

# The religious dialectic revisited

By

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## I. Introduction and references to previous articles

This is a companion piece to my article “Why did Dooyeweerd want to pull out his hair?”<sup>1</sup> So read that first; it concerns the idea of the supratemporal heart. Dooyeweerd says that his whole philosophy depends on that idea, and that it is required for any truly Christian philosophy.

In this article, I want to continue the argument that I made in 2005, in “Dooyeweerd versus Vollenhoven: The religious dialectic in reformational philosophy.”<sup>2</sup> I want to show, from Dooyeweerd’s own words, how giving up his idea of the supratemporal heart has resulted in a religious dialectic within reformational philosophy itself. And to do that, I am going to look at what he says in a lecture that he gave in 1964, and then compare this with later events.

What does a religious dialectic mean? It is the alternation between two polar views, resulting from an absolutization of different aspects of temporal reality. Examples given by Dooyeweerd are alternating between the ideas form and matter, or between nature and grace, or between nature and freedom. In other words, a religious dialectic results from a non-Christian Ground-motive. When Christians use such non-Christian Ground-motives, they are involved in synthesis.

“Hold it, hold it!” I hear someone say. “Are you suggesting that reformational philosophy is itself a synthesis, that is uses the wrong Ground-motive? How dare you

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<sup>1</sup> J. Glenn Friesen: “Why did Dooyeweerd want to pull out his hair?” (2006), online at [<http://www.redeemer.ca/~plant/rr/jgf-01.pdf>].

<sup>2</sup> J. Glenn Friesen: “Dooyeweerd versus Vollenhoven: The religious dialectic within reformational philosophy,” *Philosophia Reformata* 70 (2005) 102-132, online at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/hermandooyeweerd/Dialectic.html>][‘Dialectic’].

suggest that! We're the ones that expose the wrong Ground-motives in other philosophies.”

Well, yes, that is what I am saying. But it is not only my view. It is what Dooyeweerd said in his last article of 1975, directed against Danie Strauss.<sup>3</sup> He says that Strauss's philosophy contains a logicism (which is an absolutization), that it contains genuine antinomies (which are always the sign of a religious dialectic, and a wrong Ground-motive), and that its epistemology does not differ from that of modern epistemology, whose presuppositions have “darkened its insight into the correct relation of the naïve or pre-theoretical to the theoretical, scientific attitude of thought and experience” (thus, it is a synthesis philosophy).<sup>4</sup> And in that article, Dooyeweerd again mentions the importance of the idea of our transcendence of time. Not even the ideas of the irreducibility of the modal aspects or their mutual coherence can be understood apart from the idea of their root-unity in the religious center of human existence. So if a person doesn't accept the idea of the supratemporal heart, he or she will also not understand the modal aspects.

To what extent can Dooyeweerd's criticisms of Strauss also be leveled against Vollenhoven? In “Dialectic,” I argued that the same ideas could be found in Vollenhoven, and that these ideas differ significantly from Dooyeweerd's own philosophy. In North America, we have long been inclined to suppose that Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven were pretty much in agreement, but this turns out not to be the case, as some reformational leaders in the Netherlands realized all along. The truth of the matter is that Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven disagreed on almost every key idea. Here is a list of some of Dooyeweerd's ideas that Vollenhoven rejected, at least in the way that Dooyeweerd understood these ideas: (1) only God is Being; created reality is only

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<sup>3</sup> Herman Dooyeweerd: “De Kentheoretische Gegenstandsrelatie en de Logische Subject-Objectrelatie,” *Philosophia Reformata* 40 (1975) 83-101 [*Gegenstandsrelatie*] Translation and discussion online: [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/jgfriesen/Mainheadings/Kentheoretische.html>].

<sup>4</sup> *Gegenstandsrelatie*, 97. For details of Dooyeweerd's criticism, see my article “Dooyeweerd versus Strauss: Objections to immanence philosophy within reformational thought,” (2006), online at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/hermandooyeweerd/Objections.html>].

meaning (2) cosmic time and the *aevum* (created eternity), as distinct from God's eternity (3) the place of God's law (4) the supratemporal heart (5) religious (supratemporal) root of temporal reality (6) man as image of God (7) the nature of modalities or aspects (8) temporal succession of modalities (9) anticipations and retrocipations (10) subject-object relation (11) *Gegenstand*-relation (12) individuality structures (13) *enkapsis* (14) intuition (15) use of Scripture and theology (16) the meaning of the Christian Ground-motive of creation, fall and redemption (17) the possibility of direct, unmediated religious experience (18) the importance of ecumenism.

To some readers, this list may seem strange. Bear in mind that Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven both drew some of their terms from a common pool of philosophical terminology. Therefore, casual reading in Vollenhoven may create the impression that what is being said is roughly what Dooyeweerd said as well, for his terminology is reminiscent of Dooyeweerd. But he intends something very different.

I would like to explain each of these points in more detail, but then I would be repeating what you can read in my earlier article. When I wrote "Dialectic," I referred to Dooyeweerd's January, 1964 lecture to the Association for Calvinistic Philosophy. For that lecture made public many of these disagreements between Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd. I relied on excerpts of this lecture and discussion, as cited in Marcel Verburg's work on Dooyeweerd.<sup>5</sup> Dooyeweerd says in the lecture,

Each part of this philosophy [of the Law-Idea] must be critically weighed, because don't forget, it is the work of humans. I have had an alarming success in [being subjected to] such criticism! After the Second World War it came to the point that I sometimes thought, "No pillar remains standing. At the moment everything lies knocked down flat. There is no part of this philosophy that has not been subjected to a sharp critique. The teaching of time, in my opinion a very fundamental piece of the philosophy of the law-Idea, has been struck at in its foundation." The teaching of the law-spheres...has in various parts been so injured that I thought, "Okay, now where are we going?" It was in fact said to me, "Yes, we agree with you, there is a diversity of modes of experience..., but we hesitate to speak of a historical aspect of experience," and "We do

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<sup>5</sup> Marcel Verburg: *Herman Dooyeweerd. Leven en werk van een Nederlands christen-wijsgeer* (Baarn: Ten Have, 1989) ['Verburg'].

not want to become historicists. That [aspect] must remain outside.” And others said, “Now, the intuition of time; it is such an all-encompassing time, in which all the aspects are fitted. That we can't accept. There are aspects—the arithmetical aspect, the spatial aspect—which are timeless. We must maybe make time itself into an aspect...etc.” I thought, “There goes the whole philosophy of the Law-Idea [Verburg 380-81, my translation].

And Verburg reports that Vollenhoven, perceiving that these remarks were directed at him, responded:

The theory of the law-spheres, the theory of the modalities—that has been splendidly developed by Dooyeweerd. The theory of retrocipations and anticipations, the theory of the object—these are rather mixed up [*door elkaar geslagen*], as I have recently shown. ‘Individuality structures’ –I have always hesitated about that idea; I thought, “I don't need that word.” And the theory of time—yes, I have a very broad understanding of that. But as for the place of religion in philosophy, we are in precise agreement and therefore these other questions are of a different nature [Verburg 381, my translation].

Note that although Vollenhoven admitted that he disagreed on some points, he claimed to agree with respect to the modalities and the nature of religion. But based on the full 1964 lecture, and on subsequent events, that seems to be a very doubtful claim. We will get to that later.

## II. Reviewing the full text of the 1964 lecture

Recently, I visited the Dooyeweerd Archives in Amsterdam. I located a copy of Dooyeweerd's original 1964 lecture, and a transcript of the discussion that followed. My translation of both of these documents can be found on my website.<sup>6</sup> So now that we have the entire lecture and transcript, what further information is available to us about these disagreements between Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven?

I was surprised that these documents show an even greater divergence than I had supposed, although Prof. van Riessen, who was the Chairman of the meeting, tried to smooth over the differences. The complete transcript confirms that Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven differed deeply in their ideas. The transcript is also very good in

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<sup>6</sup> Herman Dooyeweerd: Center and Periphery: The Philosophy of the Law-Idea in a changing world,” online at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/hermandooyeweerd/1964Lecture.html>]

demonstrating the differences in their philosophical styles, and their different stances towards the ideas of others. Dooyeweerd seems much more passionate, but also much more open to others. Vollenhoven comes across as more closed, and directed inwards to the Reformed tradition; he wants to continue his detailed analysis of different theologies (he mentions 80 or 90 different kinds of theology)<sup>7</sup>, before venturing into dialogue with others.

Let's look at a few of the differences, as highlighted by this 1964 lecture and transcript.

#### A. The supratemporal heart

Contrary to what has been asserted by Danie Strauss, the 1964 lecture and discussion do not in any way relativize Dooyeweerd's distinction between the supratemporal and the temporal.<sup>8</sup> Dooyeweerd in fact affirms the importance of the idea of the supratemporal heart, the center of man's existence, in which he transcends the cosmic temporal order. He says that the idea of the supratemporal heart is essential in order to understand the central operation of God's Word in our hearts, and in order to understand Christ's incarnation. The idea of the supratemporal heart also necessary in order to understand the whole distinction between what is religiously central, and what is temporally peripheral.<sup>9</sup> But in his answer to Peter Steen, Dooyeweerd is also careful to stress that

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<sup>7</sup> Vollenhoven analyzed philosophers and theologians and classified them using what he called his "Problem-Historical Method." For an introduction to this method, see Kornelis A. Bril: *Vollenhoven's Problem-Historical Method: Introduction and Explorations* (Sioux Centre: Dordt College Press, 2005), as well as D.H.Th. Vollenhoven: *The Problem-Historical Method and the History of Philosophy*, ed. Kornelis A. Bril (Amstelveen: De Zaak Haas, 2005). Bril has several other excellent works on Vollenhoven, which have so far not been translated. I find the following to be particularly helpful: D.H.Th. Vollenhoven: *Schematische Kaarten*, ed. K.A. Bril and P.J. Boonstra, (Amstelveen: De Zaak Haas, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> See my article, "Why did Dooyeweerd want to tear out his hair?" online at [<http://www.redeemer.ca/~plant/rr/jgf-01.pdf>]. By failing to read it in its context, Danie Strauss has misinterpreted an excerpt from this 1964 discussion. What Dooyeweerd rejects is Steen's theological use of the Idea of the supratemporal heart in relation to Christ's incarnation.

<sup>9</sup> Surprisingly, Strauss has denied that Dooyeweerd ever made the distinction between a supratemporal center and a temporal periphery. See the references in my article "Dooyeweerd versus Strauss: Objections to immanence philosophy within reformational

the supratemporal heart is *man's* center. He objects to Steen's theological words relating it to Christ's incarnation. But even in his answer to Steen, Dooyeweerd emphasizes that Christ's incarnation affects both our own supratemporal center and our temporal body (1964 discussion, p. 5).

### B. Ecumenism and Theology

I was surprised to learn that the reason that Dooyeweerd did not publish Volume II of *Reformation and Scholasticism* is that he thought the book had lost its point. He had directed the book against Roman Catholicism's scholasticism. But he says in this lecture that recent developments in Roman Catholic theology had approached his own views to such an extent that there was no longer any point in publishing the book (1964 lecture, pp. 9-10). Dooyeweerd therefore makes a passionate plea for ecumenism. He expresses his view that the word 'Calvinistic' should be dropped from the Association's name. The term is an obstacle to those who are otherwise attracted to the Philosophy of the Law-Idea.

But Vollenhoven throws cold water on this idea. He says that Dooyeweerd is being really rather naïve here (he uses the word 'guileless'), and that modern Roman Catholic theology may have changed a bit, but that it is really the same old stuff. And he says that before we venture a broader ecumenism, we should first try to patch up the differences within the Reformed (*Gereformeerde*) communities (1964 discussion, pp. 22-25).<sup>10</sup>

Dooyeweerd responds to Vollenhoven. He says that Vollenhoven has not understood him. Vollenhoven has brought in theological issues here, the dissection of the 80 or 90

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thought," (2006), online at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/hermandooyeweerd/Objections.html>]. But Dooyeweerd used the distinction in the 1964 lectures, as well as elsewhere in his work.

<sup>10</sup> '*Gereformeerde*' means "Reformed", but '*Gereformeerde*' is also the name of a specific denomination that split off from the *Hervormde* Church in the Netherlands. The *Gereformeerde* Church itself then went through several splits, as Dooyeweerd mentions in the 1964 lecture. So it is unclear whether Vollenhoven wanted to first heal these later splits within the *Gereformeerde* Church, or whether he is referring to the broader Reformed community. In any event, he obviously had no interest in dialogue with Roman Catholicism.

different kinds of theology that Vollenhoven has mentioned. But Dooyeweerd says that he was not talking theology at all, but about the religious center of our being. When we do not talk in theological terms, but focus our Christian philosophy on what is central, we will then find unity with others. He gives the example of a meeting of the heart with an Arminian (Remonstrant) woman preacher following one of his lectures. They did not let theology get in the way of their mutual understanding. Dooyeweerd compares the way that they were able to understand central issues with the charismatic idea of speaking in tongues.

And this entire exchange is a most enlightening example of how much more theologically inclined Vollenhoven was than Dooyeweerd. Vollenhoven wanted to continue analyzing the various different philosophies and theologies, and labeling each position. But Dooyeweerd makes it clear that it is this very labeling that is getting in the way of real understanding. Dooyeweerd says that we can have the best confession of faith in the world, but if the Spirit of God is not within us, then any written confession of faith is worth nothing. He approves of the fact that Kuyper did not spell out the guiding principles for the Free University, but merely spoke of “*Gereformeerde* principles,” which were left undefined.

For Dooyeweerd, theology is based on philosophy, and the basis of his philosophy is the idea of supratemporal heart. We do not have to wait for a perfect theology before engaging in dialogue. Dooyeweerd intended that his transcendental critique would allow dialogue even between those who did not share the same Ground-motives. But of course, followers of Vollenhoven have not accepted the transcendental critique, either. That is not surprising, since the transcendental critique is necessarily linked to the Idea of the supratemporal heart. The supratemporal heart is the answer to the second transcendental problem, that of Totality. The three transcendental ideas correspond to eternity (God as Origin), supratemporality or created eternity, the *aevum* (Totality), and cosmic time (the problem of temporal coherence). If you give up the supratemporal heart then the transcendental critique makes no sense.

But let's come back to the issue of ecumenism. In my view, Dooyeweerd's philosophy will more easily lend itself to such broader ecumenism. In a 2005 lecture at Redeemer

University College, I suggested how Dooyeweerd's philosophy can be used in dialogue with the Orthodox Church.<sup>11</sup> And Dooyeweerd's 1964 lecture shows that his philosophy is also very suitable for dialogue with the Roman Catholic church, particularly now. For Pope Benedict shares many of the same ideas that Dooyeweerd found so surprising in *la nouvelle théologie*. But I suspect that those who follow Vollenhoven will be less interested in this kind of project, preferring to continue to analyze and to label the differences that they might have with other religious denominations. Dooyeweerd warns against this, and says in this 1964 lecture that it turns reformational philosophy into a narrow-minded [*geborneerde*] clique that is an obstacle to dialogue with others. And it is clear from a recently discovered document that Vollenhoven did not favour Eastern Orthodox views, which he regarded as too mystical. Instead he favoured the Western Augustinian tradition.<sup>12</sup>

### C. Modal Aspects

In the 1964 lecture, Dooyeweerd says that his Idea of the modal aspects has been one of the least understood of his ideas (1964 discussion, pp. 2,3, 8). In the 1964 lecture, Dooyeweerd refers to a misuse of the idea of aspects by certain people in South Africa. But the problems must go deeper than that, for it was not just South Africa that doesn't understand the aspects; he says that it is one of his least understood ideas. How can this be? This 1964 lecture was given one year before Dooyeweerd's retirement. Several books had been written about his philosophy, such as the book by Spier, describing the modal aspects.<sup>13</sup> It is widely assumed that the theory of the modal aspects has been properly understood. Dooyeweerd comments on this in the 1964 lecture:

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<sup>11</sup> On Nov. 15, 2005, I gave a lecture at Redeemer University College on the topic "Kuyper, Dooyeweerd, and the Quest for an Ecumenical Orthodoxy." See the handout for my lecture, online at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/jgfriesen/Mainheadings/Ecumenism.pdf>].

<sup>12</sup> See Propositions of D.H.Th. Vollenhoven, submitted to the Curators of the Free University, online at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/aevum/PropV.html>].

<sup>13</sup> J.M. Spier: *Een Inleiding tot de Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee*, fourth ed. (Kampen: Kok, 1950), translated as *An Introduction to Christian Philosophy* (Philadelphia, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1954).



And I found that to be particularly important with respect to the theory of the modal aspects. For again and again, I have experienced that this is one of the least understood parts of the Philosophy of the Law-Idea. This is in contrast to what is usually asserted about this philosophy. For those who have sometimes heard about this philosophy at second hand will say: “Oh yes, that is the Philosophy of the law-spheres; we know about that. But as far as I can tell, only a few people have understood what this theory [of the modal aspects] really is, and what it really means. I frequently see that it is interpreted in a way that completely contradicts the original intention. Therefore I believe that for the present we still have much to do to appropriate for ourselves what has been brought forward in this theory of the modal aspects. This can be done in a critical spirit, that is of course wonderful and I have always stimulated such discussion. But if you want to exercise criticism, you first have to know what you are being critical of. It is not sufficient that you know the name and not the nature of the beast—the nature that is covered over [*gedekt*] by the name, the nature that carries the name. Therefore, I believe that there remains much to be done here. And the same thing goes for the theory of the individuality structures (1964 discussion, pp. 2-3).

He says that people think they know. But they know the only the word ‘aspect’ and not its meaning, “the name but not the nature of the beast.”

But surely Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd agreed on the aspects? That does not seem to be the case, although they did use some of the same words, and both of them referred to a modal scale. In “Dialectic”, I have explored what some of these differences are. More than a decade after his 1964 lecture, Dooyeweerd wrote his last article “*Gegenstandsrelatie*” (1975), where he maintained that it is a “serious misunderstanding” to believe that the modal structures can be deduced from the individuality structures:

But this functioning is only possible within the individuality-structures of concrete reality, which can in no way be deduced from the modal structures of the aspects, just as the modal structures of the aspects can in no way be deduced from the individuality-structures of concrete reality. There is a serious misunderstanding concerning this cardinal point even by some adherents of the Philosophy of the Law-Idea, insofar as they are of the opinion that the modal structures can be discovered by an ever-continuing abstraction from the concrete experience of reality (p. 90)

But hasn’t this “serious misunderstanding” now become the commonplace way of viewing the aspects? In his 1974 Interview with Magnus Verbrugge, Dooyeweerd says that the aspects are often referred to as “modes of being.” But he rejects that view,

saying that he reserves the term ‘Being’ for God.<sup>14</sup> For Dooyeweerd, aspects are both modes of our consciousness and modes in which individuality structures function. And there is an identity of those two modes, which is why the theoretical *Gegenstand*-relation, the entering into the temporal functions of our own body, can work. It is God’s law that gives the identity. I have dealt with these matters in greater detail in my article “Imagination, Image of God and Wisdom of God: Theosophical themes in Dooyeweerd’s philosophy.”<sup>15</sup>

Unlike Vollenhoven, Dooyeweerd also distinguishes between the modal aspects and the functions of individuality structures and events *in* those aspects. In the 1964 lecture, he again says that the failure to appreciate that distinction is one reason that some people have misunderstood and rejected the historical modality (1964 discussion, pp. 3-4). Dooyeweerd also gives some very helpful clarifications regarding his view of how sociology relates to the theory of the modal aspects (1964 discussion, pp. 8-13).

#### D. Individuality Structures

Vollenhoven and many reformational philosophers following him, such as Van Riessen, did not accept Dooyeweerd’s idea of individuality structures. One of the criticisms leveled against Dooyeweerd was that this theory reduced individual reality to law.<sup>16</sup> In the 1964 lecture, Dooyeweerd says that this is a mistake, since he has always emphasized that reality has both a law-side and a subject-side, and that corresponding to the central law-Idea there is also a central subject-Idea (Discussion, p. 14). Unlike Vollenhoven, Dooyeweerd does not view the modal aspects as universals that require a particular.

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<sup>14</sup> Interview between Magnus Verbrugge and Dooyeweerd, Sept. 23, 1974. A tape of the interview is in the Dooyeweerd Archives. It has not been transcribed.

<sup>15</sup> J. Glenn Friesen: “Imagination, Image of God and Wisdom of God: Theosophical themes in Dooyeweerd’s philosophy,” (2006) [‘Imagination’], online at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/hermandooyeweerd/Imagination.html>]

<sup>16</sup> See Kent Zigterman: “Dooyeweerd’s Theory of Individuality Structure as an Alternative to a Substance Position, Especially that of Aristotle,” (Master of Philosophy Thesis, Institute for Christian Studies, 1977). Zigterman argues that Dooyeweerd reduces things to structure. Lambert Zuidervaart follows Zigterman in that view, in his article “Fantastic Things: Critical Notes Toward a Social Ontology of the Arts,” 60 *Philosophia Reformata*, (1995), 37-54.

Objectivity is not the same as universally valid law-conformity (*NC II*, 370). This misunderstanding of law (and modal aspects) as universals is something that Dooyeweerd says causes him to regret having used the term ‘Philosophy of the Law-Idea.’ Dooyeweerd says that, as in the case of the modal aspects, there is much work to be done for reformational philosophers to understand individuality structures:

It is not sufficient that you know the name and not the nature of the beast—the nature that is covered over [*gedekt*] by the name, the nature that carries the name. Therefore, I believe that there remains much to be done here. And the same thing goes for the theory of the individuality structures (1964 discussion, p. 3)<sup>17</sup>

### E. Center and Periphery

The very title of the 1964 lecture concerns center and periphery. And it is clear that Dooyeweerd regards this in terms of a religious, supratemporal center and a temporal periphery that is the *expression* from out of that center. The religious center is our supratemporal heart, our time-transcending selfhood. Dooyeweerd says that that idea is required in order to understand the central religious working of God’s Word upon our heart, and also to understand Christ’s incarnation within time.

Dooyeweerd also uses center and periphery in relation to different philosophies. He was asked, “Can one develop different directions in Philosophy of the Law-Idea from out of the same center [*kern*]?” (1964 discussion, p. 1). His answer is that it is not very likely:

For what we have seen up to now is that whenever differing directions developed, this was most closely connected to the fact that these people only accepted the Philosophy of the Law-idea up to a certain point.

He then refers to Stoker’s philosophy as an example. Stoker has a different view of the religious center. Therefore, he cannot be regarded as an adherent of the Philosophy of the Law-Idea. Stoker disagreed on the nature of man’s central heart; he continued to hold to a dualistic anthropology. Dooyeweerd says that philosophers like Stoker who have a

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<sup>17</sup> I have tried to set out my own understanding of what Dooyeweerd means by individuality structures in my article “Individuality Structures and Enkapsis: Individuation from Totality in Dooyeweerd and German Idealism,” (2005) [‘Enkapsis’], online at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/hermandooyeweerd/Enkapsis.html>]. In that article, I also explore the historical sources that Dooyeweerd used for these ideas.

different view of this center cannot be regarded as adherents of his philosophy. “It is undoubtedly a different direction, and one that does not come from out of the same center” (1964 discussion, pp. 1-2).

Dooyeweerd expands on this later in the discussion. He says that if philosophers remain faithful to the core, then we will not find the antinomies that we find in philosophies coming from out of a different Ground-motive:

I have also sometimes expressed what *cannot* be expected if we remain faithful to the core of the Philosophy of the Law-Idea—that we would then see here the same kind of phenomenon that we see in scholasticism and also in humanistic thought—the divergence of currents that stand opposed to each other in a polar way. For example, in humanistic thought, you have “materialistic” standing opposed to “idealistic.” I have tried to show that such polar opposites come out of the polarity, the dualism in the Ground-motive from which [these philosophies] proceed. But since it comes out of the Biblical Ground-motive, and since the Biblical Ground-motive does not know of such a polarity, a Christian philosophy that remains true to the Biblical motive, the Biblical Ground-motive, will also not end up in schools of thought [*richtingen*] that stand over against each other in a polar way. But there various nuances may appear (1964 discussion, p. 4).

Verburg maintains that Vollenhoven believed that these comments were directed at him (Verburg, 381). In the 1964 Discussion, Vollenhoven says that it was “perhaps by coincidence” that Dooyeweerd referred to Stoker. What does Vollenhoven mean? I think that it shows Vollenhoven’s sensitivity to the issue; he feels that Dooyeweerd could have referred in this context to Vollenhoven’s own philosophy. Does Vollenhoven’s philosophy come from out of the same center? For Vollenhoven also disagrees with Dooyeweerd on the question of the supratemporal selfhood. It is for that reason that Vollenhoven sets out his differences with Dooyeweerd, even though Dooyeweerd had not specifically named Vollenhoven in his lecture. But Vollenhoven says that Dooyeweerd should distinguish between central and peripheral only when talking about the difference between religion and philosophy. Within philosophy, Vollenhoven says that differences should be regarded merely as cardinal points and secondary points. Vollenhoven reframes what Dooyeweerd said about Stoker:

Then, perhaps by coincidence there was the example given of Prof. Stoker, and then Prof. Dooyeweerd has said, “It is therefore very clear that these

are not matters of secondary importance.” I agree with him (1964 discussion, p. 22).

But that was not what Dooyeweerd said. Dooyeweerd did not use the word ‘secondary.’ He said, Stoker’s philosophy was “not a difference in the periphery [*omtrek*] but it is in fact a difference in the core [*kern*].” He maintained the distinction between centrally religious and temporally peripheral.

But Vollenhoven wants his own differences with Dooyeweerd to be regarded as nuances, matters of secondary importance. He does not want Dooyeweerd’s criticism of Stoker to apply to him. After all, Vollenhoven was a Professor of philosophy at the Free University. There was something at stake here for him if Dooyeweerd was in fact criticizing his views, too. So Vollenhoven emphasizes that he and Dooyeweerd differed in certain philosophical ideas, or nuances, but that they agreed on the place of religion in philosophy. After summing up his differences with Dooyeweerd, Vollenhoven says,

But as for the place of religion in philosophy, we are in precise agreement and therefore these other questions are of a different nature. And they must remain sharply distinguished (Discussion, p. 25).

But do Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven agree regarding the place of religion in philosophy? For Dooyeweerd, the religious dimension or level of our experience is the level of the supratemporal.<sup>18</sup> As I have shown in “Dialectic,” Vollenhoven rejects that idea. He also rejects the idea that temporal reality refers beyond itself to the supratemporal and to the eternal.<sup>19</sup> And Vollenhoven rejects the idea of a supratemporal regeneration of the heart; he criticizes both Dooyeweerd and Kuyper for that idea.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See my discussion of ‘levels’ in my online Glossary, at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/jgfriesen/Definitions/Levels.html>].

<sup>19</sup> This referring beyond itself is what Dooyeweerd means when he says that temporal reality exists only as “meaning.”

<sup>20</sup> See Vollenhoven’s *Divergentierapport* 116, and his *Isagoogè* par. 123, note 2, as referred to in my “Dialectic” 40. Stellingwerff even regards certain ideas of Kuyper here to be Gnostic. See Johan Stellingwerff: *Geschiedenis van de Reformatorische Wijsbegeerte*, (Stichting voor Reformatorische Wijsbegeerte, 2006), 64, 65, 90. Yet these are the very passages from Kuyper that Dooyeweerd praises! I do not believe that these ideas are Gnostic, but a similar opinion seems to have been behind Vollenhoven’s rejection of these ideas.

Moreover, Vollenhoven does not speak of religious Ground-motives, since they also relate to the supratemporal heart. For Dooyeweerd, these Ground-motives operate out of our supratemporal heart, and they provide a driving force that we then express in our temporal lives. And as I set out in “Dialectic,” Vollenhoven also rejects the idea of God’s Word working in an immediate way on our supratemporal heart, or any idea of immediate religious experience. Is this really the same idea of religion? In the 1964 lecture, Dooyeweerd expressly affirms the central operation of God’s Word on our supratemporal heart.

After Vollenhoven’s comments in 1964, Dooyeweerd makes some further remarks. He says that he cannot let the matter rest there, or there would be serious misunderstandings. He does not say that he agrees with Vollenhoven. He says, “I will not discuss everything that Prof. Vollenhoven has brought forward, for we don’t have time for that” (1964 discussion, p. 26). Dooyeweerd restricts himself to the issue of ecumenism, and to the way that God is already working in the invisible church. From other writings, it is clear that for Dooyeweerd, this invisible church is also supratemporal.<sup>21</sup> So Dooyeweerd does not address the issue of whether or not Vollenhoven’s philosophical disagreements are merely nuances. But as we shall see, the issue did not go away.

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<sup>21</sup> See for example:

In Christ, the root of the reborn creation, the transcendent fullness of individuality has been saved. The ‘*corpus Christianum*’ in its radical religious sense is not a colourless conceptual abstraction without any individuality. Rather it is, according to the striking metaphor used by St. Paul, a religious organism in which the individuality of its members is ultimately revealed in all its fullness and splendour. Individuality, in other words, is rooted in the religious centre of our temporal world: all temporal individuality can only be an expression of the fullness of individuality inherent in this centre. However obfuscated by sin, it springs from the religious root (NC II, 418).

### III. Religious dialectic in reformational thought

#### A. Synthesis and religious dialectic within reformational philosophy

In the 1964 lecture, Dooyeweerd says that there will be no genuine antinomies in reformational philosophy “if we remain faithful to the core of the Philosophy of the Law-Idea.” It is that word ‘if’ that is so interesting. If reformational philosophy holds to the central ideas, then it will not result in the kinds of antinomies that we see in other religious Ground-motives. There will not be a religious dialectic.

But what happens when reformational philosophy abandons the center? What happens when it rejects the idea of the supratemporal heart? Will reformational philosophy itself then become involved in such religious antinomies? That is what Dooyeweerd says happened in reformational philosophy. Let’s look at these later developments in more detail.

After the important public airing of their differences in 1964, Vollenhoven continued to emphasize his disagreements with Dooyeweerd. Take a look at his 1968 lectures, with an eye to this issue.<sup>22</sup> And Vollenhoven was not the only critic of Dooyeweerd’s ideas within the reformational camp.

But Dooyeweerd did not accept these attempts to reform his philosophy. In his last article “*Gegenstandsrelatie*” (1975), he says that had listened to criticisms of Stoker, Conradie, Brümmer—these are all names that he also mentions in his 1964 lecture. In his last article, he also names other critics. Dooyeweerd says,

I did not want to involve myself prematurely in this discussion, since it was still continuing in its movement, and I wanted to see whether it might perhaps open up fruitful new points of view (“*Gegenstandsrelatie*,” p. 83).

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<sup>22</sup> D.H.Th. Vollenhoven: “De Problemen van de tijd in onze kring”, (1968), in A. Tol and K.A. Bril: *Vollenhoven als Wijsgeer* (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 1992), 199-211 [‘*Kring*’]. Online at [<http://www.aspecten.org/vollenhoven/68b.htm>]. See my translation: [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/hermandooyeweerd/Tijd.html>].

What caused Dooyeweerd to finally speak out was the publication of Danie Strauss's thesis *Begrip en Idee*.<sup>23</sup> Dooyeweerd says that this thesis represented the provisional conclusion [*afronding*] of the criticism against him. Dooyeweerd says that in Strauss's philosophy, there are genuine insoluble antinomies. There is a logicism that threatens the irreducibility of the other modal aspects ("*Gegenstandsrelatie*," 100). The antinomy is that, although Strauss wants to maintain such irreducibility, his logicism does not permit him to do so. And Dooyeweerd says that Strauss's epistemology does not differ from modern epistemology:

Strauss has evidently not seen that it is just this identification of the epistemological *Gegenstand*-relation with the subject-object relation in human knowledge that belongs to the most current presuppositions in modern epistemology, which as we have earlier seen, have darkened their insight into the correct relation of the so-called naïve or pre-theoretical to the theoretical, scientific attitude of thought and experience ("*Gegenstandsrelatie*," 97).

Dooyeweerd's last article, directed at Strauss, is therefore a very sharp critique. And Dooyeweerd emphasizes the continued importance of our transcending time—"that human existence, although it is enclosed by cosmic time in its modal aspects and individuality structures, nevertheless transcends this time in its religious center" (pp. 83-84). He says that not even the irreducibility of the modal aspects can be understood apart from the idea of their root-unity in the religious center of human existence. (p. 100). But Strauss denies that our selfhood transcends time. For him, the selfhood is merely pre-modal or supramodal. In Dooyeweerd's terminology, Strauss's philosophy must therefore be immanence philosophy, a philosophy that is merely in the periphery, but that differs radically in its center. Using the terms of the 1964 lecture, we can say that Strauss's philosophy, like Stoker's, does not come out of the same religious center. It works with a different Ground-motive. It denies the selfhood, seeing it only in terms of supra-modality but not supratemporality. For although the supratemporal is also supramodal, the term 'supramodal' could mean merely a pre-functional selfhood, an idea that Dooyeweerd

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<sup>23</sup> D.F.M. Strauss, *Begrip en Idee* (Assen, 1973). Strauss's doctoral supervisor was Hendrik van Riessen, who had himself done his own doctoral dissertation under Vollenhoven.



specifically rejects. And it is clear that Strauss uses ‘supramodal’ in a way that is not supratemporal.<sup>24</sup>

Now the question arises to what extent Dooyeweerd’s criticisms of Strauss also apply to Vollenhoven’s philosophy itself. Strauss was a student of Van Riessen, who was in turn a student of Vollenhoven. I believe that the same ideas that Dooyeweerd objected to so strongly in Strauss are also found in Vollenhoven. But there are also interesting personal factors to be borne in mind. Vollenhoven’s wife was Dooyeweerd’s sister. This family connection made it a rather delicate matter for Dooyeweerd to speak out against Vollenhoven. Furthermore, both men had gone through the investigation by the theologians at the Free University. Although their philosophies differed, they stood together in their opposition to scholasticism, and against the attacks of the theologians who wanted to maintain a scholastic anthropology.<sup>25</sup> But when Dooyeweerd saw how reformational philosophy was working his ideas out along the lines of Vollenhoven’s philosophy, he felt he had to speak out, although he directed his critique towards the ideas of Vollenhoven as they had been elaborated in Strauss’s thesis.

### B. A choice is required

In “Dialectic,” I said that reformational philosophers are required to make a choice. We can choose to follow Dooyeweerd or Vollenhoven, but not both. Or we can strike out in a new direction.

Some people will find it hard to accept that we now confront such a fork in a road. Within six months of the publication of my article “Dialectic,” and my November, 2005 lecture at Redeemer University College (Ancaster, Ontario), a mini-conference was

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<sup>24</sup> In an email on Thinknet dated April 3, 2003, Strauss said that Dooyeweerd “...(unfortunately) equated supra-modal with supra-temporal.” Although Strauss says that man has “an eternal destination,” he does not accept the present supratemporality of the heart. See the discussion in my article “Dooyeweerd versus Strauss: Objections to immanence philosophy within reformational thought,” online at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/hermandooyeweerd/Objections.html>].

<sup>25</sup> See “Responses to Curators,” online at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/hermandooyeweerd/Curators.html>].

convened at Redeemer. The conference was entitled “Dooyeweerd or Vollenhoven: Does it make a difference?” I did not attend, but I sent a note regarding the importance of Dooyeweerd’s idea of the supratemporal heart. My note was distributed to those who attended the mini-conference. Three of the people who gave presentations at the conference have since placed written articles online. You can find these comments in “The Reading Room,” an online site maintained by Theo Plantinga.<sup>26</sup>

I have already discussed Strauss’s article in connection with his misinterpretation of Dooyeweerd’s response to Peter Steen in the 1964 discussion. Dooyeweerd maintained the importance of the Idea of the supratemporal heart. Strauss is also wrong when he says that Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven shared the idea of a pre-functional heart. Dooyeweerd specifically rejects that idea (*NC I*, 31, fn1 and *NC III*, 783-84). In his Redeemer presentation, Strauss does not refer to my article “Dialectic,” or to my citations of the acknowledged differences between Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven. He does make some suggestions of his own as to how he believes reformational philosophy should develop, but these ideas, however interesting, must be distinguished from Dooyeweerd’s own philosophy. For example, Strauss’s idea of concept-transcending knowledge is different from Dooyeweerd’s transcendental Ideas. Dooyeweerd speaks about this in the 1964 lecture. He distinguishes his meaning of boundary concept [*grensbegrip*] from that of Kant, and he observes:

But when it concerns things that transcend time, well then man cannot form any adequate concepts, and then in fact he forms boundary concepts [*grensbegrippen*]. He continues to use concepts, but they are allegorical concepts, which cling to the analogical structure (Discussion, p. 7)

What Dooyeweerd says here is very different from Strauss’s proposal of “concept-transcending knowledge,” which is related to things and events in their *individuality* (Strauss, 12). For Dooyeweerd, our Ideas are *grensbegrippen*, and they concern things

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<sup>26</sup> Theo Plantinga, “The Reading Room,” online at [<http://www.redeemer.on.ca/~tplant/rr/index.html>]. See:

--Danie Strauss: “Appropriating the legacy of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven” [‘Strauss’]

--Jim Olthuis: “Spiritual Convergence, Philosophical Differences: Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd”

--Lambert Zuidervaart: “Reformational Philosophy after Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven”

that transcend time, the eternal, invisible things of which we nevertheless have knowledge. Ideas are central (i.e. supratemporal) and concepts are peripheral.<sup>27</sup> Ideas seek the supratemporal fullness of meaning; concepts are temporal. For Dooyeweerd, our Ideas can transcend temporal theoretical knowledge, and refer to transcendent things, only because of our supratemporal selfhood, which itself transcends time.<sup>28</sup>

I was very interested to read what Jim Olthuis said about Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven. Olthuis has supported my research into Dooyeweerd, encouraging me to publish my first article “The Mystical Dooyeweerd,”<sup>29</sup> even though my findings clashed with his own

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<sup>27</sup> See also Dooyeweerd’s *Encyclopedia of the Science of Law* (1946), translation online at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/hermandooyeweerd/Encyclopedia.html>], where he relates Ideas to what is central and supratemporal:

When we have found the correct method, and when we have we have established the central concept of law that determines all concrete concepts of law, and which imprints on them their unique juridical character, then we have established the middle point of the circle, and we can thereafter cover the distance to the periphery, to the circumference (p. 6)

The law-Idea seeks the fullness of meaning of the law above the temporal diversity of the law-spheres. [...] The *legal concept* is dependent on the *law-Idea*, just as surely as the temporal meaning-sides of reality do not exist “*an sich*” [in themselves], but exist only as temporal refractions of meaning of the supratemporal fullness of meaning in the religious root of the human race (p. 13)

<sup>28</sup> In the *Encyclopedia of Legal Science* (1946), Dooyeweerd says that the Idea of Law is central, and, like all Ideas, can only be understood in relation to our central selfhood, which transcends time. The peripheral concepts are temporal, and practical, but they can only be understood from out of the central Idea. The synthesis of meaning achieved in the Gegenstand-relation occurs when our supratemporal selfhood enters into its temporal meaning functions:

The meaning synthesis of scientific thought is first made possible when our self-consciousness, which as our selfhood is elevated above time, enters into its temporal meaning functions. This supratemporal selfhood of our human existence is the religious root of our personality, which in its individuality participates in the religious root of the human race (p. 12).

<sup>29</sup> J. Glenn Friesen: “The Mystical Dooyeweerd: The relation of his thought to Franz von Baader,” *Ars Disputandi* 3 (2003) [<http://www.arsdisputandi.org/publish/articles/000088/index.html>] [‘Mystical Dooyeweerd’].

views. So for me, Olthuis is in many ways a model of the way that dialogue can continue to be carried on across different traditions. Olthuis rejects Dooyeweerd's idea of the supratemporal heart, and I therefore supposed that he was more in line with Vollenhoven's ideas. But in his Redeemer presentation, Olthuis says that he finds Vollenhoven to be "boring." I am also intrigued by how Olthuis contrasts Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven by comparing them to Plato and Aristotle respectively. I find it important that Olthuis expresses appreciation for the idea of panentheism (not to be equated with pantheism). Panentheism is an idea that I find in Dooyeweerd. But Vollenhoven misunderstands the idea as dualistic. I would have liked to see a more precise articulation of Olthuis's own standpoint in relation to these differences between Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven.

Lambert Zuidervaart has distinguished his own views from those of Dooyeweerd. He rejects Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique, and finds contradictions and circularities in Dooyeweerd.<sup>30</sup> I admire Zuidervaart's honesty here, although I believe that he might have come to different conclusions had he not interpreted Dooyeweerd through Vollenhoven's ideas. To give just one example, he might have come to different conclusions regarding Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique if he had discussed it in terms of the supratemporal selfhood, and the movement from supratemporal center to temporal periphery. Dooyeweerd makes it clear that is only because of our supratemporal selfhood that we can form Ideas of that which exceeds theoretical thought. I was therefore disappointed that Zuidervaart did not really explore these differences.

Zuidervaart says that we must neither follow nor reject, but that we must "critically retrieve" parts of both philosophers. But this solution avoids asking the tough questions. For how can we critically retrieve ideas from two philosophers who contradict each

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<sup>30</sup> See Lambert Zuidervaart: "The Great Turning Point: Religion and Rationality in Dooyeweerd's Transcendental Critique," *Faith and Philosophy* (January, 2004). Zuidervaart speaks of "circularity" and "logical slippage" in Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique, and that it seems

...self-referentially incoherent. That is to say, his critique does precisely what it declares impossible: it provides a theoretical account of that which surpasses the limits of theoretical thought.

other? It is not sufficient to say that we only need to look for the areas where they agree. For the whole point of this discussion is that Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven disagree on the key ideas! Furthermore, Dooyeweerd's philosophy must be viewed as a whole; his ideas just cannot be understood in isolation from the central Idea of the supratemporal heart.

More importantly, what is the philosophic basis for such critical retrieval? How is critique possible at all? What are its basic presuppositions? This is really what Dooyeweerd is asking when he investigates the ontical foundations of theoretical thought.<sup>31</sup> Dooyeweerd says that a true foundation for theoretical thought depends on the existence of our supratemporal selfhood. So what is the philosophical anthropology that is presupposed in Zuidervaart's proposal of critical retrieval? Does it acknowledge the idea of the supratemporal heart? I don't think so. On the contrary, it seems to be associated with a temporalizing of our experience, and a temporalizing of all philosophical anthropology. And does not the emphasis on 'critical' betray that same autonomy of thought that Dooyeweerd opposed? The term 'critical retrieval' is often associated with the ideas of Paul Ricoeur. But Ricoeur's idea presupposes that we first go through the process of a hermeneutics of suspicion before we get to this stage of critical retrieval. That idea cannot be squared with Dooyeweerd's views of the transcendental critique.

Zuidervaart says that we must neither follow nor reject, and that we must also not strike out in a new direction, for then we would no longer be reformational. But it seems to me that his advocacy of "critical retrieval" is itself based on a new direction that undercuts reformational philosophy, or at least Dooyeweerd's philosophy. Dooyeweerd himself says that many of his ideas can be developed further, but that the central ideas must be

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<sup>31</sup> These ontical foundations are not themselves theoretical presuppositions, but the foundation for any theory whatsoever. We form theoretical Ideas of these foundations, but the Ideas are not the foundations themselves. The Ideas only point to those ontical foundations.

accepted or else the development is no longer within the same tradition.<sup>32</sup> It is not that Dooyeweerd's philosophy is beyond criticism. But surely Dooyeweerd is the most knowledgeable about which ideas are central to his own philosophy. And he stated that his philosophy must be interpreted as a whole, and in particular, in reference to the Idea of the supratemporal selfhood. But the idea of "critical retrieval" seems to be serving as a way to avoid grappling with the meaning of Dooyeweerd's philosophy as a whole.

Perhaps Zuidervaart's solution can fit better with Vollenhoven's philosophy, where philosophical differences are regarded as mere 'nuances.' But even there, if reformational philosophy wants to follow Vollenhoven and not Dooyeweerd, doesn't it have the duty to spell out the philosophical bases and presuppositions of its philosophy, and the basis upon which it can decide to critically retrieve the philosophers of the past?

The very idea of eclectically choosing only bits of Dooyeweerd's philosophy is troubling. It runs counter to what Dooyeweerd himself says about the ideas that are fundamental to his philosophy—ideas like cosmic time and the supratemporal heart. Dooyeweerd says that his philosophical anthropology is the basic idea in his philosophy, its beginning and its end point.<sup>33</sup> In his 1964 lecture, Dooyeweerd indicates that he wanted to continue with the third volume of his *Reformation and Scholasticism*. That volume was to be devoted to philosophical anthropology. It has never been published, but the draft of this second volume was exhaustively analyzed in W.J. Ouweneel's doctoral thesis.<sup>34</sup> A part of Ouweneel's thesis was summarized in an article in *Philosophia Reformata*. Ouweneel correctly emphasizes the key nature of this idea of the supratemporal heart for Dooyeweerd:

From around 1930 onward, this view of the Supratemporality of the heart or the religious root-unity of the cosmos becomes the essential,

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<sup>32</sup> The Institute for Christian Studies, where Zuidervaart teaches, used to describe itself as continuing in the reformational tradition begun by Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven. I note with regret that such a statement no longer appears on its website.

<sup>33</sup> See *NC III*, 783-84.

<sup>34</sup> W.J. Ouweneel: *De Leer van de mens* (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 1986). Ouweneel's own summary of this work is available in English, online at [<http://www.reddmer.ca/~tplant/cp/SA-MO-HTML>].

unchangeable, and indissoluble cornerstone of his thought. The pivotal place of this view in Dooyeweerd's thought must be emphasised over against all those who have expressed objections to this view. They suppose that it is possible to drop this idea but to maintain the "rest" of Dooyeweerd's philosophy. They fail to see that the very core of his thought—the metaphor of the prism with its law of refraction, the law of concentration, the idea of the unity, fullness and totality of the religious root, the theory of time, the transcendental critique of thought—as well as the whole theory of the modalities, according to which the modalities are seen as "temporal aspects," stand or fall with the idea of the supratemporality of the heart.<sup>35</sup>

Dooyeweerd's philosophy must be read as a whole. Zuidervaat's attempted solution of a critical retrieval of only parts of the philosophy cannot work. For as Dooyeweerd himself says in the 1964 lecture, problems arise when people accept the philosophy "only up to a certain point" (1964 discussion, p. 1).

### III. Conclusion and Continued Dialogue

Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven disagreed on almost every key issue. These differences need to be taken seriously. They are not just matters of nuance, but concern central ideas. At their heart (quite literally) is a disagreement regarding philosophical anthropology. As W.J. Ouweneel has said, without this idea of the supratemporal heart, no other part of Dooyeweerd's philosophy can be understood.<sup>36</sup>

I know that this article will raise many questions. So let me conclude with a dialogue in which I respond to some of the questions that I anticipate:

**Question:** So, Glenn, you really think that current reformational philosophy is synthesis philosophy, and that it is therefore embroiled in a religious dialectic?

**Glenn:** Yes, that's what I think, but what's more important is that that is what Dooyeweerd himself concluded. Dooyeweerd's last article (1975) continues what he said in 1964 about what happens when philosophies no longer arise from out of the true religious center. And that last article also carries forward what Dooyeweerd says about

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<sup>35</sup> W. J. Ouweneel: "Supratemporality in the Transcendental Anthropology of Dooyeweerd," *Philosophia Reformata* 58 (1993) 210-220, at 213.

<sup>36</sup> See citation in my article "Why did Dooyeweerd want to pull out his hair?"

the theories of the modal aspects and of individuality structures not being understood. They cannot be understood apart from the Idea of the supratemporal heart and transcendent religious root.

**Question:** But he wrote the 1975 article against Danie Strauss, and you are suggesting that his criticisms also apply to Vollenhoven?

**Glenn:** It's true that Dooyeweerd does not specifically make these statements against Vollenhoven. Vollenhoven was his brother-in-law, and maybe Dooyeweerd found it difficult to do that. But many of these same disagreements are evident in the 1964 lecture and discussion. And Vollenhoven later continued to differentiate his ideas from Dooyeweerd. So if there is a way that you can distinguish Vollenhoven from both Strauss and Dooyeweerd, I would like to see it. But Strauss was a student of Van Riessen, who was a student of Vollenhoven, and in these earlier philosophers I see many of the same ideas that Dooyeweerd objected to in Strauss in these earlier philosophers. The idea of aspects as properties of things, the idea of theoretical abstraction as being an abstraction of those properties from things, the denial of the *Gegenstand*-relation, the blurring of naïve and theoretical experience, and most importantly, the rejection of the supratemporal heart. Without that idea, none of Dooyeweerd's philosophy can be understood. As for Van Riessen, I think the comment is correct that he spoke with "the voice of Dooyeweerd, but the spirit of Vollenhoven."<sup>37</sup>

**Question:** What about other reformational philosophers like Roy Clouser?

**Glenn:** I don't think we can take the time here to go through each reformational philosopher individually. For that, I suggest that you look at Johan Stellingwerff's recent history of the reformational movement.<sup>38</sup> Better yet, look at Theo Plantinga's "History of

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<sup>37</sup> A comment of J. Klapwijk, a colleague of Van Riessen, as reported by Johan Stellingwerff: *Geschiedenis van de Reformatorische Wijsbegeerte*, (Stichting voor Reformatorische Wijsbegeerte, 2006), 137 ['Stellingwerff'].

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* One of the problems with Stellingwerff's history is that, although he refers to disagreements between Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven, he consciously tones down those same disagreements in his book on the history of reformational philosophy by trying to "harmonize" the two philosophers. It is questionable whether that is a valid approach to a *history* of reformational philosophy. In attempting this synthesis, Stellingwerff



the Reformational Movement.”<sup>39</sup> But let me say something about Clouser. It seems to me that Clouser, unlike Strauss, does recognize the heart’s supratemporality in a way that really transcends time.<sup>40</sup> But it seems to me that he has not understood the implications of the idea of the supratemporal heart for the rest of his philosophy. Clouser has acknowledged his affinity to Strauss’s views in epistemology—the same views that Dooyeweerd criticized so sharply.<sup>41</sup> And Clouser says he has “downplayed” the significance of the supratemporal heart.<sup>42</sup> We can understand some of the origins of Clouser’s philosophy, and the problems that this has caused for him, by examining his

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consistently attempts to resolve the differences by taking Vollenhoven’s point of view. See my review of this book in *Philosophia Reformata* (2006) (forthcoming).

<sup>39</sup> Theo Plantinga: “History of the Reformational Movement,” online at [<http://www.redeemer.ca/~tplant/m/REFTOC.HTM>].

<sup>40</sup> See email from Clouser to Bill Gordon, July 22, 2005, online at [<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TrinitarianReformati/message/209>]. I have problems with Clouser’s formulation, in that he sees the heart as partly in and partly out of time, whereas for Dooyeweerd, the heart is totally supratemporal. It is man who exists both supratemporally (in his heart) and in cosmic time (in the body or mantle of functions). And Clouser’s use of the term ‘supranomic’ is confusing. The heart is subjected to the central law, so it is never above God’s law, but only above the temporally refracted law. Clouser gives a stronger appreciation for Dooyeweerd’s idea of the supratemporal heart, at least for the afterlife, in his review of John W. Cooper’s very interesting book, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989). [[www.freewebs.com/royclouser/ClouserReviewofCooperWTJ53.pdf](http://www.freewebs.com/royclouser/ClouserReviewofCooperWTJ53.pdf)].

<sup>41</sup> See “Clouser on Dooyeweerd’s Transcendental Critique,” online at [<http://www.dooy.salford.ac.uk/ctc.html>]. Clouser says he has made “just one change” in Dooyeweerd by rejecting the *Gegenstand*-relation. But that was of course the change that Strauss made, and which Dooyeweerd reacts so strongly against in his last article “*Gegenstandsrelatie*” (1975). This is not one change, as Clouser suggests, but is an idea that prevents the understanding of other key ideas in Dooyeweerd’s philosophy.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* In *The Myth of Religious Neutrality* (Notre Dame, 1991) Clouser does downplay the supratemporal heart. He cites Dooyeweerd’s view that the ego “central” (p. 163), but he uses Vollenhoven’s terminology in referring to the heart as ‘prefunctional’ (314, fn8). This is an idea that Dooyeweerd rejects at NC I, 31 fn1. In *Myth*, Clouser continues to speak of aspects as properties, he modifies Dooyeweerd’s subject-object relation to refer to active and passive properties (214), he continues to view theory as abstraction, and he blurs the distinction between pre-theoretical and theoretical experience by speaking of degrees or intensity of abstraction (53-54). These are all ideas that Dooyeweerd rejected.

correspondence with Dooyeweerd at the time that Clouser was working on his doctoral thesis on Dooyeweerd at the University of Pennsylvania. Whatever Clouser may have understood in his discussions with Dooyeweerd, the correspondence shows that they had significant disagreements.

**Question:** Can you describe some of these disagreements?

**Glenn:** Sure, as long as you realize that this is not intended as a personal criticism of Clouser, but as an attempt to understand how his views could differ so much from Dooyeweerd's. In an early letter to Dooyeweerd, Clouser asks how Aristotle's argument for the idea of substance—that a thing being more than the sum of its parts—is different from saying that “the unity of the aspects of a thing cannot be any of the aspects.”<sup>43</sup> Clouser does not seem to appreciate how radically different Dooyeweerd's idea of individuality structures is from the idea of substance. He says that Dooyeweerd's argument seems “exactly parallel with Aristotle's argument” except that Dooyeweerd attributes a divine Origin to things. And Clouser continued with this (Aristotelian?) view that aspects are “of things”—that the aspects are properties that we logically abstract from things. These ideas caused a lot of problems for Clouser.<sup>44</sup> Dooyeweerd never agreed

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<sup>43</sup> Letter from Clouser to Dooyeweerd dated March 4, 1968 (in Dooyeweerd Archives). Clouser refers to Book VII, chap. 17 of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Clouser asks,

Doesn't it parallel the line of argument of the New Critique in which things and events may be explained from the standpoint of many aspects by the special sciences but the things are more than the sum of their aspects?

<sup>44</sup> Clouser met with Dooyeweerd for many weeks. Yet a month before his thesis defence, Clouser was still not sure of many points, and it was his views of theory as abstraction and of aspects as properties that were causing the problem. His thesis supervisor did not agree with describing theory in terms of abstraction, and said that this was just the old realist position. Clouser wrote Dooyeweerd on April 26, 1972:

Isn't it your point that the immediate data of pretheoretical thought are analyzed in the theoretical attitude whether or not we suppose that what we are analyzing are properties in the old sense or resemblances and kinds of resemblances (aspects)? I'm not sure about this point.

Clouser asked Dooyeweerd how he could be sure about the list of aspects, and said that maybe Dooyeweerd was suggesting there are “some aspectual distinctions” or at least two, “the logical and the non-logical.” He asked Dooyeweerd, “wouldn't it be better for

that aspects are properties of things. Rather, Dooyeweerd said that aspects are modes of experience.<sup>45</sup> Dooyeweerd confirmed this a few years later in his last article “*Gegenstandsrelatie*.” Although the article was directed against Strauss, Dooyeweerd says that the idea of abstracting aspects from things is a “serious misunderstanding” among some reformational philosophers. And Dooyeweerd emphasizes again that the modal aspects cannot be understood apart from our transcendent selfhood. So Dooyeweerd certainly did not downplay the supratemporal selfhood. It is essential for understanding his view of theory. I think that Clouser’s difficulties in defending the irreducibility of the modal aspects demonstrates some of the problems resulting from his view of theory, a view that he shares with Strauss. As Dooyeweerd said, a genuine antinomy arises between the logicism of Strauss’s view of theory, and the belief in irreducible modal aspects.

**Question:** But how can you be so dogmatic? How can you say that these are incorrect ways of interpreting Dooyeweerd?

**Glenn:** It’s Dooyeweerd himself who says these things (Don’t blame the messenger bringing the news!). It would be different if Dooyeweerd had not himself addressed these issues. But he did, and I am trying to understand what Dooyeweerd has said. And Dooyeweerd is clear that the ideas of cosmic time and of the supratemporal heart are crucial to his philosophy. He is clear that aspects cannot be discovered by abstraction

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me to say just this than to undertake to defend a particular list of aspects even I see that list as the correct one?”

<sup>45</sup> In a letter to Dooyeweerd dated June 21, 1972 (after his thesis defence), Clouser says that he is still having difficulty answering why Dooyeweerd’s list of aspects is correct, although he finds that list “very appealing.” His letter goes on to show that he is still having difficulties understanding the very idea of modes, since Dooyeweerd clearly does not agree that they are properties:

If all this sounds objectionable on the grounds that I am talking of aspects as kinds of properties and laws rather than as modes of experience (as you suggested in your last letter), then I'm afraid I don't see the crucial meaning of "mode" which avoids the difficulties I just mentioned. [...] With respect to my proposed theory of concepts, I want to be sure that I correctly understand your reservations.

from things.<sup>46</sup> The *Gegenstand*-relation, which presupposes the supratemporal selfhood, is necessary for a proper understanding of theoretical thought. Otherwise, we will end up in a logicism where we cannot even understand the irreducibility and coherence of the modal aspects. And Dooyeweerd also says that the distinction between pre-theoretical and theoretical experience will then also be blurred. The difference is not just one of degree.<sup>47</sup>

**Question:** You may be the messenger, but you agree with Dooyeweerd!

**Glenn:** Would you prefer that I did not agree with him? That I would raise all these points of disagreement and then side with Vollenhoven? But whether I agree or disagree with Dooyeweerd, the important point is to understand what he really said. And that has been obscured by the way his philosophy has been interpreted. From the very beginning, his ideas have been interpreted through the lens of Vollenhoven's ideas. Vollenhoven tried to reform Dooyeweerd's ideas, and he used many of the same terms as Dooyeweerd, thereby creating confusion. Dooyeweerd did not accept those reforms.

**Question:** But why would you raise these issues now? Your writings are destroying the unity of reformational philosophy.

**Glenn:** Well, it's a fact that there was a fundamental disagreement between Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven. And it's a fact that there was a fundamental disagreement between

<sup>46</sup> "*Gegenstandsrelatie*," p. 90, where Dooyeweerd continues to discuss his objections regarding this "serious misunderstanding":

But this opinion clearly depends on the thought that I have already rejected in principle—that the modal structures are only given to us in their supposed individualization within the individuality-structures of concrete things, event, social relations and so on, and that their *universal* modal character is only to be discovered by theoretical abstraction from out of these individuality-structures.

<sup>47</sup> See "*Gegenstandsrelatie*," where Dooyeweerd says that in pretheoretical experience, we do not even have an implied concept of the modal aspects (p. 92). See also *NC II*, 417:

But it is no more possible to acquire true *structural* concepts of individuality by means of the current procedure of gradual abstraction which neglects the cosmic order of time than we can obtain theoretical insight into the modal structure of the law-spheres in this way.

Dooyeweerd and Strauss, a disagreement that also extended to other reformational philosophers. These things are evident from what has been written. The unity of reformational philosophy is a myth that has prevented real understanding. By untangling these philosophies, we can better understand what both philosophers are saying.

**Question:** But we have worked so hard to set up Christian institutions along reformational lines!

**Glenn:** You seem to be afraid that, without both Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven as its founding pillars, the whole temple of neo-Calvinism will collapse. But no, it was Dooyeweerd who felt that all the pillars had been knocked down from his philosophy: “No pillar remains standing. At the moment everything lies knocked down flat. There is no part of this philosophy that has not been subjected to a sharp critique” (1964 lecture, p. 15).

**Question:** But your critique could undermine those institutions that claim to follow Dooyeweerd’s reformational philosophy.

**Glenn:** No one is saying that your institutions cannot continue doing the things they have long done. The only difference is that reformational philosophy can no longer rely on Dooyeweerd to support its current philosophy. And despite the lip service that is given to Dooyeweerd, is there still really that much significance placed on his work? Do they really rely on his work, other than to say, “Yes, we also have a great philosopher. They say he was more original than Spinoza.”<sup>48</sup> Some institutions like ICS have already ceased referring to following in the reformational tradition of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven. After all these years, a large portion of Dooyeweerd’s work remains untranslated. The few works that have been translated have not been translated with the care and attention that this great philosopher deserves.<sup>49</sup> On a recent visit to Amsterdam,

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<sup>48</sup> Citing G.E. Langemeier’s view that Dooyeweerd was the most original Dutch philosopher, Spinoza not excepted (*Trouw*, October 4, 1964). This also ignores the fact that Dooyeweerd himself disclaimed any originality.

<sup>49</sup> Here are some examples: (1) The recent edition of *In the Twilight of Western Thought* did not use the corrected edition. See Paul Otto, “In the Twilight of Dooyeweerd’s Corpus. The Publishing History of *In the Twilight of Western Thought* and the Future of

I spoke with some philosophy students at the Free University; they had barely heard of Dooyeweerd (or even of Abraham Kuyper). There are no books by either Dooyeweerd or Vollenhoven available for purchase in the bookstore of the Free University. The Dooyeweerd Archives have never been properly catalogued and organized, but consist of a number of boxes of documents. Dooyeweerd's private library, part of which was sent to ICS after his death, remains largely uncatalogued. The Dooyeweerd Centre at Redeemer University College has no archived materials available for scholars to consult, although I hope that this will change in the near future. But my point is that these institutions are not relying on Dooyeweerd's ideas. So they can continue on their present course even if Dooyeweerd's ideas turn out to be very different than has been supposed. The temple will not be overthrown. In any event, why would you want to claim Dooyeweerd as a source for your ideas when you have rejected what he himself says are the key ideas?

**Question:** But if we *did* accept Dooyeweerd's ideas, would that result in changes to these institutions?

**Glenn:** Oh, that's a very different question. Quite possibly, yes. It would certainly make a difference in the content of the philosophy being taught, and the way that Dooyeweerd's ideas are worked out in the various academic disciplines. But your

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Dooyeweerd Studies," *Philosophia Reformata* 70 (2005) 23-40. Dooyeweerd personally corrected errors in the first edition, as is evident by the letter dated Feb 24, 1964 from the Craig Press *Lade* I, 2 of the Dooyeweerd Archives. (2) There are serious errors in the present translation of *The Encyclopedia of the Science of Law*. See my article, "Dooyeweerd's *Encyclopedia of the Science of Law: Problems with the Present Translation*," online at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/hermandooyeweerd/Encyclopedia.pdf>]. (3) There are serious translation errors and omissions in *Roots of Western Culture*, the English translation of a part of Dooyeweerd's *Vernieuwing en Bezinning*. Already in 1980, Keith Sewell's review of the translation pointed out some shortcomings, although he generally praised the translation. See online at [<http://72.14.253.104/search?q=cache:KQOz1KwAeEJ:www.freewebs.com/kcsewell/SewellOnRoots.pdf+%22roots+of+western+culture%22+review&hl=en&gl=ca&ct=clnk&cd=1>]. But there are many other shortcomings that were not addressed by Sewell. For even those parts that were included in the translation contain omissions from the text and serious inaccuracies. See also the references in footnote 51 below. These textual problems have not been corrected in the new edition.

question is whether the institutions themselves would be affected? In the 1964 lecture, Dooyeweerd talks about Christian schools and universities, but he does not seem to envision them as being run along denominational and confessional lines.<sup>50</sup> That might be one difference. Another problem, and one that surprised me, is Dooyeweerd's statement in the 1964 lecture that the religious antithesis cannot be organized. What does he mean? I think that he is saying that reformational thought has mistakenly confused Dooyeweerd's (and Kuyper's) idea of sphere sovereignty with Groen van Prinsterer's ideas of autonomous bodies, and that Groen's ideas were later worked out to mean pluralism or *verzuiling*. But that brings up the problem of the passage from *Vernieuwing en Bezinning* that was mysteriously omitted in the English translation *Roots of Western Culture*.<sup>51</sup> In *Vernieuwing en Bezinning*, Dooyeweerd seems to say that sphere

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<sup>50</sup> He refers positively to Kuyper's decision to leave 'Reformed principles' undefined:

But I know for certain that Kuyper wanted to take a position here against sectarianism. He did not want an ecclesiastical sectarianism in the broad domain of culture, where Christians should work together with each other. He also did not want that in the area of Christian schools. He did not want separate *Gereformeerde*, *Hervormde* and Lutheran schools, etc. He merely wanted Christian Protestant schools. [...] That he strove towards this, towards a genuinely catholic, that is, ecumenical view of Christendom. "For that reason I did not want being bound to any ecclesiastical confession, and also not any written confessions of faith. Definitely not." [...] Kuyper always fought against the idea that [the use of the term 'Calvinistic'] implied being bound to the *Gereformeerde* Churches or anything like that. He fought very hard against sectarianism (1964 discussion, pp. 16, 17).

And Dooyeweerd adopts that view in his plea for ecumenism:

The Ground-motive of the Bible is, in the full meaning of the words catholic, that is, ecumenical. It does not allow itself to be bound up, or better said, locked up in any church denomination whatsoever, not even in that denomination that we regard as being the most pure revelation on earth of the Body of Christ. Not even in that body (1964 discussion, p. 18).

<sup>51</sup> See my footnotes 24 and 25 to the 1964 lecture, online at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/hermandooyeweerd/1964Lecture.html>]. We also know from Dooyeweerd's last interview (1975) that he was not happy with Groen's ideas. Online at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/hermandooyeweerd/Interview.html>].

sovereignty ought not to be confused with ideas of societal pluralism. But more research, and much more reflection is needed on this important point.

**Question:** So what's wrong with tinkering with Dooyeweerd's ideas, accepting some ideas and not others, and in this way continuing with what we are doing and following in Dooyeweerd's philosophy?

**Glenn:** There's nothing wrong with developing your own philosophy. The problem arises only when you then claim that this new system is the same as Dooyeweerd's. Dooyeweerd says that you cannot understand his philosophy apart from the idea of the supratemporal selfhood. Not even the modal aspects can be understood. So we can't just take only bits and pieces from his philosophy, and still claim that we have interpreted him correctly. It is rather like someone who claims to be a Platonist, and who uses the analogy of the cave, and then says that this means that the people who are living in the shadows are the ones who are seeing things as they really are. Other philosophers would say, "But why then do you still call yourself a Platonist? That's the opposite of what Plato said!" Similarly, those who deny Dooyeweerd's idea of the supratemporal selfhood should not be surprised when they are told, "If you deny the supratemporal selfhood, then you are seeking totality within the temporal. That's what Dooyeweerd calls 'immanence philosophy.' And that's the opposite of what he advocated. You have quite literally taken the heart out of his philosophy."

**Question:** Does this mean that we can't criticize Dooyeweerd?

**Glenn:** No, of course not. Dooyeweerd encouraged criticism. But read what he says in the 1964 lecture. He says that before you criticize, make sure you know what you are criticizing. Evidently he thought that his critics had not understood what they were talking about. As one example, he refers to the theory of the modal aspects, which he says is one of the least understood ideas of his philosophy. That is shocking. How can that be? He says that it is not sufficient to know the word, but that one also must understand the meaning. As another example, he said that Vollenhoven did not understand his idea of cosmic time (see my discussion in "Dialectic").

**Question:** You obviously respect and admire Dooyeweerd. Others may find some ideas attractive, but not the whole. Why can't they choose just some ideas and reject others?



**Glenn:** Your question itself provides the answer. The issue is one of respect. Dooyeweerd is a great philosopher, and we should pay attention when he says that some ideas are essential to understanding his philosophy. If we disagree with those central ideas, then the respectful response is to reject his philosophy and not to try to force it into a temporalized view of reality that contradicts the basis of his philosophy.

**Question:** Are you saying that Dooyeweerd’s philosophy is a finished system to which we cannot add anything?

**Glenn:** No. Dooyeweerd distinguishes between what is central and what is peripheral. If anything is added, it must fit with what he himself says are his central ideas. Otherwise you are no longer building on his philosophy, but substituting a different philosophy. He says that the ideas of cosmic time and the supratemporal selfhood are central to his philosophy. And he says that the modal aspects, which individuate from supratemporal totality, cannot be understood apart from that religious center of our existence.<sup>52</sup>

**Question:** What would a peripheral issue be?

**Glenn:** From the 1964 lecture and discussion, it appears that the precise number of the modal aspects would be an example of a peripheral issue. Dooyeweerd is open to discussion on that, although he rejected the proposals discussed on that occasion. And he

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<sup>52</sup> See “*Gegenstandsrelatie*,” 100). Dooyeweerd says,

This extensive quotation throws a sharp light on the short-circuiting that arises in Strauss’s argument as a result of his losing sight of the fact that, what he calls a “vicious circle” in my train of thought is in reality a necessary consequence of the transcendental ideas—*which he himself accepts*—of the mutual irreducibility and unbreakable reciprocal meaning-coherence of the modal aspects. For these ideas are unquestionably of an *inter-modal* character, and they lie at the basis of the epistemological forming of concepts of the modal aspects, as developed in the Philosophy of the Law-Idea. There does not exist any logical contradiction between both of these transcendental ideas. Rather, they cohere unbreakably with each other, and these ideas are in turn not to be separated from the transcendental idea of the root-unity of the modal aspects in the religious center of human existence, and the idea of their divine Origin in the will of the Creator.

says that those who have rejected some aspects, like the historical aspect, have also not understood what he says.

**Question:** I suppose that Dooyeweerd would also say that the application of the theory of the modal aspects within the special sciences is something still to be worked out, and not completed?

**Glenn:** Yes. He says that the theory of the modal aspects is a “vision” that needs to be completed by those in the special sciences (1964 discussion, p. 3). However, it seems to me that reformational philosophy moves too quickly to attempt to apply these ideas without having first understood them. For example, Van Riessen’s ideas on technology were not in accordance with Dooyeweerd’s philosophy.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, when reformational philosophy moves too fast, it often ends up with a view of reality that does not differ from a substance theory of reality, except that God has created the substance.<sup>54</sup> And its epistemology adopts a view of abstraction that is, in Dooyeweerd’s terms, “logicistic.”<sup>55</sup> And it adopts a philosophical anthropology that totally temporalizes human existence. So reformational philosophy ends up merely putting a Christian veneer on present philosophy, instead of radically reforming it. It becomes involved in immanence philosophy or synthesis.

**Question:** All right, suppose that I grant Dooyeweerd’s conclusion that Strauss’s philosophy (and current reformational philosophy to the extent that it shares Strauss’s ideas), is based on a synthesis with non-Christian thought. But from Vollenhoven’s point of view isn’t Dooyeweerd’s philosophy based on synthesis?

**Glenn:** Now you are beginning to acknowledge the problem. Yes, each philosopher finds that the other one’s philosophy is based on a synthesis with non-Christian elements. Vollenhoven says that Dooyeweerd is a mystic, although he can’t quite decide whether to

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<sup>53</sup> See my discussion of Van Riessen’s mistaken view of technical forming, Part 6F of my article “Imagination,” online at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/hermandooyeweerd/Imagination5.html>].

<sup>54</sup> See my article “Enkapsis.”

<sup>55</sup> See Dooyeweerd’s last article, “*Gegenstandsrelatie*.”

classify his type of mysticism as monism or dualism. I don't think that either category is correct.

**Question:** How do you explain the fact that each philosopher apparently sees the other one as engaged in synthesis?

**Glenn:** Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd seem to have a different view of synthesis. For Vollenhoven, synthesis seems to be any connection with ideas of philosophers who do not rely on the Bible. Dooyeweerd seems much more willing to acknowledge the connectedness with other philosophers. For him, synthesis has primarily to do with whether our philosophy proceeds from the radical unity of the supratemporal selfhood, or whether we seek to find that unity within temporal reality, by absolutizing some part of temporal reality like rationality. And so, for example, Dooyeweerd can express appreciation for Kant, but then say that the problem is that Kant sought the transcendental selfhood and acts of that selfhood in terms of purely temporal events.<sup>56</sup> For Dooyeweerd, those philosophers who do not accept a supratemporal selfhood are engaged in immanence philosophy. They seek their starting point within time. So on that basis, reformational philosophy, which follows Vollenhoven in denying the supratemporal selfhood, is immanence philosophy.

**Question:** But wait a minute, both Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven agree on the Biblical idea of creation, fall and redemption. So Vollenhoven is not an immanence philosopher.

**Glenn:** It seems to me that you have not understood what Dooyeweerd means by 'immanence philosophy.' Just because you believe in a transcendent God does not mean that you are not an immanence philosopher in his sense. Simply believing in a

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<sup>56</sup> Dooyeweerd says that that Kant and his followers opposed the logical function to the other modal aspects of the integral act of thought.

It is precisely the antithetic structure of the latter [the theoretical attitude of thought] which obliged Kant and his followers to oppose the logical function to the other modal aspects of the integral act of thought. The only, but fundamental, mistake in their argument was the identification of the real act with a purely psychical temporal event, which in its turn could become a 'Gegenstand' of the ultimate transcendental-logical 'cogito' (NC, I, 50).

transcendent God does not get you off the hook; it does not mean that you are not an immanence philosopher. For Dooyeweerd, an immanence philosopher is someone who denies the supratemporal selfhood and seeks this unity within temporal reality itself.<sup>57</sup> So you can be an immanence philosopher and still believe in a transcendent God. Secondly,

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<sup>57</sup> See Herman Dooyeweerd: *De Crisis der Humanistische Staatsleer* (Amsterdam: Ten Have, 1931), p. 113:

Maar naar onze beschouwing, de Christelijke opvatting der persoonlijkheid, kan evenmin het ‘individueele ik’ in den tijd worden gezocht en daarmee nemen wij principieel tegen de ‘geesteswetenschappelijke sociologie’ positie, die zulks met de geheele immanentie filosofie juist wel doet. De individueele zelfheid is door en door religieus, boventijdelijk. In de kosmische tijdsorde kan nòch aan den individueelen mensch, nòch aan het verband zelfheid, ikheid toekomen. Dit is het cardinale uitgangspunt voor iedere wezenlijk Christelijke beschouwing der tijdelijke samenleving.

[But according to our view, the Christian understanding of a person, the ‘individual I’ can no more be sought within time. And we thereby stand in principle against the position of sociology in the humanities, which seeks to do just this in its immanence philosophy. The individual selfhood is through and through religious, supratemporal. In the cosmic temporal order, selfhood or I-ness cannot be reached by [sociological conceptions of] either individual man, or of societal structures. This is the principal point of departure for any truly Christian view of temporal society.]

Or see *De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee* I, 29:

Het is de inderdaad radicale beteekenis van de Christelijke religie voor de Wijsbegeerte, dat zij ons weder den transcendenten religieuen wortel van het menschelijk bestaan in al zijn functies heft onthuld en daarmee het  $\pi\rho\tau\tau\omicron\nu\ \psi\epsilon\upsilon\delta\omicron\varsigma$  der immanentie-philosophie heft blootgelegd

It is the radical meaning of Christianity for philosophy that it has again unveiled for us the transcendent religious root of human existence in all its functions, and has laid bare the  $\pi\rho\tau\tau\omicron\nu\ \psi\epsilon\upsilon\delta\omicron\varsigma$  [first lie] of immanence philosophy.

Or *NC* I, 21:

In truth the selfhood as the religious root of existence is the hidden performer on the instrument of philosophic thought. Only, it is *invisible* on the basis of the immanence-standpoint.

read Dooyeweerd's *In the Twilight of Western Thought*.<sup>58</sup> He says that it is not enough to believe in creation, fall and redemption, for even the scribes and Pharisees believed that (*Twilight*, 125, 145). In his understanding of the Christian Ground-motive, these doctrines must be understood in their *radical* (root, *radix*), sense. They can be understood only in relation to the idea of the supratemporal selfhood, which was created as the religious root, which fell into sin as the religious root (and therefore took with it all of temporal creation), and is redeemed in Christ the New Root.

**Question:** Are you saying that the views of reformational philosophy are no better than the views of the scribes and Pharisees? But we believe in Christ. Are you saying that *In the Twilight of Western Thought* is directed against ideas that reformational philosophy holds?

**Glenn:** What else can the book mean? Of course, the belief in Christ is a difference. But what does that mean? Dooyeweerd's emphasis is that not even redemption is understood apart from the ideas of supratemporal root and religious root. Christ is the New Root. And redemption is in our supratemporal heart. And in the 1964 lecture and discussion, Dooyeweerd says that the supratemporal heart is required to understand Christ's incarnation. These are not just my ideas. Read what Dooyeweerd says.

**Question:** Dooyeweerd's views entail that Vollenhoven and those who follow him are therefore not following Dooyeweerd's understanding of the Christian Ground-motive? That's shocking. But surely Vollenhoven was a Christian.

**Glenn:** Yes, of course. In Dooyeweerd's philosophy, holding to a wrong Ground-motive does not necessarily mean that you are not a Christian. Many scholastic and humanist philosophers are Christians. It just means that they have made a synthesis by denying the supratemporal selfhood, and accommodating their thought to philosophies that seek totality within time.

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<sup>58</sup> Herman Dooyeweerd: *In the Twilight of Western Thought*, (Nutley N.J.: Craig Press, 1968). As discussed in footnote 49 above, the later Mellen edition is not reliable. I have given a close reading of this book in Appendix D of my article "Imagination, Image of God and Wisdom of God: Theosophical themes in Dooyeweerd's philosophy," online at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/hermandooyeweerd/Imagination.html>].

**Question:** Well what about the religious antithesis? Are you saying that reformational philosophy today is on the wrong side of the religious antithesis?

**Glenn:** Well, remember that for Dooyeweerd, the religious antithesis is not between groups of people, but something that runs through the hearts of each of us (*NC I*, 524). All of us are tempted to forget that we live in both the supratemporal and the temporal world, and we then sinfully suppose that our life is wholly temporal. This is why Dooyeweerd says (allow me to refer to his *magnum opus* again):

Every Christian knows the emptiness of an experience of the temporal world which seems to be shut up in itself. But the Christian whose heart is opened to the Divine Word-revelation knows that in this apostate experiential attitude he does not experience temporal things and events as they really are, i.e. as meaning pointing beyond and above itself to the true religious centre of meaning and to the true Origin (*NC III*, 30).

Dooyeweerd says "the fallen earthly cosmos is only a sad shadow of God's original creation" (*NC II*, 34). But Dooyeweerd also says that when we see reality in terms of the correct Ground-motive, then the light of eternity breaks through, illuminating even the most trivial events:

In the Biblical attitude of naïve experience the transcendent, religious dimension of its horizon is opened. The light of eternity radiates perspectively through all the temporal dimensions of this horizon and even illuminates seemingly trivial things and events in our sinful world (*NC III*, 529).

**Question:** But if the line of religious antithesis runs through our own hearts, then how can you, I mean how can *Dooyeweerd*, make this big distinction between his own philosophy and immanence philosophy?

**Glenn:** There is a difference between (1) slipping or falling into a temporalized view of reality, which we all do from time to time, and which then clouds our proper view of God, self and cosmos and (2) setting up a philosophy that deliberately and consciously works from the premise that we are merely temporal beings, and that denies the supratemporal selfhood. It is because current reformational philosophy has built into its system such a temporalized view of man that Dooyeweerd can claim that it results in genuine antinomies, that it absolutizes the logical, and that its epistemology is no

different from modernist epistemology. By doing this, reformational philosophy has encouraged the sinful temporalizing of reality.

**Question:** Don't you think that reformational philosophy is different from what is being done by other philosophers?

**Glenn:** You are asking me again? Well, in its view of theory as abstraction of properties from things—a view that Dooyeweerd rejected—I personally have a hard time seeing how this differs from modernism. Instead of reforming the sciences, reformational philosophy seems to have just given a Christian cosmological overlay that explains the way that science is presently being carried on. But someone who is not a Christian could also claim to abstract from things in the same way. How is current reformational philosophy really distinctive? Dooyeweerd's view of theory is definitely distinctive, since it relies on the idea that theory depends on the supratemporal heart, which is created in the image of God. And the way that he works that out is also different. I have tried to show this in my article "Imagination."

**Question:** But the belief in a transcendent God who created the world is an important distinction.

**Glenn:** Oh, yes. But in *Twilight of Western Thought*, Dooyeweerd says that we cannot understand even the doctrine of creation apart from the idea of the supratemporal heart. And in the 1964 lecture, he says that the idea of supratemporality is necessary in order to understand other theological doctrines, like the incarnation of Christ, or to understand the way that the Word of God operates in our central and supratemporal heart. The Word of God is also both central (supratemporal) and peripheral (temporal), just like our own selfhood.

**Question:** But Vollenhoven also refers to the Word of God.

**Glenn:** But not as operating upon our supratemporal heart. For Vollenhoven, the Word is mediated in Scripture, and through the preaching from Scripture. Unlike Dooyeweerd, Vollenhoven also uses Scripture as a source for philosophy. But when Vollenhoven tries to articulate what this Biblical philosophy is, he is unable to fit it into his problem-historical method. Nor can he fit his own ideas into the grid of categories. Instead, the

idea seems to be that Biblical philosophy is somehow off of the grid, in a way that cannot be conceptualized. For example, Vollenhoven did not call himself a theist, because theism attributes being to God.<sup>59</sup> But this leads to a peculiar kind of negative theology, or even negative philosophy.

**Question:** And is there something wrong with that?

**Glenn:** Well, we can use negative theology in different ways. There are different kinds of apophaticism. One is a theology or philosophy of emptiness, where our concepts, even the concept of Being, do not apply to God. I think that Vollenhoven tends towards that kind of negative theology, and that this has something to do with his interpretation of what it means that the law is a boundary between God and creation. I believe that some of the consequences of this kind of negative theology are:

(1) the inability to experience God in our life<sup>60</sup> (2) the inability to know ourselves<sup>61</sup> and (3) the inability to know the cosmos.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> See Stellingwerff, 27, 41.

<sup>60</sup> An example is the recent lecture tour by John Suk, the new President of the Institute for Christian Studies. In his lecture, "A Personal Relationship with Jesus," Suk is critical of the idea of a personal relationship with Jesus, except as a pietistic or individualistic experience. Instead, he emphasizes the absence of God in our lives, and the need for faith despite this absence. You can listen to it for yourself by downloading the mp3 at [<http://www.icscanada.edu/audio/>]. After the lecture, Suk was asked whether his views were not inconsistent with Kuyper's, as expressed in *To be Near Unto God*. He responded that Kuyper made mistakes, too. But it is that side of Kuyper that is carried on in Dooyeweerd's philosophy.

Dooyeweerd particularly praised Kuyper's works of a devotional or meditative nature. See Herman Dooyeweerd: "Na vijf en dertig jaren," 36 *Philosophia Reformata* (1971) 1-10. And this emphasis on our immediate relationship with God should not be characterized as merely pietism or subjectivism. And note that Vollenhoven says that he was never interested in Kuyper's devotional writings: "...de Kuyper van de meditaties heeft me nooit zo erg geboeid" ("*Kring*," 205).

<sup>61</sup> I have made this criticism of Olthuis's view of the selfhood, which seems more in line with a Buddhist view of emptiness. James Olthuis: "Of Webs and Whirlwinds; Me, Myself and I," in D.F.M. Strauss and Michelle Botting (eds.), *Contemporary Reflections on the Thought of Herman Dooyeweerd* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000). See my Glossary entry for 'Selfhood,' online at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/jgfriesen/Definitions/Selfhood.html>].



And I think that this is what Dooyeweerd means when he says

The religious meaning of the created world binds the true knowledge of the cosmos to true self-knowledge, and the latter to the true knowledge of God (*NC II*, 560).

**Question:** But Vollenhoven did not accept Barth's view that God is totally other.

**Glenn:** True, but he seemed to restrict our knowledge of God to what is revealed in the Bible. He was very suspicious of any immediate experience of God, and as I have already said, he disagreed with the view that the Word of God acts supratemporally on our heart, because of course he denied that view of the heart altogether. He also denied that man is the image of God. Vollenhoven fully temporalized man's existence. So insofar as reformational philosophy has followed this view, it is immanence philosophy. Its philosophical anthropology gets lost in the diversity of the world.

**Question:** And Dooyeweerd? Does he have an apophaticism or negative theology? For he, too says that the law is the boundary between God and creation.

**Glenn:** Yes, but Dooyeweerd emphasizes that the law as boundary means the dependence of creation on God. Dooyeweerd does have an apophaticism, but it is an apophaticism of wonder—that there is always more to God, self and creation than we will ever understand. For him, our transcendence of time in our heart is what allows our Ideas, which are directed to the invisible things, to ascend the temporal aspects, “from anticipatory sphere to anticipatory sphere” until our thought finds rest in its religious root:

In the *Idea* of a meaning modus, philosophical reflection oriented to our cosmomic Idea passes through a process of successive meaning-coherences in the transcendental direction of time. The internal unrest of meaning drives it on from anticipatory sphere to anticipatory sphere, and so from one anticipatory connection to another. At last we arrive at the transcendental terminal sphere of our cosmos and reflect on the insufficiency of the modal Idea.

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<sup>62</sup> Here, I would point to the present fascination of reformational philosophy with postmodernism. If, as Dooyeweerd says, reformational philosophy is really no different from the epistemology of modernism, then it is very vulnerable to the criticisms of postmodernism. See for example

We then direct our glance to the transcendent meaning-totality and the Origin, in which at last our thought finds rest *in its religious root* (NC II, 284).

This makes our theoretical thought itself an act of religious worship and adoration, a kind of ladder of contemplation that ends in apophatic wonder, because even our Ideas are insufficient. We can see that that they are insufficient by glancing at the transcendent. Thus, this is not an apophaticism of emptiness, but of fulfillment, and a going beyond our Ideas. I have compared it to the Eastern Orthodox idea of *epektasis*. That is a term used by Gregory of Nyssa to refer to the drawing of the soul ever onwards (Phil. 3:13). Dooyeweerd does not use this word, but he does refer to the supratemporal as dynamic, and to the idea of supratemporal fulfillment.

**Question:** If there are different Ground-motives between Dooyeweerd and current reformational philosophy, how will we even be able to talk to each other?

**Glenn:** Well, we are talking right now. I know that you are rather wary of what I am saying, but so were Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven in their discussion with each other in 1964. And I think that Dooyeweerd is right that it is only when we make our different standpoints clear that the possibility of real dialogue opens up. We may not agree, but we can talk. In the 1964 lecture, he says that that was the purpose of his transcendental critique.

Some of my most enjoyable philosophic discussions have been with Kornelis Bril, the Vollenhoven scholar. We disagree on almost every issue, although he agrees that a choice must be made between Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven. We have helped each other in historical research to bring more clearly into focus exactly how these viewpoints differ. I have even assisted Dr. Bril in his translation of some of Vollenhoven's works. I hope that my own research will encourage people to re-read Dooyeweerd's works, and that more of Dooyeweerd will also be translated and made available to English-speaking philosophers.

**Question:** But isn't there a problem of point of contact if the philosophies of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven diverge to such an extent?

**Glenn:** Dooyeweerd never accepted Van Til's view that there is no point of contact. Dooyeweerd emphasizes that there are "states of affairs," to which we can appeal to. But one of these states of affairs for him was the idea that there must be a totality to which all temporal diversity is related. That totality is the supratemporal selfhood, as redeemed in Christ. So to the extent that Vollenhoven denies this idea of totality, dialogue with Dooyeweerd has become much more difficult. We are Christians, but to assume that we are all philosophically speaking about the same thing is a mistake. It may be that there is more connection between Dooyeweerd and the new Roman Catholic theology about which he speaks in the 1964 lecture than between Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven. But we can still engage in dialogue.

**Question:** Are you serious? But doesn't Roman Catholicism operate from the nature and grace Ground-motive?

**Glenn:** That's what surprised Dooyeweerd. Roman Catholic thought had changed so much that he felt there was no longer any point in publishing the second volume of *Reformation and Scholasticism*. Roman Catholics had themselves abandoned the nature/grace dualism.

**Question:** But Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven were at least united in their opposition to the scholastic idea of a dualistic anthropology, which was based on a material substance which is our body, and an eternal substance that is the immortal soul.

**Glenn:** Yes, and their common opposition to that idea allowed them to stand together during the lengthy investigation by the Curators of the Free University. But even there, you can see differences in the views of the two men.<sup>63</sup> Their different ideas of synthesis help to explain how Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven could both agree that the scholastic dualistic view of body and soul was wrong, but that they then could develop such different solutions to the problem. Both men correctly saw that this scholastic anthropology contained the scholastic concept of substance: a material substance for the body and an eternal immortal substance for the soul. Vollenhoven's solution was to

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<sup>63</sup> See Responses to Curators, online at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/hermandooyeweerd/Curators.html>].

relativize everything that scholasticism had supposed was eternal in man. He proposed a purely temporal model of the selfhood, where the heart is pre-functional but not supratemporal.

**Question:** And what about Dooyeweerd?

**Glenn:** Dooyeweerd did the reverse. He relativized everything temporal by the idea of the supratemporal selfhood.<sup>64</sup> The supratemporal selfhood is the Totality from which temporal reality individuates. It *expresses* itself within temporal reality. The aspects are modes of consciousness, not properties of things. And things themselves are much less substantial than in Vollenhoven's view. They are individuality structures (a term that Vollenhoven rejected), architectonic groupings of the modal aspects with a duration in time.

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<sup>64</sup> See *WdWI*, vi:

From out of this central Christian viewpoint [the heart, the religious root of human existence], it appeared to me that a revolution was necessary in philosophic thought, a revolution of so radical a character, that, compared with it, Kant's "Copernican revolution" can only be qualified as a revolution in the periphery. For what is at stake here is no less than a relativizing of the whole temporal cosmos in what we refer to as both its "natural" sides as well as its "spiritual" sides, over against the religious root of creation in Christ. In comparison with this basic Scriptural idea, of what significance is a revolution in a view of reality that relativizes the "natural" sides of temporal reality with respect to a theoretical abstraction such as Kant's "*homo noumenon*" or his "transcendental subject of thought?" [my translation]

The English translation in the *New Critique* does not adequately bring out this relativizing of the temporal world. It also fails to translate '*periphère*' as 'periphery.' For Dooyeweerd is here contrasting the central (supratemporal) and peripheral (temporal) ideas.

On the basis of this central Christian point of view [the heart, the religious root of human existence] I saw the need of a revolution in philosophical thought of a very radical character. Confronted with the religious root of the creation, nothing less is in question than a relating of the whole temporal cosmos, in both its so-called 'natural' and 'spiritual' aspects, to this point of reference. In contrast to this basic Biblical conception, of what significance is a so-called 'Copernican' revolution which merely makes the 'natural-aspects' of temporal reality relative to a theoretical abstraction such as Kant's 'transcendental subject'? (*NC I*, v).

**Question:** But in this way Dooyeweerd reduced the individuality of things to the law?

**Glenn:** Well, he says he did not, although in the 1964 lecture, he says that the very name ‘Philosophy of the Law-idea’ has led to that misunderstanding.

**Question:** But if you say that Dooyeweerd relativized everything temporal, then didn’t he end up by a pantheism, in his idea that eternity is set in our heart?

**Glenn:** No, Dooyeweerd distinguishes between God’s eternity and the created eternity (or *aevum*) of man’s heart. His philosophy is neither monistic or dualistic. It is mystical, but neither pantheistic nor world-denying. This has not been understood, partly because Vollenhoven had no other categories.<sup>65</sup>

**Question:** Is it really that important to do all this research regarding the past? Haven’t we moved beyond Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven?

**Glenn:** Well, remember what Dooyeweerd said in the 1964 lecture. It was entitled “Center and Periphery: the Philosophy of the Law-Idea in a changing world.” Dooyeweerd says that the world is always changing. There was a lot of change when he developed his philosophy. But what does not change is the center. It is its religious significance that will keep the Philosophy of the Law-Idea going.<sup>66</sup> And if you hold on to that central, religious, supratemporal significance, then Christian philosophy will not have the antinomies that result from a religious dialectic.

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<sup>65</sup> See my article “Monism, Dualism, Nondualism: A problem with Vollenhoven’s problem-historical method,” [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/hermandooyeweerd/Method.html>].

<sup>66</sup> 1964 lecture, p. 14:

The core [*kern*] of the Philosophy of the Law-Idea is not of a philosophic nature. The core of the Philosophy of the Law-Idea is of a central religious nature. And I believe that its strength is there, and that is also where its meaning for the future will lie. As long as one continues to see this, as long as one continues to see that in the final analysis it comes down to the driving force of God’s Word, which is active in the religious center of our existence, through the power of Christ Jesus, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. As long as one continues to see this, the Philosophy of the Law-Idea will not become meager, it will not become irrelevant to a rapidly changing world, but it will retain its full relevance.

**Question:** But can't we just form new ideas, and be original?

**Glenn:** It's a mistake to avoid looking at our connectedness to the past. In the 1964 lecture Dooyeweerd acknowledges his own connectedness to the past.<sup>67</sup> We need to ask, "What are the sources that have influenced Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven? And what are the sources that have influenced our own thinking?" Isn't the desire to be new and original itself a symptom of a desire to avoid looking at our philosophic roots? Dooyeweerd himself denied that his philosophy was in any way original, except insofar as it was a pointing back to the Origin.<sup>68</sup>

**Question:** What you say here will offend a lot of people.

**Glenn:** Well, that has certainly not been my intention. If I have criticized the writings of certain people, it is in order to distinguish their views from Dooyeweerd. These are philosophical issues that have to be addressed. I suppose there are people who might wish that all these questions would just go away. But the questions come from a reading of the texts. If we claim to be doing philosophy, then we cannot ignore what Dooyeweerd has actually written.

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<sup>67</sup> 1964 discussion, p. 6:

...I have never been afraid to acknowledge that there has been influence from non-Christian thought upon the Philosophy of the Law-Idea. It would be completely dishonest and also impossible to have denied it.

<sup>68</sup> See *WdW* III, vii-viii, part of Foreword to Volume III of *De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee*, not translated in the *New Critique*:

In its point of departure, the Philosophy of the Law-Idea is not at all "new," but rather it builds on the *foundation of all ages*. What it fights against is the falling away from this fixed foundation, a falling away that appeals to the autonomy of thought, or depends on a completely misplaced appeal to the teaching of "common grace."

So whoever reproaches this philosophy with "the desire for originality" does not know what he is talking about. Its characteristic is not a *desire for originality*, but a *desire for the Origin*, in the sense that it restlessly drives thought out above its supposed resting points, and points towards its true Origin in Jesus Christ.

**Question:** Do you consider yourself a reformational philosopher?

**Glenn:** Was Dooyeweerd a reformational philosopher?

**Question:** OK, I get the point. So in a nutshell, what are you trying to do, Glenn?

**Glenn:** I am trying to understand Dooyeweerd's philosophy. I believe that the implications of Dooyeweerd's philosophy in science, psychology, perception, art, imagination, sociology and theology have been largely untapped. His views of the subject-object relation, his nondual view of perception, and his idea of individuality structures are brilliant ways of interrelating each one of us to the rest of the temporal world and to other humans. I believe that Dooyeweerd's ideas have great significance for both our temporal as well as for our spiritual, supratemporal life.

We know that there were profound differences between Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven, and also between Dooyeweerd and Strauss. And we know that the "received view" of Dooyeweerd is an interpretation that is based on Vollenhoven's ideas. So I am trying to rehabilitate Dooyeweerd, by distinguishing his work from that of Vollenhoven. And here is the really ironic fact. Many followers of Vollenhoven would like to see Vollenhoven receive more credit for reformational philosophy. I agree that he should be given most of the credit for the received view. It is Dooyeweerd's work that has not been understood! I am trying to interpret it as a whole, giving his views the respect that I believe they deserve. And it is my hope that my research will encourage reformational philosophers to return to the original texts of both Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd. Even for those who disagree with Dooyeweerd, this untangling of his ideas from those of Vollenhoven will help to clarify what is at stake in reformational philosophy.

So what I hope will happen is that reformational philosophers will ask themselves, "To what extent are we caught up in synthesis? And if current reformational philosophy contains within it a religious dialectic, to what extent has it become an obstacle to understanding Dooyeweerd? Does what Dooyeweerd described as the logicistic view of theoretical abstraction differ from the type of modern epistemology that postmodernists have been calling into question? How vulnerable does this make us to postmodern critique? Does our view of creation, fall and redemption really correspond to Dooyeweerd's? Do we understand it in the radical sense related to the supratemporal

selfhood? And if we claim to be making a critical retrieval of good ideas from the past, have we really set out the philosophical bases—the philosophic standpoint—for that critical retrieval? Or does this get us caught in some new synthesis without our being conscious of such synthesis? And to what extent can we speak in postmodernist language without thereby also reducing our whole lived experience to the temporal? Which philosophy will assist us to recover our own experience of the work of God’s Spirit in our lives, working directly on our heart? And which philosophy gives us a better chance of dialogue with other traditions?”

I hope that reformational philosophers will also ask the more personal questions of meaning, such as, “If we do not accept the idea of the supratemporal selfhood, then what is our hope for what happens after death? And is it then impossible for us to seek immediate religious experience in this temporal life?” Dooyeweerd is firm in his conviction that the supratemporal heart, a present reality, will also continue after death, when our body, our temporal mantle of functions, is cast aside.<sup>69</sup> Vollenhoven has a thoroughly temporal view of the selfhood, where nothing is left over at death. It seems to me that he is left with a doctrine of soul sleep, where our existence does not continue until the resurrection. But Vollenhoven’s view is even more bleak, since in his view, there is not even a soul that is asleep. K.A. Bril confirms this view. He was Vollenhoven’s assistant, and he recalls Vollenhoven emphasizing that resurrection is a resurrection of the *dead*.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> See “Responses to Curators,” online at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/hermandooyeweerd/Curators.html>]. Dooyeweerd, like Kuyper, emphasizes the immediacy of our religious experience. For our supratemporal heart is not merely a future hope, but also a present reality. It is the basis of all of our experience. It is that central and transcendent point of our consciousness out of which are all the issues of life. It is the basis of all our actions, the basis for our expression within our temporal body and outwards towards the rest of temporal creation. Vollenhoven seems to be afraid of direct experience, preferring to see it mediated to us indirectly, by means of the preached Word. See “Dialectic.”

<sup>70</sup> I understand that a fourth presentation at the Redeemer conference on Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven was given by John Kok, who attempted to show that Vollenhoven’s idea of a temporal selfhood did not necessarily imply that there was nothing left over of our existence after death, and that there is nothing until the resurrection of the dead. I would



**Question:** Well, that’s a lot to think about. I would hardly call that a nutshell.

**Glenn:** I agree that it doesn’t provide a very good sound bite from this interview. My long answer reflects the fact that Dooyeweerd’s ideas need to be taken as a whole, and not in little snippets. Should I say even more? But we are already on page 49 of this article. So let me just refer to two Latin maxims from Dooyeweerd, to keep this discussion going at a later time. I don’t think that enough attention has been paid to either of these maxims.

(1) “*Inquietum est cor nostrum et mundus in corde nostro!*” (NC I, 11).

[Our *heart* is restless, and the world is restless in our heart!]<sup>71</sup>

In contrast to Descartes’ rationalist “*Cogito ergo sum*” [I think, therefore I am], and to the irrationalist “*vivo in fluxu continuo, etiam cogitans*” [living in continual flux, and also thinking], Dooyeweerd says,

(2) “*Ego, in Christo regeneratus, etiam cogitans ex Christo vivo*” (NC I, 506).

[I, regenerated in Christ, am also thinking by living from out of Christ]

We can live from out of Christ because we dwell in Him, we participate in Him as the New Root of creation.<sup>72</sup> On that page, Dooyeweerd again makes reference to “The heart in its pregnant Biblical sense as religious root and centre of the whole of human existence.” And he again confirms that this heart transcends time:

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be interested in seeing how Kok believes he can avoid a doctrine of soul sleep until the resurrection. The newly translated List of Propositions that Vollenhoven submitted to the Curators confirms this. Immortality is not an inherent quality of the soul, but a gift that God gives to his children at the Last Judgment. See online at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/aevum/PropV.html>].

<sup>71</sup> The idea of restlessness of the heart comes from Augustine, but Dooyeweerd expands the maxim to include the restlessness of the world in our heart. Vollenhoven denied the idea of the supratemporal heart, he denied that temporal reality is restless, and he certainly denied that temporal reality was restless in man’s heart, as the religious root.

<sup>72</sup> See for example NC I, 99:

But by regeneration, our reborn selfhood also participates in Christ, the new root of mankind (NC I, 99).

Many reformational philosophers have trouble with this mystical idea.

The heart is not a blind, or dumb witness, even though it transcends the boundary of cosmic time with its temporal diversity of modal aspects, and temporal thought within this diversity. For it is the fullness of our selfhood in which all our temporal functions find their religious concentration and consummation of meaning; “*Ego, in Christo regeneratus, etiam cogitans ex Christo vivo*”, versus the Cartesian “*cogito ergo sum*”, and the irrationalistic “*vivo in fluxu continuo, etiam cogitans.*”

May the discussion continue. And as Dooyeweerd says, “May then the conflict about this philosophy be carried on merely for the sake of truth, and thus in a chivalrous fashion” (NC I, ix).