically having to do with the place of a faith as the mediating function between all the other temporal aspects and the supratemporal heart. That, he believes, justifies his special use of closed as false rather than his customary usage of closed as unopened or undeveloped. The question that needs to be asked, however, is whether Dooyeweerd's problems in this area do not point to ambiguities, tensions, or weaknesses in his theory of faith as a whole and even in his entire theory.¹¹ What is clear is that considering openness to the heart to be constitutive of faith and closed as the cardinal mark of false faith, Dooyeweerd makes it difficult to distinguish clearly between opened and closed developments of the function of faith and the separate matter of whether any particular faith is true or false.

Contributions of Dooyeweerd's Theories

Dooyeweerd's theories of religion and faith can offer some contributions to the wider worlds of theology and philosophy. The uniqueness of Dooyeweerd's views about religion and faith centers in his refusal to identify them with each other in the traditional way. Religion, he maintains, is the nature of all life; all of life is spiritual

response to God. One mode of this response is the response of faith. Seeing *faith* as only *one* of the many ways of being *religious* is the heart of Dooyeweerd's position.

In asserting that life as a whole is spiritual, Dooyeweerd is affirming along with Paul Tillich and many others that the relation to the Transcendent One, our ultimate concern, cannot be limited to one area of life to which we pay attention at special times and in special places. Religion, say Dooyeweerd and Tillich, is best seen as a total way of human life, as the depth relation in all human functioning to the Ultimate. And as Mircea Eliade, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, and many other scholars of the history of religions are teaching us, most other traditions see and live religion as a total way of life.¹²

The benefits of accepting this notion of the spirituality of the entire creation are substantial. Such a viewpoint prevents the downgrading of any human modes of functioning as second-rate, "only human," "natural," or as the locus of evil and sin. Our breathing and sleeping, our sexuality and emotionality are as spiritual as our thoughts, morals, and beliefs. In a culture which still too often puts down the body and fears the emotions, a theology or philosophy that promotes the full acceptance of body, sex, and emotion offers a healthy insight. Moreover, such a view avoids reducing religion to one sphere of life alongside of art, science, family, and business with the always present danger of acting as if God is locked up in church and is only a concern on Sunday.

How does faith fit in? And here by distinguishing faith and religion Dooyeweerd's view manifests its special genius. Whereas in Tillich's view faith is but a synonym for religion, Dooyeweerd sees faith as one of the many modes of religion. The difference is crucial.

In his discussions of faith, Tillich ends up contrasting faith (religion) with all the other modes of being in the world. Faith is the special depth function of all the other functions, and the knowledge of faith is "experienced in an attitude which contradicts the attitude of ordinary cognition."¹³ As a result, the knowledge of revelation cannot interfere with ordinary knowledge, and "ordinary knowledge cannot interfere with the knowledge of revelation."¹⁴ The end result is a basic contradiction, despite the complementarity, between faith (religion) and culture. This ultimately calls into question the validity of culture and creation, even as paradoxically faith blesses them. Entirely consistent with this view, Tillich believes that the separate, special attention to God characteristic of the institutional church, cultus, and prayer is an emergency measure necessary only because

we have lost the depth of unity. In gaining a sense of the intrinsic spirituality of all creation, Tillich ends up detracting from or playing down the specific cultic celebration of faith.

In distinction from Tillich, Dooyeweerd sees faith as one of the ordinary modes of experience, equally human, equally personal, and equally spiritual. It is by the functioning of faith that the inherent spirituality of the whole person comes to explicit conscious awareness in a surrender of self to God or the pretended ultimate. Consequently this view is able to recognize the uniqueness and importance of faith, prayer, and worship in ordinary life even as it honors the spirituality of all of life.

Moreover, by treating faith as the specific function of human acts which leads and unfolds the historical opening process, Dooyeweerd explains structurally how a person's faith commitment grounds, leads, and integrates all human activities and, simultaneously, how all the other ways of human functioning affect, confirm, and test our personal faith commitment. Instead of ending in a faith/culture contrast, it is possible to explore and trace out in more detail how faith functioning interrelates with all the other ways of functioning.

In considering faith as a *sui generis* human function which all humans possess as part of being human, Dooyeweerd recognizes faith as generically human, a fundamental, indispensable feature of life in creation. That is a reality which is today much more widely accepted due to the influence of Mircea Eliade, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, and others in the fields of cultural anthropology and the history of religions. Recognizing the commonness of faith for all peoples in all times, despite important differences in actualization, provides a basis for the comparison of the various faiths.

And recognizing faith as a distinct mode of life provides theology with an empirical field of investigation which allows theology to be a scholarly discipline (*wissenschaft*) in the usual sense. Theological study is not about God per se (How can the Creator God be the object of human scientific investigation?), but about the mode of faith within human experience in its indissoluble interrelation with all other modes of human experience. As a special science, theology would investigate (1) the norm for faith, (2) that which is subject to the norm, and (3) the correlation between norm and subjective experience. Taking such a hypothesis seriously would not only avoid giving theology a special, sacred status in respect to which theology relates to other sciences as God relates to everything else, it also would

do away with the gymnastics required to maintain that theology is a science like any other and yet a special science dealing with God. Following Dooyeweerd's lead would mean recognizing all sciences as spiritual and sacred, each one in its own way dealing with a specific mode of being creaturely, that is, religious.

Dooyeweerd's stress on the function of faith as a specific but ordinary human calling among others highlights the human responsibility to come to a faith decision. It contrasts with views that consider faith a luxury or an option that you happen to like or not to like, as well as positions that see faith as a matter of fate or fortune about which humans can do little.

The *sui generis* quality of faith as a function also makes faith impervious to any and all efforts to reduce it to feeling, thinking, or imagining. Taking this more seriously would help us, I believe, to break through the impasse of the traditional discussions about the rationality or irrationality of faith. As one mode of being, faith is faith and as such it expresses at its core a character which is not properly touched by the question of whether it is rational or irrational. However, in a concrete human act of faith, even though the faith mode of functioning dominates and gives the act its special quality as an act of faith, all the other ways of human functioning are indissolubly present. It is in terms of such full human acts of faith that it is relevant to ask the secondary questions about faith, such as whether the act is rational or not and whether it is emotionally grounded or not. Thus, although good reasons are not the ground of faith, an act of faith ought to make rational sense to the believer. But it also becomes understandable that faith in God may be right even if, at this moment or at this juncture, it makes little rational sense to me. At the same time, the unity of a human act with its impetus for coherence makes clear that believing without good reasons is an uncomfortable and tenuous undertaking.

Likewise, although good feelings are not the content of faith, an act of faith ought to include and induce appropriate feelings. Dooyeweerd's model is able to explain how my faith in God can be genuine and real even if my feelings about it are mixed or negative. At the same time it also explains why an experience of faith that is not grounded and reciprocated in our feelings is thin, inadequate, and tension-creating.

Suggestions: The Unitary Word of God and the Unitary Creation

Most of my problems, questions, and suggestions about Dooyeweerd's views on religion and faith have to do with his use of

the supratemporal/temporal scheme in working them out. This scheme has long been a chief object of criticism by those sympathetic to Dooyeweerd's philosophy as well as by other scholars.¹⁵ The problem is not that he maintains the transcendental character of reality, in terms of which everything in time refers to that which is beyond time. The problem in Dooyeweerd, as I see it, is that he creates an extra realm within created reality itself which is above time and which serves to provide created reality with a transcendent supratemporal unity en route to the Origin. My suggestions are led by a concern (which I share with Dooyeweerd) to develop a philosophical position which reflects the diversified unity of creation.

One of the problems in positing a supratemporal realm as a realm within creation but above time is a tendency toward duplication. Once accepted, the supratemporal has its own structure and seems to have its own life, separate from and duplicating temporal life.¹⁶ This tendency to duplicate is apparent in the distinction between "creation, fall and redemption in their central sense" and "in their sense as articles of faith" (*Twi*, 145). It is especially evident in Dooyeweerd's description of faith and religion.¹⁷ Religion is the innate impulse to the Absolute Origin (*NC* 1:57) and faith is relation to the Origin "within the limits of time" (*NC* 2:304). And this similarity is not merely a matter of definition. Faith in Dooyeweerd's view relates to revelation in a way which parallels the relation of the heart to revelation.¹⁸ And the function of faith and the heart, as we have noted earlier, is integrally related to both Word-revelation and the universal revelation in nature.

Moreover, the battle between the City of God and the City of This World is first of all located in the central sphere of the heart, from there issuing forth into human history. Dooyeweerd also talks of the "supra-temporal fulfillment" (*NC* 1:106) of history. But what can it mean that creaturely happening takes place outside of time, issuing into time and receiving fulfillment from above? I confess that I cannot imagine. And the problem with this seems rather obvious: All important events in the history of the world, say the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, were temporal. Dooyeweerd knows this and tries to account for it: "Adam's fall into sin and Christ's incarnation, although both concern the root of the entire cosmos, also signify historical turning-points of all-deciding importance in the history of the world" (*NC* 2:295). Notice the "also." Dooyeweerd would probably explain that the supratemporal fullness of meaning of Christ's life expresses itself in historically significant events. But is this sufficient? The fullness of the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection

is precisely not to be sought *above* time, but as the fullness and fulfillment of time *in time*.¹⁹

A transcendent sphere or heart seems unnecessary if time itself is transcendental in nature. We are creatures of time, totally temporal in nature, but as such we are directed towards the future as well as towards the Origin of all life. Temporality would seem to be the character of all creatures and to constitute the possibility for their life and growth. Temporality is a condition and a possibility which refers to the Giver of all conditions and the Origin of all possibilities.

To posit "eternity" in the heart of humans, to consider the self transcendent in order to make the connection with God is unnecessary. It is also, I judge, out of line with Scripture which sees "immortality" as a gift of God rather than an intrinsic possession of humanity.²⁰ It is plausible to argue that Dooyeweerd needs such a transcendent sphere basically for purposes of his transcendental critique.²¹ If that be the case, it would seem that his critique needs to be revised.

Abandoning Dooyeweerd's supratemporal/temporal scheme would also allow us to do more justice to the unity of the human person. When Dooyeweerd talks of the heart as the central point of reference of the human person, he is capturing the integral wholeness of what it means to be a human self. When he goes on to locate this deeper unity above time and describes the heart as "simple," "indivisible," and "immortal," he is virtually reintroducing through the back door the dualism he evicted from the front door. What do we gain in our understanding of our unity as persons by separating our unity from our actual human functioning? Although the human self is certainly more than its ways of functioning, we are constituted as whole selves in terms of our diverse ways of functioning. The self, I suggest, can be described as the whole, yet diverse person as viewed from the angle of his or her center of reference, identity, and unity.

Dooyeweerd's distinction between the Word-revelation as religious direction and the divine order as law-structure is necessitated or at least aided and abetted by his supratemporal/temporal framework which places the dynamic over against the static and structural. If we set aside this framework, we are enabled to do more justice to the unity of the Word of God. We may understand the Word of God as the one directing and structuring power which called creation into being, maintains it in its multifunctional existence, and interprets it within us. The Triune God is the Caller, the Word of God is the calling, and the creation is the called (cf. Pss. 33:6-9, 147:15, 18-19; John 1; Heb. 1; 2 Pet. 3:5-7). The Word of God is the

personal love/wisdom/energy of God giving life and calling to life; it is the network of creational norms which give constancy and direction to life. In this view, God's speaking redemptively for our salvation in Jesus Christ and in the Scriptures is heard and understood as the reaffirmation and fulfillment of God's speaking to the creation in the beginning.

Considering God's Word for reality as single and unitary allows us to reformulate Dooyeweerd's concept of religious ground motives. This is called for because of obvious discrepancies in his view. On the one hand, as we have seen, there are two ground motives—the *dynamis* of the Spirit of God and the *dynamis* of the spirit of This World—which seem to be of nonhuman origin. On the other hand, there are at least four ground motives—one biblical, two worldly, and one synthetic—which are decidedly human. Moreover, all the ground motives are supposed to be centrally religious, supratemporal, and thus suprahistorical, yet he describes the three unbiblical motives solely in terms of their cultural development in history. Given the parameters of his view, it is not clear how divine power can be human power and how suprahistorical motives can be basically historical developments.²²

The question of the relation between divine power and human response becomes especially acute when we consider the content of the biblical motive of creation-fall-redemption. Often Dooyeweerd seems to treat this content as a suprahistorical given which comes through faithful listening but without human subjective interpretation (NC 2:307). Dooyeweerd seems at this point to have ignored one of his central principles: the correlation between law and the subjects of that law. That principle would lead to the conclusion that the Word of God as law cannot be known except in terms of the subjects of creation, involving human subjective interpretation. Thus, we would expect the scriptural ground motive as manifested historically to be, according to Dooyeweerd's theory, a creaturely and fallible response to the Word of God in human hearts. Although he acknowledges human input in the formulation of the motive, he assumes that the motive itself as creation-fall-redemption can, in what he calls its "central sense," be known purely or infallibly in the human heart. He says we can only talk of the biblical ground motive when we have to do with the "direct working of God's Word in the religious root of our life independent of all subjective human interpretation."²³ In acting as if *his* understanding of the presence of God's Word is direct and pure, Dooyeweerd tends to absolutize his views. In effect his view is nonnegotiable and discussion about the validity of (his view of) the

biblical ground motive is illegitimate. It is understandable, then, that critics wonder if there is not a certain "absolutism" in Dooyeweerd's view.²⁴ Is it not in fact true that Dooyeweerd's listening and formulating "was conditioned by a religious 'paradigm' which found expression in a neo-Calvinist life-view and social action, and indeed exhibits a historical form which may be compared to other manifestations of a Biblical-reformed tradition"?²⁵

Contributing to the problem is Dooyeweerd's supratemporal/temporal framework. For when the supratemporal is treated as the normative principle for the temporal structure, the law-subject distinction recedes in importance. Thus, creation-fall-redemption as the subjective supratemporal response of the heart to the Word-revelation virtually fuses with the Word-revelation itself in its normative relation to the temporal structure. Consequently, the ground motive is effectively beyond critique and negotiation—it is the truth—as it norms and dynamically directs the temporal structure.

The question is whether the human heart, even the redeemed human heart, is so pure and undefiled that it can know infallibly the Word-revelation. The testimony of Scripture, the struggle of Christian believers, and the existence of a number of alternative traditions all claiming biblical authorization seem to indicate otherwise.

If I begin from the suggestion that the divine world-order is not other than the Word of God but is the Word of God, there is a helpful way to rework Dooyeweerd's conception of ground motives. There is, I suggest, only one true ground motive: the Word of God. The Word of God calls creation into being, grounds its existence, and guarantees its unity and diversity. The Word-Spirit motivates and directs the creation towards its fulfillment. Since the fall, in addition to the true ground motive there is also the lie of the devil which, parasitic on the Word of God, does its destructive work in creation and human life. The ground motive and what I shall call the "ungrounding" motive are antithetically opposed: one the Word of the Spirit of God, life-bestowing, life-grounding, life-directing; the other the lie of the devil, life-denying, life-destroying, life-defiling.²⁶

In response to and under the influence of the ground motive and its ungrounding rival motive, certain visions of life have developed in the course of history. These motivating visions, or worldviews, are born in faith within the various communities of humankind. Dooyeweerd's four historical ground motives are examples of such motivating communal visions of faith. Each faith community articulates in terms of its own time and situation what it apprehends to be the message of salvation. So also in the various Christian tradi-

tions, each community articulates in terms of its own time and situation a common faith in God as Creator and Reconciler. What Dooyeweerd calls the "creation-fall-redemption" motive is the twentieth-century neo-Calvinist community's effort to capture the biblical message in a vision which makes sense of reality. Other Reformed visions as well as Lutheran, Anabaptist, Roman Catholic visions are alternative efforts to translate the biblical message into a viable worldview. None of the visions can claim infallibility. All are open to critique and refurbishing.

If we drop the supratemporal/temporal scheme, we may revise Dooyeweerd's view of religion. If we no longer identify religion with a central sphere of human existence, we can more fully and adequately affirm religion as the nature of creaturely existence in relation to the Creator-Redeemer God. To be creaturely means to be in relation to God, that is, religious. In other words, life is religion. Dooyeweerd's localization of religion in the supratemporal heart undercuts, it would seem, his attempt to develop a theory in which all of life is equally religious. In his theory of religion, all of life is only indirectly or secondarily religious. It is religious via the heart.

And that is not even the full story. All of life is religious via the heart *and* via the function of faith. Dooyeweerd appears to have a hierarchical structure in which the heart is one step closer to God than the faith function which is half a step closer to God than all the other diverse ways of functioning. This has the odd result of distancing both religion and faith from the full functioning of our lives. This hierarchical view is in tension, I suggest, with Dooyeweerd's conviction that all of created reality expresses the will of the Creator. He uses the nonhierarchical image of a prism in which the light of the religious heart is refracted into the many human functions. This would not lead us to conclude that one of the colors—in this case, faith—is brighter than all the others because it is closer to the fullness of meaning.²⁷

If we no longer work with Dooyeweerd's distinction between divine order and Word-revelation, then the equally religious character of every function of life is more easily portrayed. This would lead us to sharpen his identification of the modal meaning of faith. We recall that he describes faith as "original transcendental certainty, within the limits of time, related to a revelation of the *Archē* which has captured the heart of human existence" and as "immediate relatedness to the transcendent root and . . . Origin" (NC 2:304). I would suggest that we think of the modal characteristic of faith to be simply "certitude" and then we may describe this function

as the certitudinal function. There is no need, I believe, to qualify it as *transcendental* certitude as Dooyeweerd does, unless, that is, we begin to describe all the functions as transcendental. All of reality and every function is fully and directly transcendental, equally religious, and immediately related to the Word of God. Nor do I see any necessity to add a reference about "openness to revelation" in describing the characterizing function of faith, unless, again, we add such a reference in our delineation of all other modal functions. For all of them refer to and express the Word of God, each in their own unique way. In each way of functioning, we are immediately related to and open to the Word. Every human function is directionally oriented toward God.

Identifying the function of faith as that of certitude recognizes a unique function for faith. By faith we recognize, deepen, and give ourselves to God or to a substitute god, intrinsically expressing the transcendental character of all reality. In faith all of us make the total surrender of certitude and integrate our lives by means of our full, ultimate allegiance to God or to a no-god.²⁸ In this construction, problems around open or closed faith also seem to vanish. Every manifestation of faith, whether in God or in a no-god, can be traced and examined in terms of its degree of integration, disclosure, and development or disintegration, restriction, and underdevelopment.

Although, as I have indicated, I am less than satisfied with much of Dooyeweerd's theories of religion and faith, there is also much to build upon. It would be good to continue to try out his ideas of the spirituality of creation and the *sui generis* character of faith as a function. These along with my own suggestions for revision offer, I think, fruitful prospects for further work.²⁹

Notes to Chapter 2

1. See Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961) and *Patterns of Comparative Religion* (New York: Meridian Books, 1958); Donald Evans, *Struggle and Fulfillment* (Toronto: Collins, 1979); James Fowler, *Stages of Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976); Langdon Gilkey, *Naming the Whirlwind: The Renewal of God-Language* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969); Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966); Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York: Mentor Books, 1963) and *Faith and Belief* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953) and *Dynamics*

of Faith (New York: Harper & Row, 1956); and David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order* (New York: Seabury, 1975).

2. Cf. NC 2:31 where Dooyeweerd comments on Husserl's remark that meaning cannot be burnt down like a house.

3. John N. Kraay, "Successive Conceptions in the Development of the Christian Philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd," *Phil. Ref.* 45 (1980): 24.

4. Consequently, "religious" becomes a usual way to describe this central sphere: "the religious root of mankind" (NC 1:100), "the religious fulness of meaning" (NC 1:102), "the central religious sphere of consciousness" (NC 1:56), and "the religious totality of meaning" (NC 1:104).

5. Herman Dooyeweerd, "De taak ener wijsgerige anthropologie," *Phil. Ref.* 26 (1961): 43.

6. Herman Dooyeweerd, "Het tijdsprobleem in de wijsbegeerte der wet-sidee," *Phil. Ref.* 5 (1940): 222. See also Herman Dooyeweerd, "De leer van de mens, stelling 9," *Correspondentie Bladen* (1942).

7. Herman Dooyeweerd, "Het tijdsprobleem en zijn antinomieën," *Phil. Ref.* 4 (1939): 5. Cf. also NC 1:31.

8. For more on cosmic time, see the later essay by C. T. McIntire on Dooyeweerd's philosophy of history. A good discussion of this whole matter in Dooyeweerd, as well as a thorough investigation of his doctrine of time, is A. Brüggemann-Kruyff, "Tijd als omsluiting, tijd als ontsluiting," *Phil. Ref.* 46 (1981): 145, 150ff. and 47 (1982): 41-68.

9. Again, see McIntire's essay on history.

10. See the following essay by Calvin G. Seerveld for an explanation of his modal theory.

11. In an excellent article, Henk Geertsema points to a general ambiguity in Dooyeweerd's general theory of the opening process. On the one hand, as integral to God's creation order, the process of disclosure presupposes the appearance of unopened structures. On the other hand, the appearance of closed structures is interpreted as a result of the fall. Geertsema surmises that the origin of the tension lies in Dooyeweerd's attempt to combine the opening process toward fulfillment with the triumph of the City of God over the City of This World. Geertsema points out rightly that the unfolding of the possibilities of creation is a mixed blessing, often, in fact, making the battle more comprehensive and more intense. See Henk Geertsema, "Transcendentale openheid," *Phil. Ref.* 35 (1970): 140-45. Perhaps it is this ambiguity that accounts for Dooyeweerd's description, as we noted earlier, of created reality as "restless" in spite of its negative connotation.

12. See, for example, the works cited in note 1 above.

13. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 1:108.

14. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1:130.

15. See especially Hendrik Hart, "Problems of Time: An Essay," in *The Idea of a Christian Philosophy* (Toronto: Wedge, 1973) and Peter J. Steen, *The Structure of Herman Dooyeweerd's Thought* (Toronto: Wedge, 1983). See also McIntire's essay in this volume.
16. K. J. Popma makes the separation even more radical. There is the "creatureliness" of humanity, accessible through theoretic thought, and the "being-a-child of God" in religion, known only in religion. K. J. Popma, "Tijd en religie," *Phil. Ref.* 14 (1949): 126-38.
17. Geertsema, "Transcendentale openheid," 153 (cited in note 11 above).
18. Harry Fernhout discusses this in some detail in "Man, Faith and Religion in Bavinck, Kuiper, and Dooyeweerd" (Master's thesis, Institute for Christian Studies, 1975), 88-111 especially.
19. Brüggemann-Kruijff discusses this in detail in "Tijd als omsluiting," 47:41-55 (cited in note 8 above). For further discussion of Dooyeweerd's view of time in relation to history, see McIntire's essay in this volume.
20. Cf. G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), especially chapter 7, "Immortality."
21. Cf. Brüggemann-Kruijff, "Tijd als omsluiting," 47:45-48, 57 (cited in note 8 above).
22. For more on Dooyeweerd's theory of ground motives and development, see McIntire's essay.
23. Herman Dooyeweerd, "Van Peursen's critische vragen," *Phil. Ref.* 25 (1960): 143, cf. 101.
24. C. A. Van Peursen, "Antwoord aan Dooyeweerd," *Phil. Ref.* 26 (1961): 199-200. Cf. also his "Vragen bij 'A New Critique of Theoretical Thought,'" *Phil. Ref.* 24 (1959): 167.
25. P. J. Visagie, "Dynamics of the Christian Religious Motive," *Anakainosis* 4 (September 1981): 2.
26. I willingly echo the tradition of Augustine about the two Cities and pick up on Dooyeweerd's own view that there are two mainsprings to human activity.
27. Dooyeweerd normally makes clear his intention to treat all modal aspects as equally expressive of religious meaning. Note his comments on justice, for example (*NC* 2:133).
28. I discuss the notion of certitude in James H. Olthuis, "Towards a Certitudinal Hermeneutic," in *Hearing and Doing: Philosophical Essays Dedicated to H. Evan Runner*, ed. by John Kraay and Anthony Tol (Toronto: Wedge, 1979), 65-85.
29. I would agree with Henk Geertsema's evaluation of Dooyeweerd: "Christian philosophical thinking did not begin with Dooyeweerd. Neither can it end with him. But in the whole tradition of Christian philosophical reflection the significance of Dooyeweerd is not small" (Geertsema, "Transcendentale openheid," 153; cited in note 11 above).