

# Dooyeweerd's Philosophy of History\*

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## History in Dooyeweerd's System

Herman Dooyeweerd's theories of religion and the modes of reality are obvious marks of his overall philosophy. Indeed, Dooyeweerd devoted most of volume one of the English version of his *magnum opus*, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*,\* to religion and volume two to the modalities (cf. *NC* 1:541-42). By contrast, Dooyeweerd produced no volume on his philosophy of history, but instead dispersed his ideas of history throughout *New Critique* and his other writings. We have to bring the elements together ourselves in order to hear the whole story. In spite of this, it is fair to say that his philosophy of history gives motivation to his entire structure. He constructed his system as an ontology and epistemology, but he made every effort to give it the dynamic responsiveness of history.<sup>1</sup>

We find throughout Dooyeweerd's writings all the elements we associate with philosophies of history—theories of time, becoming, change, continuity, development, progress, and so on—as well as a theory of historical study. We even find an interpretation of the course of civilization, especially what he calls “Western civilization,” i.e., European and European-related cultures, as well as a considerable amount of sheer historical analysis. Along the way he discussed thinkers we associate with the philosophy of history, including Voltaire, Giovanni Battista Vico, J. G. von Herder, G. W. F. Hegel, August Comte, Jacob Burckhardt, Leopold von Ranke, Karl Marx, Herbert Spencer, Oswald Spengler, Arnold Toynbee, Pitrikin Sorokin, and others.<sup>2</sup> In English parlance, Dooyeweerd would be readily classified, even if

\* This essay is adapted from the original version published in *The Legacy of Herman Dooyeweerd: Reflections on Critical Philosophy in the Christian Tradition*, ed. C. T. McIntire (University of America Press, Lanham, MD, 1985).

· Herman Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, 4 vols. (Amsterdam: H. J. Paris; Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1953-58; reprint, St. Catherines: Paideia, 1983; Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1997), [hereafter *NC*]. The English version is partly a revision, and partly a translation, of Herman Dooyeweerd, *De wijsbegeerte der wetsidee* (Amsterdam: H. J. Paris, 1935-36).

<sup>1</sup> On Dooyeweerd's philosophy of history, see two excellent essays: Dale Van Kley, "Dooyeweerd as Historian," in *A Christian View of History?* ed. George Marsden and Frank Roberts (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 139-80; and Earl William Kennedy, "Herman Dooyeweerd on History: An Attempt to Understand Him," *Fides et historia* 6 (1973): 1-21. I am in general agreement with Van Kley's criticisms (except for their tone), and, paradoxically, I emerge both more critical and more appreciative of Dooyeweerd than he. I doubt that Dooyeweerd should be regarded as a "historian," however; philosopher of history is enough for him to be.

<sup>2</sup> See the general surveys of philosophy of history, such as: Frank Manuel, *Shapes of Philosophical History* (Palos Alto: Stanford University Press, 1965), and Grace E. Cairns, *Philosophies of History*

against his will (NC 1:548), as a “speculative” philosopher of history.<sup>3</sup> This means that he provided us with theories about the overall course of history and its interpretation that cannot be established by empirical research alone. He also offered us a theory of historical knowledge, but one which members of the school of thought known as analytic philosophy would no doubt find unacceptable as “critical” philosophy of history.<sup>4</sup>

Dooyeweerd worked out his philosophy of history during the 1920s and early 1930s. His aim in creating it was, in the first place, to fill out and complete his system in the tradition of the neo-Calvinist thinker Abraham Kuyper. He had to find a place for historical study as one of the academic disciplines, and he needed to account for historical processes in the world. Virtually all the elements of his philosophy of history were integrated into his system by the time he published the Dutch version of his *magnum opus*, *De wijsbegeerte der wetsidee* [*The philosophy of the law-idea*], in 1935 and 1936.

Dooyeweerd had a second and more urgent aim in building his philosophy of history. Along with countless others of his generation, he believed that his civilization, “Western civilization,” experienced a profound crisis. He sought, partly via his philosophy of history, to understand the crisis and to suggest a solution. In this he continued the lines begun by Oswald Spengler in *The Decline of the West*, which appeared in German in 1918 and in English in 1926, and worked parallel with Arnold Toynbee, whose first three volumes of *A Study of History* appeared in 1934.

Dooyeweerd’s analysis of the crisis went through two distinct phases. During the 1920s and 1930s, after World War I, he wrote generally about the way in which secular humanism had spawned numerous -isms, movements which made gods out of one or another aspect, or thing, in reality, such as rationalism, irrationalism, socialism, liberalism, vitalism, and so on. Historicism was one -ism among others in this phase. But then came the Nazis, the Stalinists, the Great Depression in capitalism, and, above all, World War II with its mad devastation and the Nazi totalitarian domination of the Netherlands. Dooyeweerd was shaken by these events and interpreted them as historicism gone wild. He revised his analysis accordingly. In essays published serially between August 1945 and May 1948, in a weekly newspaper entitled *Nieuw Nederland* [*New Netherlands*], later published in English as *Roots of Western Culture*:

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(New York: Citadel, 1962).

<sup>3</sup> See W. H. Walsh, *An Introduction to Philosophy of History*, 2d rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1967); but see William Dray's suggested revision in *Perspectives on History* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 1-5.

<sup>4</sup> I refer to the philosophers of the logic of language in the tradition of Ludwig Wittgenstein, A. J. Ayer, and Carl Hempel.

*Pagan, Secular, and Christian Options*,\* he called Nazism an “unspeakably bloody and reactionary regime” and “the degenerate spiritual offspring of modern historicism.” (*Roots*, 86). Historicism, he concluded, was that “dangerous spirit,” that “fatal illness,” that understands all of reality as nothing but dynamic historical process, and that “claims that everything is relative and historically determined, including one’s belief in lasting values” (*Roots*, 61-62). With this handle on the enemy, he reinterpreted the history of secular humanism since the end of the Enlightenment as the “historicistic” period in which all varieties of humanism are permeated by the view that reality is simply historical. In the English edition (1953) of his *magnum opus*, he added a section on historicism (*NC* 1:207-15), and published this comment:

[S]ince the appearance of the Dutch edition it has become evident that the phenomena of spiritual uprooting in Humanistic thought were not merely of a passing nature, but reflect a crisis in the very spiritual foundations of western culture. (*NC* 1:208)

Dooyeweerd thus came to the conclusion that the crisis was spiritual, that it pervaded the entirety of civilization, and that it was especially due to historicism. He traced the origins of historicism to the eighteenth-century philosophers Vico and Herder. He reckoned the spiritual crisis began with Friedrich Nietzsche in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, led to the radical pessimism of Spengler, and spread with an accelerated tempo throughout the civilization under the impact of the two world wars. During his first lecture tour in North America in 1959, in lectures published in 1960 in the book *In the Twilight of Western Thought*,\* he suggested that what he called “Western civilization” had lost its sense of direction and its faith in abiding truth (*Twi*, 62). In a very direct way, Dooyeweerd saw his philosophy of history as a genuine weapon against historicism. From at least 1941 onward, he devoted more explicit attention to reaping the kernels of truth about history that historicism had to offer while he also sought to sharpen his philosophy of history as an alternative to it.<sup>5</sup> He constructed a Christian philosophy of history at a time he believed to be a great turning point of world history (*Twi*, 62).<sup>6</sup>

\* Herman Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture: Pagan, Secular, and Christian Options* (Toronto: Wedge, 1979), [hereafter *Roots*].

\* *In the Twilight of Western Thought: Studies in the Pretended Autonomy of Philosophical Thought* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1960), [hereafter *Twi*].

<sup>5</sup> I refer here to the shift in Dooyeweerd's interpretation of what he came to call the religious ground motives: in the *Wijsbegeerte der wetsidee* (1935-36) he wrote about what he regarded as merely basic themes, while from 1941 onward, including in his revisions of *New Critique* (1953-57), he treated the themes as something greater, as dynamic spiritual sources of power in the movement of history. See John N. Kraay, "Successive Conceptions in the Development of the Christian Philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd," *Philosophia Reformata*, 45 (1980): 22-32.

<sup>6</sup> C. T. McIntire, "The Renewal of Christian Views of History in an Age of Catastrophe," in *God, History, and Historians: Modern Christian Views of History*, ed. C. T. McIntire (New York: Oxford

There was a third aim to Dooyeweerd's philosophy of history. He wished to contribute to the unfolding of God's creation in the sense of Genesis 1:26-30, which he took to be a cultural mandate given by God to all people. His philosophy of history may be interpreted as an extended attempt to explain that cultural mandate and to fathom how creation might be said to unfold in the ways of love, justice, and peace under human leadership (*NC* 2:249). He intended, no doubt, an explanation on the scale of universal history, although he expressed it in terms of a struggle for the future of "Western civilization" (*Roots*, 108; *NC* 1:215), and a struggle in particular for the future of the Dutch nation (*Roots*, 82f.).

In the analysis that follows, I shall present the main elements of Dooyeweerd's philosophy of history, primarily as he presented it in *New Critique* (1953-58): time, the historical aspect, development, and the interpretation of history. I shall seek to explicate his views and discuss them critically in order to distinguish what might be of abiding value from what might be left behind. I shall have two questions in the back of my mind: does his philosophy account for the process and course of history? and does it illuminate the study of history?

## **Time**

Dooyeweerd left no room for doubt about the importance of his theory of time within his system. In a summary statement published in 1953 he wrote: "The idea of cosmic time constitutes the basis of the philosophical theory of reality in this book. By virtue of its integral character it may be called new" (*NC* 1:28). The adjective he most often used to describe reality was "temporal," as in "temporal reality." Things in the world were to him "temporal things" and human society was "temporal human society." He did sometimes use other terms, like "empirical reality" or "created reality," but none as consistently as "temporal reality." Time, for Dooyeweerd, was the most basic way to identify reality, and it was good. For him it had none of the negative connotations associated, for example, with some Christian views that understood time as merely fleeting and passing away, or with Hindu and Buddhist views of time as a prison of the soul. Moreover, he understood time in a very full way, refusing to limit time to its merely physical, astronomical, or even psychological manifestations. That is why he referred to time as "cosmic time."

Dooyeweerd's insistence upon calling time "cosmic" is actually a hint that there is something unique about his view. He occasionally used what appear to be synonyms for cosmic time, notably "cosmic horizon of time," "temporal world-order," "Divine world-order," and "Divine

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University Press, 1977), 3-11.

order of creation” (e.g., *NC* 2:552-65). These terms indicate a concept quite different from what you and I mean when we refer to past, present, and future, or when we read or write history. Curiously, Dooyeweerd did not seem to regard his theory of time as part of his philosophy of history. He explicitly told us, “The problem of time cannot be a particular theme, since it has a universal transcendental character, and as such embraces every particular philosophical question” (*NC* 1:542). It will take some explanation to see how his view of time relates to his philosophy of history.

In one crucial respect, Dooyeweerd’s theory of time is traditional. He contrasted time with eternity. For him eternity was associated with transcendence, with God the Creator and Origin of all that is. Eternity was contrasted with immanence and creatureliness (*NC* 1:8-16). Eternity had to do with “the life beyond” that is hidden from us. For us to know about eternity, “the transcendent light of eternity must force its way through time” (*NC* 2:561).

What comes next is the surprise in Dooyeweerd’s theory. Cosmic time is not eternity, but it is not simply creaturely time either. It took Dooyeweerd quite a while to work out his theory of time. We know that he achieved the cardinal elements of his view by 1931, and that he then put time at the center of his entire system. This he elaborated in his *Wijsbegeerte der wetsidee* of 1935, but he was not ready to discuss the theme in full until 1940. He worked a summary of his view into *New Critique* in 1953 (*NC* 1:22-34).<sup>7</sup>

Dooyeweerd theorized that cosmic time has two sides. On the one side, time is the order of succession and simultaneity. This is the universal side of law which he called “cosmomic,” meaning universal law. On the other side, time is duration. This is the subject side composed of individual positive phenomena subject to cosmic law. Cosmic time comprehended the two sides together in an indissoluble coherence as “time order” with “time duration,” or as “law” with “subject” (*NC* 1:24, 28).

So far we easily recognize three terms we can associate with time—succession, simultaneity, and duration—three time words. The divisions between the terms, as well as the limitation of the ensemble to those three terms, have the appearance of being arbitrary, however. Does not duration reflect an order which we might regard as the order of duration? Moreover, how may we exclude as basic a host of other terms and images associated with time, including, for example, flux, course, movement, process, progress, as well as occurrence, recurrence,

<sup>7</sup> See Peter J. Steen, *The Structure of Herman Dooyeweerd's Thought* (Toronto: Wedge, 1983). Also see Herman Dooyeweerd, “Het tijdsprobleem in de wijsbegeerte der wetsidee,” *Philosophia Reformata*, 5 (1940): 160-82, 193-234.

regress, continuity, change, dynamics, and so on? We will need to hear more about what law and subject have to do with it, but not yet.

Dooyeweerd's theory goes farther and, as it does, it sounds less and less as if it has to do with what we experience as time. The cosmomic side is also the side of the totality of meaning, of the unity of reality. The positive, subject side is the side of the diversity of meaning, the multiplicity of reality. Dooyeweerd likened cosmic time to the image of a prism in which the light of the fullness of meaning is refracted into a range of diverse colors. This diversity is manifested as the modes of reality as well as the incalculable range of individual phenomena we encounter in our experience of reality. His time theory leads into his ontological theories of modalities and individual structures which are "founded" in cosmic time. Thus, to the cosmic horizon of time as the basic denominator, he added "the modal horizon" and "the horizon of the structures of individuality" (*NC* 3:77). It seems fair to observe that while this move may be useful in providing an understanding of the ontic relationship of unity and diversity in reality, it does not help to clarify much about time. He appears to have conflated the theme of unity and diversity with the question of time. And the prism image, whatever its worth in illustrating unity and diversity of meaning, is too static to serve as a symbol for time.

As Dooyeweerd elaborated his modal theory, he stuck to one image of time with almost complete consistency: the order of the various modes was, he said, a time order of earlier and later modes (*NC* 2:49-54). He did not refer to the modes as ranked in a hierarchy of lower and higher. Rather, he described the numerous analogies within one mode to another mode as "anticipations" and "retrocipations," both time words (*NC* 2:74-76). Similarly, he suggested that the modal order of biotic to psychic to logical to historical to lingual replicates the time order in which these functions begin to operate in the course of the life of a newborn baby (*NC* 2:112-13, 3:71-79).<sup>8</sup> All of this is no doubt debatable, but in one respect at least the notion that modal order is the same as temporal order seems highly implausible. Assuming phenomena in reality are describable in some fashion as exhibiting biotic, social, ethical, and other such modal aspects, can we imagine anything coming into existence or starting to function in a temporal order one mode at a time? Does not anything in reality that exists, including infants, exist as a whole and function as a whole right from the start of its, and their, existence? Moreover, does the temporal order of the emergence of functions in an infant tell us anything about the order of the emergence of functions in a state or a guild or a bee colony? It would seem that Dooyeweerd, while consciously identifying ontological order with time order, has mistakenly done so.

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<sup>8</sup> For an explanation of modal theory, see Calvin G. Seerveld, "Dooyeweerd's Legacy for Aesthetics: Modal Law Theory," *The Legacy of Herman Dooyeweerd*, 41-79.

One insight emerges from Dooyeweerd's modal theory which I would consider to be one of the most creative things he has to teach us in the philosophy of history. He theorized that time is manifested differently in each modal aspect of reality and that different types of phenomena manifest time differently (*NC* 1:33-34 and *NC*, *passim*). What this means is, for example, that clocks and calendars record not simply time, but specifically astronomic time. There are other types of time. If a one-hour class lecture is fascinating, it feels as though the time flies, but if the lecture is boring it feels as though the time scarcely moves at all; that is a psychological variety of time. When we use past, present, and future tenses in our speech, we exhibit linguistic time. Church liturgies recapitulate the story of Jesus Christ's life as an expression of faith time. And so on. Our awareness of time, our study of time relations, and our historical explanations could be considerably richer if we would adopt this insight. It has only barely been explored.<sup>9</sup>

There is another step that Dooyeweerd took in his theory of cosmic time that brings us back to the theme of law and subject. The cosmonomic side is the order of laws and norms in the universe. They may be regarded as God's ways of expressing his Word through the very constitution of the creation. But these laws and norms, this creational Word, are present only as structural principles of potentiality or possibility. For these structured, creational principles to be effective in human existence, humans must make them positive laws and norms. This process Dooyeweerd called "positivizing." Positivizing occurs first as rules, norms, standards, and laws in human affairs, and second as existing things and entities. There is a relationship between potential and actual. Everything that can be is potentially there, but human action is required for anything in particular to exist. As a result, most potential is never actualized (*NC* 1:105, 2:335-36, 3:173-74). All of this has a distinctly Aristotelian ring to it, despite Dooyeweerd's protests to the contrary (cf. *NC* 1:25, 226). It evokes images of innumerable laws and other phenomena resting in some preexistent state, as if there were such a thing. It has no obvious connection with time. It does seem, however, to be a genuine attempt to explain in a theoretical way how human phenomena might be understood as manifestations of God's creative presence. As such, it constitutes Dooyeweerd's primary defense against historicism. In other words, what we do in the universe does not merely emerge out of ourselves, and the course of actions and events is not created by us out of nothing. Rather, our human actions and their results as history are in themselves also expressions of God's creation

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<sup>9</sup> For more, see my sketch of time in C. T. McIntire, "Historical Study and the Historical Dimension of Our World," in *History and Historical Understanding*, C. T. McIntire and Ronald A. Wells, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 22-30. See also, for example, Keven Lynch, *What Time Is This Place?* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972) and especially J. T. Fraser, *The Voices of Time: A Cooperative Survey of Man's Views of Time as Expressed by the Sciences and the Humanities*, 2d ed. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981).

in some fundamental way. The relationship can be seen as the relationship between God's creation and human history. Human history is not merely history with all our relativity and historical situatedness; human history is also dependent upon and in some way a revelation of God's will for the creation. I would count this as one of Dooyeweerd's main insights for us to follow up.

Dooyeweerd's theory may or may not be the best way to explain the relationship of creation and history; to decide that issue is beyond my purpose here. It is enough for us to find out that his theory of cosmic time is, in this respect, a misnomer. It might better be called a theory of creation order and creation law. His "cosmonomic side" may be taken as his attempt by means of theory to locate God's creational Word. His occasional synonyms for cosmic time—"Divine world-order" or "Divine order for creation"—fit better with what he attempted to describe. What he called "temporal order" would perhaps better be regarded as ontological order; then we are free to understand time in reality as something other than ontic structure.

We need to look briefly at one other element of Dooyeweerd's theory of cosmic time before we move on. That is his concept of the supratemporal. What we have seen so far is that between the eternal transcendence of God and the positive, subjective course of human action Dooyeweerd posited the divine law-order of creation. In a sense, that law-order is, for him, supratemporal. So is our human "self."<sup>10</sup> It was crucial to Dooyeweerd, as he put it, "that human existence is not restricted to the temporal world, and does not find its ultimate internal destination in the [temporal world]" (*NC* 3:88). What he regarded as our human ability to transcend time and to communicate with the eternal arises from our "self," which he variously called our "I," our "ego," or our "heart." Our self is our humanity understood in our unity, integrality, coherence; our self is the centeredness of our created being, by which we transcend the diversity of reality. We recognize here a parallel with the unity and diversity theme we discussed earlier (*NC* 1:20-21, 24). Our self is also the seat of religion, which Dooyeweerd understood as our innate impulse to direct our existence toward God or toward some substitute (*NC* 1:57). Our self, finally, is "the central sphere of occurrence," by which he meant that whatever occurs through human action originates out of our self (*NC* 1:32).

What we may notice about all this is that our self—our unity, our religious dynamic, our initiation of action—is, according to Dooyeweerd, supratemporal, that is, beyond and transcending time. This concept created problems for Dooyeweerd, for if our self is supratemporal, how may "I" exist in time and how may my religious impulse and initiation of

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<sup>10</sup> See James H. Olthuis, "Dooyeweerd on Religion and Faith," *The Legacy of Herman Dooyeweerd*, 21-40.



action have consequences in time? Am “I” with my religion and my origination of action not temporal? Dooyeweerd’s answer seems to mean that I am not temporal insofar as I am integral, but I am temporal insofar as I express myself in my diversity. Similarly, he seems to state that religion as my central dynamic is not temporal, while the results of my religion are temporal. Hence, for Dooyeweerd, neither “I” nor my religion may be studied empirically (*NC* 1:57-58). He contradicted this claim himself, however, by giving us what he regarded as empirically based theories of the self and religion. And he tangled himself in explanations about how the supratemporal may escape being enclosed beyond time and may instead “penetrate” to the “temporal sphere of our consciousness” (cf. *NC* 1:55). All in all, his theory of the supratemporal erected what would appear to be an unnecessary middle realm between eternity and time. Once again it appears that he conflated the problem of unity and diversity with questions of time. A more fruitful line of thought might be to explore how we as temporal creatures are, by virtue of our being temporal, both in communication with God and capable of manifesting God’s presence in history.

### **The Historical Aspect**

Dooyeweerd’s theory of cosmic time brought us to the door of another unique element of his philosophy of history, namely, his theory of the historical aspect of human experience. The prism of cosmic time refracts the unity of meaning into the diverse modes of meanings, and one of these modes is the historical aspect. According to his theory, it is crucial to affirm that the historical aspect is only one of many modal aspects of any temporal thing or temporal societal entity. The historical aspect is comparable in that respect with any other aspect, such as the numerical, lingual, or social. Treating the historical as merely an aspect gave Dooyeweerd his second defense against historicism. By restricting the historical to its proper limits, he believed that we may overcome the religious fallacy by which one particular feature of reality is enlarged out of proportion with the rest, even to the extent of making it the absolute source for all the rest. Historicism committed such a fallacy with the historical mode, he claimed, and thereby brought about the ironic curiosity of turning the very relativity of existence into an absolute (*NC* 1:46, 2:192; *Twi*, 83). The merit of this defense against historicism depends on whether Dooyeweerd has validly construed the historical as merely a modal aspect.

Identifying the historical aspect served as Dooyeweerd’s way of locating what field historical study properly investigates. Historical study, he proposed, examines the historical aspect of anything, similar to the way biology examines the bio-organic aspect, and gives the historian

a focus that is distinguishable ontologically from that of any other kind of scholar. Again the value of this way of indicating the focus of historical study depends on the validity of his theory that there is a historical aspect comparable with other such modal aspects. Before analyzing this matter of validity, however, it is important to note that even to pose the question of the focus and limits of historical study and to seek an answer ontologically is a distinguishing mark of Dooyeweerd's method. It is, in my opinion, a crucial question to ask and answer, and suggests an insight worth pursuing.

According to Dooyeweerd's theory, the crux of the historical aspect, what he characteristically called "the nuclear moment" of the aspect, he identified as follows. The key word, strictly speaking, is "power," in the sense of control and mastery. This he amplified as "the controlling manner of moulding [or forming] the social process," all of which he associated with the word "cultural." This he amplified still further as "the cultural process of development of human society" (cf. *NC* 2:68-69, 194-201; *Twi*, 90-93). Putting it all together, Dooyeweerd summarized his designation of the historical aspect:

Mastery or control, in its original modal sense, elevates itself above what is given and actualized after a fixed pattern apart from human planning. It pre-supposes a given material whose possibilities are disclosed in a way exceeding the patterns given and realized by nature, and [are] actualized after a free project of form-giving with endless possibilities of variation.

It always seeks new roads in such a way that what precedes fructifies that which follows, and thus a certain continuity is preserved in cultural development. (*NC* 2:197-98)

If you are new to Dooyeweerd's thought, you need not feel disconcerted if you wonder how he managed to pack all of that together into the nuclear moment for the historical mode symbolized by the word "power." Indeed, therein lies the immediate problem we encounter with his designation of the historical aspect. He is unable to permit the term "power" to stand on its own, and he has difficulty using the term "power" to evoke in us anything we might readily associate with the key to understanding the historical character of reality. Let me examine his designation element by element.

The English term "power" was Dooyeweerd's own choice as a translation of the Dutch words *macht* or *beheersing* which correspond with the German words *Macht* or *Beherrschung*. He wanted to avoid some senses of the term "power," such as ability, or effectuating capability, or

energy, or force. To do this, he added the words “control,” or “mastery.” What comes to mind is craftsmanship and technique. The image his words conjure is that of a potter who, as a master craftsman, works expertly with clay (the material) to produce a pot. The potter is not like a spider, Dooyeweerd observed, who can make only webs. As a craftsman he can form first a pot, then a plate, and next a ceramic sculpture. The possibilities are all there in the clay. As the potter freely changes his plan, he forms new varieties of products. This potter image, indeed, seems to be the model from which Dooyeweerd derived his designation of the historical aspect. This image is what he depicted by the words “forming” or “moulding,” and what he meant by the word “cultural.”

We can leave aside the question of whether “power” may be understood better in its primary meaning as energy or force, perhaps suggesting Dooyeweerd’s physical mode. The model of the potter forming the clay into pots serves well for any human action in relation to some nonhuman physical material like clay. These are actions in which ideas, intentions, plans, and predictable results are often readily discernible. However, as soon as we transfer the model to human relations with plants and animals, and above all with other humans, it begins to fail. We may quite rightly wince when we imagine roses, cats, and other people treated as material to be worked upon according to some variable plan. Our actions in such relationships are more subtly involved in complexities than his model suggests. We might admire the control farmers have over their crops, but that control lasts only as long as the economy and the weather are fine. We might even appreciate the control a good speaker has over a crowd, but that delicate relationship lasts only as long as the crowd consents to listen. As these examples illustrate, such control and planning are fragile even in the best of times. When we expand the examples to the countless more complex situations that we experience in our history, the notion of control or mastery becomes less and less serviceable for understanding much of anything. Historians would have little to study if they restricted themselves to accounts of control or mastery in human affairs.

We may be sure that Dooyeweerd wanted us to consider “power” with respect to even the most complex matters, for he added the words “social process” to his designation of the historical aspect and he returned to the theme of power in his theory of social structures. But even here it appears that he had a restricted range of situations in mind. He included only humans within the scope of the historical and excluded the history of rocks, plants, and animals, except as they are involved with humans. Within human situations, he almost invariably cited examples of an individual or small groups in simplified relationships, i.e., thinkers, politicians, church leaders, military generals, inventors, and the like, whom he called

“the moulders [formers] of history” (see, e.g., *NC* 2:243-44). Such cases reinforce the observation, with respect to historical causation and in spite of his own explicit intentions, that Dooyeweerd might be classed as an idealist and individualist, for whom ideas and individuals are the chief factors in history. His conception gives historians little to go on in analyzing the vast complexity of factors and situations we face most of the time.

My discussion so far tends toward the conclusion that what Dooyeweerd selected as his nuclear moment for the historical aspect does not fit historical study very well. There is a final element in his designation of the historical aspect which leads us to question the historical aspect itself, that is, whether what Dooyeweerd cast his eye upon can be treated as limitable to a modal aspect as defined by his theory. I refer to his addition of the concept of “development.” He tied power to development. Something subtle occurred in *New Critique* almost as soon as he introduced the passage I quoted at length a few paragraphs ago. Once having completed his brief discussion of power, he began in subsequent paragraphs and headings to refer to the nuclear moment of the historical not as “power,” but as “cultural development.” For example, he contrasted the psychology of culture with “cultural development itself”; he referred to “the historical aspect conceived as that of cultural development”; he spoke of how law, art, language, and creeds cannot be reduced to “the meaning of cultural development,” although they “appeal to the aspect of cultural development”; he observed that cultural development was “an original modal aspect of human experience” and that “the modal nuclear moment of cultural development is irreducible” (see *NC* 2:196-201, 216-17, 229f.). In each of these examples, if he had stuck to his designation, he should have used the word “power” instead of “cultural development.” It appears that he himself was unaware of what was happening. Explicitly he noted that the word “cultural” in the term “cultural development” was the reference to the historical aspect (*NC* 2:196). And technically speaking, within his system, development is the bio-organic phenomenon of growth. Thus, cultural development would be merely the biotic analogy in the historical mode (*NC* 2:232, 250-51; *Twi*, 93-94).<sup>11</sup> Yet, he neglected his own technical usage by turning cultural development into the primary theme of his discussion of the historical aspect. The genuinely operative term that carries the weight of his argument is not “power,” but “cultural development” or its synonym “historical development.” Interestingly enough, once we notice this drift in his terminology, we can see the term doing yeoman’s work throughout his writings. For example, he called the brief history of humanist thought which he wrote in

<sup>11</sup> To be even more technically precise, Dooyeweerd designated development as the kinetic analogy within the biotic mode of “life,” that is, as biotic movement (*NC* 2:110). Thus, speaking quite precisely according to Dooyeweerd’s system, cultural development is actually “cultural life development” and stands as the kinetic analogy within the biotic analogy within the historical aspect(!).

volume one of *New Critique* “a very short sketch of the main lines of this historical development” (NC 1:172; cf. 66, 325), and he called the history of philosophy “the historical development of philosophic thought” (NC 1:117f.). We encounter still another usage of the term which lets us know clearly what terrain we are on. In a passage newly written for the 1953 version of his *magnum opus*, he briefly surveyed what he called “the ideas of historical development” held by leading thinkers—Hegel, Marx, the Darwinians, and others—and he spoke of how they and their ideas joined the “chaotic struggle for leadership in the future development of the West” (NC 1:207-15). In opposition to such ideas which he believed were permeated with historicism, Dooyeweerd proposed in a lengthy passage that we pursue “the Christian Idea of cultural development” (NC 2:354-65). In the passage, he made clear that by this proposal he did not refer to anything that could be limited to the historical aspect, but to the entire unfolding of the creation throughout the course of history. In technical terms, he called it “the opening process” which in his theory is a transmodal process that moves across and involves every one of his modes and cannot be limited to any one of them. All of this appears to suggest that the historical reality Dooyeweerd had in view when he referred to cultural development is more total and encompassing than his theory could handle in terms of merely the historical aspect. Thus, we have the first indication that calls into question the historical aspect itself.

There is a second indication within Dooyeweerd’s theory which raises questions about there being a historical aspect. In his modal theory of the historical aspect, he surrounded the nuclear moment of power as control or mastery with a panoply of other terms that refer by analogy to other modes of reality. He discussed each of these in a lengthy section in volume two of *New Critique* (NC 2:229-330). I shall refer to them only briefly here in order to make the observation that his discussion of every one of his suggested analogies refers either to some other mode directly or to some transmodal phenomenon. In no case does his proposed analogy consistently fit his theory of a historical aspect. I will merely illustrate. As an analogy in the historical mode to the aspect of faith, he would need something like power-faith, but that would make little sense. Instead he discussed examples of belief in science exercising a powerful influence in early modern Europe. Later he theorized about the role of people’s beliefs and myths in historical development. In either passage, what he looked at was simply faith or belief, whether as a function or as a case history, and such faith is characterized not by his historical mode, but by his “faith” mode. His analogies to the economic, aesthetic, and juridical modes appear to refer to features of the whole process of historical development as a transmodal phenomenon. Is one social institution overdeveloped (economic)? Or are all social groups harmoniously balanced (aesthetic)? And is there one or another social group suffering

“judgment” for being out of balance with the others (juridical)? In addition to questioning how he depicted each of these three aspects of societal history, we may note that they appear to be merely three ways of saying the same thing about a balanced process of development. Under his analogy to the symbolic mode where we might expect something like “symbols of control,” he mentioned erecting war memorials and political monuments. These appear to be nothing other than two cases of nonverbal symbols expressing social memory. For his social analogy, he cited the interrelations between a tribe and representatives of European civilization, or relations between nations which allow influences to pass between them. This would appear to refer to intercultural or international intercourse, and serve merely as a supplement to the relations between individuals within the same society which he discussed under his social mode. In short, his analogies within the historical aspect provide no evidence that there is a separate historical aspect, but instead merely lead us to his other modes as such or to transmodal development. None of his proposed analogies holds up long enough to be useful to a theory of historical study, even though in passing he did bring up many matters of interest to historical study.

I can now mention a third indication within Dooyeweerd’s theory which evokes doubts about his historical aspect. For each modal aspect from the physical mode to the faith mode—the modes that can serve to characterize whole phenomena—Dooyeweerd was able to identify a large number of phenomena that were especially characterized by one of those modes. For each mode, that is, except the historical. He called such a characterizing mode the qualifying or the leading function. He theorized that the qualifying function was decisive for establishing what kind of phenomenon any thing or social structure was. For example, a granite rock is a physical thing qualified by the physical mode; a linden tree is a bio-organic thing qualified by the biotic mode; a state like Canada or India is a political entity qualified by the juridical mode; an Anglican church is a faith community qualified by the mode of faith; and so on for each mode. The difficulty arises with this historical aspect. Is there anything typically characterized by that aspect? He found no examples of things or social structures; even the monuments erected for the benefit of social memory he thought are qualified symbolically (*NC 2:223*).

In the face of this, Dooyeweerd made an unexpected move. If no things or social structures are qualified by the historical aspect, he decided that nearly everything is founded on the historical mode. He meant by this that nearly everything having to do with humans owes its existence to human acts of forming and technical power, including things such as chairs and artworks, and social structures such as states, churches, trade unions, and social clubs (*NC*

3:120, 135-38, 413, 536-39, 575-77, 603-4). The exceptions are biologically founded social structures like families and kinship groups (*NC* 3:266-67, 342). This move is significant because by it, first, he recognized that there is nothing characterized historically as such, and, second, he shifted unwittingly from an ontological analysis of structure to entirely plausible observations about how things and social structures come into being, which is a historical concern par excellence.

Interestingly, Dooyeweerd did come up with something else that he designated as qualified by his historical mode, namely, events which he occasionally called “historically qualified facts” (*NC* 2:193, 223; *Twi*, 85-86). As examples of historical events, he mentioned the Allied invasion of France against the Nazis, the battle of Waterloo, and the happenings in war and revolution commemorated by monuments. Aside from noting the limited range of his illustrations, we may note that the wars and revolutions which he cited were actions by or against governments and, as such, would be more properly regarded within his system as political events, qualified by their juridical function. When we pursue the matter further, we discover that anything we might regard as a historical event, and indeed anything which we may study historically, is (assuming it is possible to find a qualifying function according to Dooyeweerd’s system)<sup>12</sup> qualified by some function other than the historical. This suggests that whatever it is that is historical about things, social structures, and events does not appear susceptible to description by means of the device of a modal aspect. If this is the case, we can find no help here for historical study. The historical character of a phenomenon seems to be attributable to something other than a modal function, something relevant to the phenomenon as a whole, notably the transmodal question of how anything comes into existence.

There is a fourth indication that Dooyeweerd’s theory about a historical mode may be unsatisfactory. And this indication would be enough by itself to render Dooyeweerd’s theory of a historical mode untenable. In my discussion of his view of cosmic time, I explained his idea that time is manifested differently in each different kind of phenomenon. I commented that this was one of his most creative insights. I must now confess that I have one major reservation in my appreciation of this element of his theory. It has to do with how he identified time in his historical aspect. Dooyeweerd posited that the prism of cosmic time yields the expression of time in the historical aspect as past, present, and future (*NC* 2:193). He did not elaborate, but a difficulty with his suggestion strikes us immediately. Does not

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<sup>12</sup> We should keep in mind that Dooyeweerd's theory of qualifying functions applies only to what he called the "differentiated" social structures in which there is one function that takes the lead in characterizing the social entity. He also discussed what he called "undifferentiated" structures, like tribes, and "enkaptic" (or encapsulated) structures, like the whole of French society, which have no single qualifying function. I shall discuss "differentiation" later under development.

every kind of manifestation of time in every mode exhibit past, present, and future? For example, assuming that verb tenses manifest linguistic time, do they not thereby exhibit past, present, and future? And is not the psychological feeling that a boring lecture takes a very long time also an experience of past, present, and future? We can raise comparable questions about every one of his modal aspects. This would suggest that Dooyeweerd landed upon a transmodal feature of time—all things manifest time as past, present, and future—and that his attempt to locate past, present, and future in one modal aspect is mistaken. This also suggests that if we are to find help for historical study, we will need to turn to something other than a modal theory of history.

I only mention a fifth indication which evokes doubts about there being a historical modal aspect. According to Dooyeweerd's theory, only humans are subjects in the historical mode, and rocks, plants, and animals can only enter history as objects of human historical activity. In other words, they can become historical only insofar as they relate to or are incorporated within human history (*NC* 2:196, 229-30). Such a claim amounts to denying that rocks, plants, and animals have a history of their own apart from human involvement. However, the Alps, sequoia trees, and dinosaurs do have a history which geologists, biologists, and zoologists study historically. Noting this observation gives us still another reason to turn from a modal to a transmodal theory of history in order to account for the historical existence of all phenomena, human and nonhuman.

The gist of my discussion of Dooyeweerd's historical aspect points away from a modal treatment of history and toward a transmodal theory of history. His designation of the nuclear moment of the historical aspect appears to be inadequate as a way of identifying the historical character of reality. Moreover, the ambiguous presence of "cultural development" within his modal theory, the referents of his modal analogies, his inability to locate historically qualified phenomena, matched by his move to observe instead how things come into existence, his linkage of historical time to past, present, and future, and his failure to comprehend the historical character of nonhuman phenomena apart from human influence—all these point toward depicting the historical character of reality not as a modal function, but as a transmodal feature of creaturely existence. His proposal that historical study is a modal science, and one having the focus that he suggests, does not withstand critical analysis and, as such, does not seem able to illuminate historical study. If this be so, then it would be difficult to agree with his view that his theory of the historical aspect may serve as an answer to



historicism. Nevertheless, his method of asking what the focus and the limits of historical study are remains important and useful.<sup>13</sup>

## Development

Dooyeweerd's theory of the historical aspect, as we have noticed, came to be dominated by the concept of "cultural development." We now may turn directly to his theory of cultural development to which he gave the technical term "the opening process." We enter for the first time upon the terrain of what he himself regarded as his philosophy of history. It is a fascinating and complicated terrain.

Dooyeweerd's philosophy of history is, as he phrased it, a Christian idea of development (*NC* 2:364-65). It is a comprehensive idea that in a sweeping way embraces the entire course of human civilization and makes use of all the elements of his general philosophy. He himself considered his philosophy of history to be an extended theoretical discussion of the development of created reality in fulfillment of the divine cultural mandate committed to humanity in the beginning (Gen. 1). He even linked the meaning of the cultural mandate in Genesis 1 directly to the nuclear moment of the historical aspect. He did not notice that in this way he reduced the meaning of a comprehensive religious task to the specific meaning of one of his modes. By so doing, however, he provided yet another sign that the history he had in view was not limited to a modal aspect, but was total and comprehensive (*NC* 2:246-48; *Twi*, 93).

By conceiving of his philosophy of history as an idea of cultural development, Dooyeweerd put himself fully in the mainstream of modern European thought, at least since Vico and Herder in the late eighteenth century. He acknowledged Hegel to be the source of the particular tradition of understanding history as development with which he felt affinity (*NC* 3:583-88). A wide mainstream it has been, one explicitly related to the rise of historicism which he otherwise found so religiously objectionable.<sup>14</sup> In the twentieth century, the idea of development succeeded the idea of progress as the dominant symbol for the historical process. Dooyeweerd's theorizing about history occurred during the twenties, thirties, and forties when the idea of progress was collapsing as a viable explanation of history. It was also the time when the new study of cultural anthropology brought one New Guinean, African, or Dutch East Indian tribe after another to European and North American attention. It was also the period when the colonies of the European states struggled for independence. The term

<sup>13</sup> See C. T. McIntire, "The Focus of Historical Study," *Fides et historia* 14 (1981): 6-17.

<sup>14</sup> See Maurice Mandelbaum, *History, Man, and Reason: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Thought* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971).

“development” emerged in politics, philosophy, cultural anthropology, sociology, and economics as the one word that caught in a flash the relationship between the peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America in undeveloped societies, on the one side, and the dominant societies of Europe and North America in developed societies, on the other. Dooyeweerd’s theory of cultural development reflects this experience, and we will understand him better if we keep it in mind.

What was Dooyeweerd’s Christian idea of development? The metaphor he adopted in English to symbolize his meaning was the “opening process” or the “unfolding process.” It was a translation of the Dutch word “*ontsluitingsproces*,” which evokes images of the giant locks of a Dutch canal opening to let the waters rush out or the cervix of a woman in labor opening to allow the birth of a baby. His theory of the opening process complemented his theory of the modal aspects. Both theories elaborated the notion of “sphere sovereignty” that he inherited from Abraham Kuyper. What the modal theory did for his ontology, the theory of the opening process did for his philosophy of history.

Dooyeweerd’s theory of the opening process pertains to the ongoing temporal existence of things and social relationships, and to the world of events, processes, and acts. On the face of it, we have no difficulty agreeing that such matters are indeed germane to history. In his theory of cosmic time, which we saw earlier, he suggested that human actions convert the principles of potentiality, which are the laws and norms of the law side of cosmic time, into real potentials and real actualities. He called this the process of positivizing. For Dooyeweerd, actualizing potentials is a dynamic process that occurs in a noticeably temporal order. The theory of the opening process is his attempt to describe how it happens.

There are two basic kinds of opening process (*NC* 2:177f., 3:59), and both assume Dooyeweerd’s theory of the modal structures understood as the created order of time. Both also have two positions: closed and opened. The opening process is the process of development in moving from the closed to the opened position. The first kind of opening process is the opening of modal functions. Dooyeweerd wrote, “In this process, anticipatory structural moments come to be developed; and these moments disclose their inner coherence of meaning with the modal aspects that are later in order” (*NC* 1:29). I shall give two of his examples. In our ordinary everyday experience, what he called “naive, pre-theoretical experience,” the logical aspect of our thought operates in a closed position so that our experience of modal coherence is whole and integral. The scientists, philosophers, and theoreticians among us have learned to think logically in very precise and theoretical ways. When doing so, their logical function operates in the opened position, and they can make

numerous distinctions and discern logical relationships that the rest of us would miss entirely (*NC* 1:29, 33-34). In a comparable manner, a tribal society usually restricts legal standing entirely to members of the tribe and usually excludes foreigners from peaceful social, juridical, and moral relations with members of the tribe. In such cases, the aspect of social intercourse is closed. One sign of the opening of the social mode would be the first halting steps to grant social access to persons from other tribes or to representatives of “Western civilization” (*NC* 2:182-83).

The second kind of opening process pertains to individual phenomena as wholes, which Dooyeweerd treated in his theory of individual things and social structures. This refers to actual historical processes in which whole entities develop, either according to their own internal potential or according to how they potentially function in relation to each other. For example, a tree internally develops as a fully functioning mature tree, or an economic corporation gradually unfolds in its internal structure as a finely tuned socioeconomic entity (cf. *NC* 3:59). And for example, an artist transforms a piece of marble into a sculpture and thereby opens the potential aesthetic function of the physical material (*NC* 3:109f.). Once a centralized political entity or religious community has provided a society with comprehensive stability, the people of the society are usually in a position to develop other social structures and activities more fully (*NC* 3:568-69, 659).

So far Dooyeweerd’s theory is, at the very least, intriguing. It has the markings of a genuine theory of historical process which may be applicable to a vast range of phenomena. It makes connections and sees comparative features in historical processes that may help to make sense out of otherwise wildly different kinds of things. Each example he gave would need to be examined on its own merits. The whole theory depends for its validity not only on empirical analysis, but also on his theory of the modal aspects. In particular, it depends on what sort of correspondence there may be between the theory of modal order and the actual temporal sequences that the various phenomena go through. Here again, I have my suspicions that he may have unnecessarily confounded ontological order and temporal sequence.

Dooyeweerd applied his theory of the opening process to the most complicated case there is, believing that his theory explained the structure of the development of human civilization as a whole. To understand how he pursued his theory on the scale of the totality of civilization, we need to introduce what is really the key to his theory of the opening process, the triad of differentiation, individuation, and integration (*NC* 2:259-62). He believed that these three are the structural laws of modern society. He acknowledged Hegel as the discoverer of these laws, which Hegel described in “a masterly interpretation of the historical development of the

modern individualized inter-individual societal relations” (NC 3:587). He noted that these laws have found general recognition in sociological theory.<sup>15</sup> For Dooyeweerd, the three terms constituted what he meant by development. In characteristic fashion, Dooyeweerd treated the triad as much more than just useful descriptive devices or theoretical concepts. They each were, he claimed, “a fundamental norm of historical development”:

God has created everything according to its own inner nature; and in the temporal order of genesis and development this inner nature must freely unfold itself.... [The Christian philosopher] appeals to the universal order of creation which has to unfold itself within all aspects of the real process of temporal development, in the biotic, as well as in the psychological, and the post-psychical law-spheres. (NC 2:261-62)

This is a crucial summary statement by Dooyeweerd in which it is evident that the transmodal “temporal order of genesis and development” (NC 2:261) and the process of unfolding or opening of the modal aspects are the same thing; the process by either name embraces all aspects of the creation.

In technical terms, Dooyeweerd regarded the norms of cultural differentiation, individuation, and integration as norms of merely the historical aspect. However, he also believed that differentiation and its companion processes occurred in organic life. This presented a problem. Did differentiation originate, so to speak, in organic life and did differentiation as such belong to the bio-organic aspect the way he asserted that development did? At least since Herder and certainly since the advent of evolutionary theory in biology, one common philosophical trend has been to liken the history of civilization to the bio-organic processes we know in plant and animal life or in our own human biology.<sup>16</sup> Dooyeweerd spoke of “the development of a human being from an undifferentiated impregnated egg-cell to a highly differentiated individuum, and to an ascending series of undifferentiated and more or less differentiated living beings in nature” (NC 2:261). If this is bio-organic differentiation, and if the norm of the historical aspect entailed cultural differentiation, and if, as he also suggested, there is economic differentiation, social differentiation, and so on, where did just plain “differentiation” fit in? We faced precisely the same problem with the term “development,” which Dooyeweerd tried to solve technically by identifying it as originally bio-organic in character. He made no attempt to locate a modal home for differentiation and, thereby,

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<sup>15</sup> Dooyeweerd mentioned Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Ferdinand Tonnies; he could have added Talcot Parsons, Pitrikim Sorokin, and many others.

<sup>16</sup> See Robert Nisbet, *Social Change and History: Aspects of the Western Theory of Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969, 1979); see also Mandelbaum, *History, Man, and Reason* (cited in note 14 above).

allowed the problem to drift. The problem itself, however, points once again towards a transmodal solution, not a modal one.

What do the norms of differentiation, individuation, and integration mean for Dooyeweerd? Integration refers to the need for human societies and civilizations to cohere as wholes as they go through manifold changes throughout their history. Ultimately, integration needs to push toward giving actual expression to the unity of humanity. This he also related directly to the cultural mandate of Genesis 1 by affirming not only that all humanity is spiritually one, but also that our human task of development includes the task of achieving that unity in human history (*NC* 2:262). In this regard, he stood well within the ancient Christian tradition of universal history.<sup>17</sup> He put himself firmly against any narrow allegiances such as racism, nationalism, and class warfare. But there is also a difficulty with his understanding of the way in which universal history is to be achieved. We shall get to that shortly.

Individuation means the process of forming new individual entities in the course of history, including new social structures such as states, churches, and so on. Dooyeweerd related it to the founding of nations and the multiplication of nation states in the twentieth century. In the debate over Dutch national identity after the Second World War, Dooyeweerd went on record stating that not only were nations and nation-states a normative outworking of individuation, but also that the Dutch nation in particular could be viewed as a “normative type” because of the especially high quality of Dutch life when compared with other nations (*Roots*, 81-83). We might excuse him for his overloyal Dutch nationalism, but we have no reason to accept his justification of the modern anarchy in the international politics of states and nation-states as normative. In a similar way, he regarded the increasing recognition of individual persons, their merit, and their opportunities as an apt expression of the norm of individuation (*Roots*, 84). However, he did not make clear why the modern European and North American version of atomistic bourgeois individualism should be considered a good expression of the norm.

Of the triad of norms, differentiation was the one about which Dooyeweerd spoke most often, and the crucial norm for his understanding of the course of development. Technically put, differentiation in society is the process by which the modal aspects, each with its specific norms, come to expression in such a way that one is separated from the next and each serves as a qualifying function in at least one distinct social structure. In the fullest sense of his term, human civilization opened up, unfolded, and actualized its potential through such a process. The process, like a journey, had two ends. At one end were all undifferentiated societies and

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<sup>17</sup> See Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983; second edition, 1994).

social structures, and at the other was modern differentiated society. In between were various gradations of more or less differentiated social structures. On the one end, were the tribal societies of New Guinea, sub-Sahara Africa, and the former Dutch East Indies, the societies he consistently called primitive and compared with the childhood stage of a person's life history (*NC* 2:178). On the other end, was modern European and European-linked society in which he stood and which he used as his model. Modern society was differentiated so as to include, as he styled it, "a state, a church, a free industrial or trade-life, free associations, a free unfolding of fine arts, a scientific community, etc." (*NC* 2:261; see also *Roots*, 79 and *Twi*, 100). In the middle were the social structures of medieval Christendom.

We must remember that differentiation, individuation, and integration are norms of "the Divine world-order" for Dooyeweerd. The creation *ought* to unfold in such a manner. We humans *ought* to pursue our tasks in history in order to actualize these norms. He was quite intrigued by the question of how a historian might judge the difference between progressive and reactionary tendencies in history. He was disturbed by the use many political parties made of such labels within Dutch politics to praise themselves and castigate their enemies or favorite *bete noire*. He made progressive and reactionary tendencies in history the theme of an address before the Royal Dutch Academy of Arts and Sciences.<sup>18</sup> He believed that he had found the objective criterion for making judgments about what was progressive and what is reactionary in this triad of norms. If a tendency promoted or entailed differentiation, it was progressive, even if ungodly; if it restricted or sought to reverse differentiation, it was reactionary, even if Christian in content. His classic examples of reactionary tendencies were the Christian aristocratic attempts to restore the remnants of feudal France after the defeat of Napoleon, and the Nazi attempt to create an undifferentiated German Volk under the Third Reich. Examples of progressive tendencies were the leadership in the differentiation of culture provided by the early medieval church and the promotion by the humanistic Enlightenment of the differentiation of natural science, the individualization of economic initiative, and the integration of European society.

More could be said in expounding Dooyeweerd's Christian idea of development, but perhaps we have enough before us to give a fair view of his thought. What do we make of all this? Again, his thinking continues to be intriguing, and we can easily see the creative turns he took even while staying fully within the mainstream of European thought on development—his

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<sup>18</sup> Herman Dooyeweerd, "The Criteria of Progressive and Reactionary Tendencies in History," in *Verslag van de plechtige viering van het honderdvijftigjarig bestaan der Koninklijke Nederlandse Academie van Wetenschappen, 6-9 Mei 1958* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1958), 213-28.

relating development to the creation order, his elaboration of a fully systematic historical theory, his search for an ecumenical and independent criterion of progress, and so on.

There seem to be large problems with Dooyeweerd's theory, however. In the first place, it is a theory that commits the fallacy of reading history merely backwards and defining history from the present, much like the Whig interpretation of history about which Herbert Butterfield complained many years ago.<sup>19</sup> Dooyeweerd could only know that anything (e.g., capitalist industry) was conceivably a "potential" because he had seen it in existence; retroactively, he treated its antecedent situations, and even the creation order, as holding the thing "in potential." He could decide that certain societies were undifferentiated, or undeveloped, by defining them negatively as not possessing features or structures that presumably later differentiated, or developed, societies possessed. Consequently, in the second place, it is a theory that cannot handle the future. If all societies are defined in relation to a norm which looks like the present state of society, what happens after today? Does development via differentiation merely go on endlessly? Can we conceive of a still more differentiated society? Can we be sure that the societies of the future will not be quite unlike today's, perhaps as a new kind of "undifferentiated" society, rendering the entire theory of development totally inapplicable? In the third place, the theory assumes that the development of civilization unfolds in a unilinear temporal order of stages, starting from an undifferentiated, undeveloped state, passing through degrees of differentiation, until reaching the fully differentiated state (cf. *Roots*, 79-80). According to his example, this would place tribal societies at the beginning of the process of stages which culminates in modern society. Can we point to any one society that ever passed through such stages? Can we claim empirically that tribal societies were the origins of modern European and North American society? Do we really think that the societies of Papua today, ancient Germania, and ancient Israel are the same kind of tribal societies? And are our contemporaries in Papua to be taken as our ancestors? When we answer such questions, the theory appears as merely an abstract arrangement which cannot serve as historical description; to arrange all the different societies as representing stages in a process of development turns out to be an implausible theoretical artifice.

There are other problems. It is to Dooyeweerd's credit that he incorporated cultural anthropological findings about tribal societies outside Europe into his theory. His view of such societies is too one-sidedly negative, however. In sociological terms, they are more complex than he allowed, and they display considerable personal individuality of a different sort from Europe, as well as a highly differentiated range of social relationships different from

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<sup>19</sup> Herbert Butterfield, *Whig Interpretation of History* (London: Bell, 1931; reprint, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973).

but paralleling our modern societies.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, their societal arrangements display integrative features which make our societies look utterly fragmented by contrast. In any case, tribal characteristics vary considerably from tribe to tribe, and it is difficult to approve and disapprove of them all in one sweep. Further, how may we accept the implications of his theory that all such societies, by virtue of being “undifferentiated” and at the “primitive” stage of world development, are historically antinormative and ought to disappear? Are they really like children who ought to grow up? Should they all become like us?

This brings us to the observation that, even against his expressed will on the subject (*NC* 2:262; *Twi*, 112), Dooyeweerd accepted the composition of modern European and North American societies as normative in an important sense of the word. Not only did modern European and North American societies serve as his model of differentiation according to his meaning of the term (*NC* 2:261; *Roots*, 79), but he also found himself approving their particular version of that differentiation more than he disapproved it. We have already noticed how he approved Dutch nationality and the European nation-state system of sovereign political entities. He also approved liberal constitutional state structures in the form of a modern welfare state. He approved capitalist economic enterprise with its internal structural division between capital and labor, and with its chief purpose of creating, maintaining, and increasing capital.<sup>21</sup> He approved the self-standing nuclear family and the organizational structure of Reformed churches. And so on through his list of today’s differentiated societal structures. Most of this we may glean from his theory of differentiated societal structures in volume three of *New Critique* where he identified the normative characteristics that political, economic, familial, ecclesiastical, and other social forms ought to exhibit. What Dooyeweerd faced was the difficulty of trying to discern the normative “Divine world-order” itself by looking through a slide photograph of modern European societies in the middle third of the twentieth century. What he detected as normative resembled his modern European society. It is understandable that he appreciated so many of the fundamental features of the society in which he lived, but it does not seem theoretically warranted for him to identify normative principles of the divine order and construct a theory of the whole development of human

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<sup>20</sup> I think, for example, of E. E. Evans-Pritchard's several studies of the Nuer people of Africa that describe their religion, kinship groups, marriage relations, political structures, and economic institutions. See *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People, Kinship and Marriage among the Nuer, and Nuer Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947, 1951, 1956, respectively).

<sup>21</sup> I base this summary statement of Dooyeweerd's view of economic enterprise not upon *New Critique*, but upon a longer passage about industrial and business enterprise written in 1946 and published in *Vernieuwing en bezinning om het reformatorisch grondmotief* (Zutphen: J. B. van den Brink, 1959), 201f. This passage was not included in the book's English translation, *Roots of Western Culture*.



civilization on the basis of one passing version of society whose state of health is debatable at best.

The final problem I shall note about Dooyeweerd's theory of development is that it concentrates on only one kind of historical process—development—to the neglect of other kinds. His theory may provide some help in analyzing processes of genuine development in the history of any particular phenomenon. For example, it is plausible that once the federal structure of the government of the United States of America was established in the 1780s, many features of subsequent American national political organizations were a development of that structure in his sense of opening up and differentiating those features. But we would do well to remember that there have been many other kinds of processes at work in American political history. Dooyeweerd's theory tends to neglect the historical processes of beginning things, of maintaining them, of modifying them by adding, removing, revising, deforming, reforming, or otherwise changing them, and of bringing them to an end. Seen in this way, development is only one kind of process of modifying any existing phenomenon. In addition to all these processes just named, which are all in some way processes of continuity in the existence of some phenomenon, there are also the discontinuities. Much of history is a matter of first one thing, then another thing, or first these things, and next those. If we are to consider as our subject matter the entire history of human civilization, how much more important it is for us to make use of theories of beginning, maintaining, modifying, and ending, as well as theories of changing from one thing to another, in addition to theories of that form of modifying we call developing.<sup>22</sup> Far and away most cultures throughout most of human history, including even European and North American cultures, have not been dominated by processes of development.

Against such an empirical observation, however, Dooyeweerd's theory comes forward with a normative claim, that civilization *ought* to develop. But we demur again. Can "human civilization" be regarded as a single social-cultural entity with a continuing identity? Our knowledge of human history indicates that there have been many cultures and many societies, each with its own history.<sup>23</sup> And have there not been times when further development of one such culture has been harmful? What about European and European-related cultures? Is the endless development of European and North American cultures desirable or even possible? May we justifiably claim that the expansion of European and European-related civilization

<sup>22</sup> For more on this, see McIntire, "Historical Study and the Historical Dimension of Our World" (cited in note 9 above), 30-38.

<sup>23</sup> This is the point of all the comparative studies of civilizations, notably Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History*, 12 vols. (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1934-61).

throughout the world is the mainstream of world history in fulfillment of the creation mandate of Genesis 1 (cf. *NC* 2:266-68)?

Since Dooyeweerd published his theory in the 1930s and 1950s, I think we have become more fully aware of the distortions—ecological, military, economic, religious—that are due to the excessive development of Europe and North America and to the attempted development of Asian, African, and Latin American cultures according to the European and North American model.<sup>24</sup> We have much to discover about historical processes other than development, and about cultures other than our own.

As stimulating and helpful as Dooyeweerd's theory may be for understanding the specific kind of process we call development, it is too one-sided to serve as a general theory of human culture in response to a divine cultural mandate for humanity. A possible way to take the discussion would be toward theorizing about a greater variety of historical processes in relation to the rich variety of human cultures that have existed and still exist in God's world. Then if we can connect all that with our need to work for a world which manifests the love of God and our neighbors, I would find it fruitful to theorize about the character of human creativity for the expression of shalom.

### **The Interpretation of History**

Now that we have looked at the main elements of Dooyeweerd's philosophy of history—his theories of time, the historical aspect of reality, and development—we are equipped to see how he interpreted the course of human history. This will permit us to notice how his theory related to his interpretation of history as well as how he functioned to some degree as a historian.

In discussing this theme, it is crucial to remember, in fairness to Dooyeweerd, that he was not by vocation a historian. He was a scholar of jurisprudence and a philosopher, and he did not give us history books. Nevertheless, he was a philosopher who produced his philosophy in full dialogue with the history of philosophy as well as the history of society, albeit mainly European. Dooyeweerd knew his Plato, Leibniz, and Hegel, and he knew his Roman social history, medieval church history, and Dutch political history. We would know a lot about the history of European philosophy and society if we never read any history other than what he included in *New Critique*.

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<sup>24</sup> See E. F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973) and Bob Goudzwaard, *Aid for the Overdeveloped West* (Toronto: Wedge, 1975).

Dooyeweerd meant for his historical work to service his philosophy, and he insisted upon employing what he called an “integral empirical method” which rejected in principle “every speculative metaphysics” (*NC* 1:548). At the same time, he applied his philosophy to his historical investigations. If all goes well, such a relationship between philosophy and history may be a fruitful one. In his case, two of his philosophical theories-his theory of development and his theory of religion-thoroughly influenced his historical passages with only partially satisfactory results.

We have already noticed that, for Dooyeweerd, to give “a sketch of the historical development” of something meant the same as to give “a brief history” of it (cf. *NC* 1:66, 172, 215, 223, 325). Now we can observe that when he himself told the history of something, he focused upon the theme of development, and he thought that this was as it should be in historical study. Genuinely empirical historical study, he affirmed, examines “the factual course of cultural development” (*NC* 2:270), and the historian’s task is “to investigate the historical coherences in the process of the disclosed development of history” (*NC* 2:295). He was so convinced of the epistemological importance of an “Idea of historical development” (*NC* 2:282) that he urged all historians to think carefully about the matter as they conducted their research so that they might discern genuine historical continuity. In any case, he believed every historian worked with some idea of development willy-nilly (*NC* 2:282, 354).

Dooyeweerd used his own idea of historical development as a criterion to determine what to include or exclude when writing a history. He would examine only things that developed or participated in development, particularly if they were “taken up by the stream of development of modern civilization.” He would include cultures in New Guinea and the Old Germanic and Celtic cultures “only insofar as they are referred to by an opened and deepened form of cultural development.” He would include the historical development of opened cultures, such as “Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Crete, Greece, Rome, Byzantium, Palestine, etc.,” not because of their own character as open cultures, but because “essential developmental tendencies [from them] have passed over into” medieval and modern European cultures. This whole course of development, he claimed, “does not vegetate within the narrow boundaries of closed and undifferentiated cultural groups, but, like a fecundating stream, it always forms new channels to continue its course” (*NC* 2:265-66). The destination of all this history is an integrated world, humanity integrated as a whole. Strictly speaking, a culture is truly part of history insofar as it contributed to the integration of humanity on a world scale.

All of this amounts to a solitary criterion of inclusion/exclusion that Dooyeweerd employed in reverse order from the actual historical order in which the events occurred. Unless applied

with great liberality, this criterion would have the effect of excluding most of what happened in the history of the world before the Second World War, for it was not until during and after the war that humanity became solidly integrated under the aegis of the expansion of European and European-related societies: the world state system modeled on the European one, the capitalist world economy, the world military system dominated by the polarity of the United States and the Soviet Union, the world communication system dominated by American technology, and so on. Such a criterion leaves too much history out of the scope of historical study to be very helpful.

We encountered Dooyeweerd's theory of religion in our discussion of both his theory of cosmic time and his theory of the realm of the supratemporal "self." For him it is out of the "self," the "heart," that religion emerges. I only need to say enough here to explain how, for Dooyeweerd, religion is germane to historical development. He understood religion to be the *dynamis* of life, the motivating power, like the central mainspring of a clock that you wind. As such, religion is what empowers human beings in our "entire attitude of life and thought." There are two types of this dynamic: the Spirit of God revealed in the heart's impulse toward the true God, or the spirit of the evil one expressed in the impulse toward some idol that we substitute for God. The one tendency empowers what Augustine called the City of God, characterized by the love of God, while the other motivates the City of This World, based on self-love. In Dooyeweerd's view, there is nothing more basic than this religious dynamic in human history (*NC* 1:32, 61). Thus far in his theory, he is fully in the mainstream of the Christian interpretation of the place of religion in life.

A unique feature of Dooyeweerd's thought comes next, however. The two expressions of the religious dynamic give rise to what he called various "religious ground-motives" throughout the historical development of human society. While not wishing to ignore the religions of Asia and Africa, he concentrated upon European societies. To review his analysis briefly, we can recall that he believed there have been three religious ground motives in what he called "Western civilization," beginning with the Greeks, that have exercised dominant power in the development of culture: the Greek-Roman motive of form and matter, followed by the medieval Christian motive of grace and nature that synthesized Christianity with the Greek-Roman motive, followed by the secular humanist motive of freedom and nature, also known as the motive of personality and science (cf. *NC* 1:61-62, 65-66; *Roots*, 15-16). Each of these three religious ground motives has two power poles, called "ideals," that relate to each other by a dialectic movement oscillating from one to the other throughout the course of their history. They each give rise to a community, or communities, of people who share the same

motivating power. Moreover, they each control the whole development of culture that unfolds out of their motivating power. These religious ground motives arise out of the “self” in communities of selves and, via the modal aspect of faith, initiate and continue to empower the entire opening process of history (*NC* 2:291-93, 356). These three motives provide Dooyeweerd with the criterion by which he periodized the history of “Western civilization” into the ancient pagan, the medieval Christian, and the modern secular periods.

Dooyeweerd’s aim here was to understand how religion as the central dynamic of our human hearts could be grasped conceptually as a specific power in the motivation of cultural development. He used the concept of religious ground motives to interpret the history of all aspects of the development of a culture, but he applied it primarily to the history of thought. It is probably fair to say that he derived his idea of these ground motives from his analysis of thinkers, notably Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and Kant (cf. *NC* 1:61-62, 65, 403, 529), and then extended the ground motives he found in their thought to the whole of society. In general, it appears that he believed that cultural development occurs chiefly, although not only, due to these religious ground motives, as their power passes via faith to the thought of thinkers and thereby onward to the society and culture at large. On the whole, he tended to neglect factors and influences that work the other way around, as, for example, from society to thinkers to faith. In his brief histories of the religious ground motives, he spoke disturbingly as if the ground motives were actors disconnected from the human beings who acted. For example, speaking about the philosopher Kant, he wrote, “The ideal of personality finally wrested itself free from the tyranny of the science-ideal”; and referring to the philosopher Fichte, he stated: “The science-ideal has converted itself into a moralistic ideal of culture that comes to full expression in titanic activity” (*NC* 1:325, 448-49). His history of the secular humanist ground motive reads like a Hegelian struggle of disembodied spirits. It is not clear why the important matters he called the “ideals,” the two religious power poles within each ground motive, may not be treated simply as philosophical themes, or why he decided to elevate the three pairs of themes he did choose above the many other themes thinkers have reflected upon, themes like good and evil, or particulars and universals. It is worth noting that all three pairs of themes that he called the three ground motives may be found together in the thought of many particular thinkers since the introduction of Christianity, including Thomas Aquinas and Kant, rather than merely laid out in a sequence of periods. It is also not clear why he believed it was good to try to reduce everything to only two sides within each of the religious ground motives, even though at times the complexity he faced was nearly intractable. His theory might be more faithful to reality if he thought of the “poles” as multiple and if, instead of a dialectic, he thought of the religious dynamic as “pluralistic.” It is

hard not to regard his scheme of religious ground motives as an *a priori* single factor interpretation that he placed on each thinker. The difficulty was compounded when he endeavored to apply the scheme to the entirety of a society's history (cf. *Roots, passim*).

There was a fourth religious ground motive in Dooyeweerd's interpretation of the history of "Western civilization": the Christian motive of creation, fall, and redemption. This motive is like the others in that it motivates development from out of the hearts of a community of people empowered by it. It is different, however, in that it is not polar and dialectic, but integral. It is also different in that, according to Dooyeweerd, it has not exercised very much influence in the development of "Western civilization." Thinkers empowered by it include Augustine, John Calvin, and Abraham Kuyper. Whole societies affected by it include Calvin's Geneva and parts of late nineteenth century Holland. He regarded the motive as an expression of a truly biblical spirit, and he meant for it to be interpreted in a fully ecumenical and non-ecclesiastical way (*NC* 1:523-25). His way of understanding the motive revealed that he was indeed partial to the Dutch Reformed Protestant tradition and that he wished to continue the work of Calvin and Kuyper in an ecumenical spirit. The main use he made of this motive in his own historical interpretation was as a critical instrument with which to find the other three motives wanting. He did not consider whether thinkers whom he characterized as driven by the Christian motive of grace and nature were not also driven by the Christian motive of creation, fall, and redemption. He did not write or plan to write any sketch of the history of the integral Christian ground motive as he did for the other three ground motives.<sup>25</sup>

Putting his theories of religion and development together, we may now say that Dooyeweerd interpreted history to be development motivated essentially by religion. He conjoined religion and development with the result that he understood the course of history to be one of multiple conflicts. History was not optimistic progress, nor pessimistic decline, but a dialectical religious struggle which yielded a powerful developmental struggle for the unfolding of creation. Marx interpreted history as class struggle, Herbert Spencer and the social Darwinists viewed it as a struggle for survival, and liberal historians saw it as a struggle for freedom and reason. By contrast, Dooyeweerd's view of struggle in history was more varied than these.

First, in relation to religion there are two kinds of struggle. In the most basic religious sense, Dooyeweerd saw history as a drama of conflict between the City of God and the City of This World, a struggle that occurred even within the lives and work of Christians (*NC* 1:32, 119

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<sup>25</sup> Dooyeweerd outlined the development of the form-matter motive in his first volume of *Reformatie en scholastiek in de wijsbegeerte* (Franeker: Wever, 1949), and planned a second volume on the grace-nature motive. He gave a history of the freedom-nature motive in the first volume of *New Critique* (1953).

and 2:294-95, 336; *Roots*, 3). He consciously linked himself with Augustine in interpreting history in this way. Dooyeweerd took the theme further, however, and saw history, in a secondary religious sense, as dialectical conflict within each religious ground motive other than the integral Christian one. He understood this struggle among secular humanists or Greek philosophers, for example, to be a result of absolutizing first one aspect of creation and then another, in a futile search for a resting place. In his histories of Greek, medieval Christian, and secular thought, he explicitly highlighted this struggle which he found to be internal to each ground motive (*NC* 1:64).

Second, in relation to development, there are two types of struggle as well. Viewed one way, advocates of each social sphere tend to conflict with the other spheres in asserting their position in relation to the leadership of the whole course of differentiation. The church fought against emperor and king in the medieval period, and commerce and industry battled against church and state in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (*NC* 2:286-90). Viewed another way, advocates of the existing way of doing things clashed with proponents of a new way, in a struggle for ongoing development against tradition (*NC* 2:241-45).

Third, the religious and developmental struggles come together in still another kind of struggle, the struggle for the normative expression of the principles of the creation order in each aspect of human experience—for faith against unbelief, for love against hatred, for justice against injustice, for stewardship against waste, for clarity against befuddlement, and much more.

In interpreting history, Dooyeweerd's views concerning history as struggle are helpful for some things, but not for others. From a Christian perspective, he quite validly treated the struggle between the City of God and the City of This World as central to understanding human existence. We will probably not see the end of our efforts to understand what that struggle entails in each succeeding generation. By contrast, his idea of a dialectic struggle between the two poles in the nonintegral ground motives seems not very useful for the reasons given earlier, although the general notion that people tend to absolutize one feature or aspect of life over the others would seem to explain a vast number of conflicts in history. We should not overlook conflicts among Christians: those who emphasize creation against others who emphasize sin, or partisans of this view of redemption against partisans of that view, or those who stress evil against those who stress redemption. The idea of the social spheres conflicting can be helpful provided we base our interpretation upon a careful empirical analysis of what the social structures are in each culture and in each period of time. In any case, not only do whole social structures conflict, but one social class struggles against

another social class, one race against another, one nation against another, one person against another. Social conflicts are of many, many kinds. His understanding of the conflict between proponents of new ways and conservers of tradition can be useful in picking out much that happens in history. It would be worthwhile to think further about how persons along the spectrum of reactionary, conservative, progressive, and revolutionary interrelate in the ongoing course of events.

Finally, Dooyeweerd offered us an insight of great significance when he connected the struggles for a healthy human existence—for faith, love, justice, stewardship, clarity, and the many other experiences of a normative life—with actual historical engagement. Such struggles are moral struggles in the broad sense of the term, and not merely matters of moral discourse or theoretical contemplation. They are matters intrinsic to the very constitution of our human action and to the daily course of human history. Except for his revulsion against the Nazis, however, Dooyeweerd tended to theorize about these moral concerns in the abstract, out of touch with the actual experiences of the current or past history of his own society. For example, he said nothing in his major theoretical writings, which appeared between 1935 and 1958, about the Great Depression or the oppression of poor people or the exploitation of dependent people in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Nonetheless, his theory of historical engagement as unavoidably and intrinsically moral engagement, in everyday affairs as well as in the monumental events, may readily serve as an instrument for justice and well-being in today's world.

Dooyeweerd placed his interpretation of history within the widest context, and in doing this he continued the Christian tradition of encompassing the entirety of universal history from the origins to the eschaton. For him the story of salvation revealed in the Holy Scriptures was not radically separable from world history, but was continuous with ordinary history as we know it. What he called the integral Christian ground motive of creation, fall, and redemption culminating in the last days is, in one sense, an overview of the whole course of history. The biblical story influences us, he thought, to believe that the world had an origin, even though the origin of the world is beyond empirical examination, and the “days of creation” in Genesis are not to be taken as historical descriptions of the process of creation (cf. *NC* 1:9f., 33; 2:265; 3:656). In a similar way, based upon the biblical story of the last days to come, we may assume that the world as we know it will come to an end, although we have no grounds upon which to make any predictions about it (*NC* 1:174, 2:295). According to Dooyeweerd, God's providence with the history of the world, “in so far as it embraces ... the factual side [of cosmic time], . . . is hidden from human knowledge, and therefore [is] not accessible to a



Christian philosophy” (NC 1:174). The sweep of Dooyeweerd’s historical interpretation was wide indeed, and at the crucial points he offered his interpretation with due caution and self-restraint.

### **Dooyeweerd’s Legacy for Philosophy of History**

When we look at all the elements of Dooyeweerd’s philosophy of history, we cannot fail to be impressed with the comprehensiveness and unity of his system. In one way or another he systematically touched upon a vast number of themes pertinent to understanding history. Looking back over all that we have covered in this essay, we conclude that his theory of cosmic time, his theory of development, and his interpretation of history appear to have such major shortcomings as to make them difficult to pursue as they stand. Nonetheless, they contain certain particular features of undoubted value that may be incorporated in future reflections. It would be well simply to abandon the theory of the historical modal aspect.

When taken in a general way, there are important features of Dooyeweerd’s philosophy of history as a whole which might be regarded as a legacy of characteristics that should belong to any philosophy of history. Let me mention them. First, his theories, at least in part, are about features of reality that are indeed historical in character and not merely structural and ontological, including, for example, temporal relations, progress, development, continuity, events, processes, tradition, culture making, the interpretation of history, and the like. Second, his theories are formulated in order to be germane to historical study, unlike much of the work of the dominant school in North America known as analytic philosophy of history.<sup>26</sup> Third, his theories invite interdisciplinary reflection. He maximized the ties historical thinking has with philosophy, sociology, cultural anthropology, economics, political theory, psychology, biology, and other studies. Fourth, his theories encourage historical action and emphasize the import that thinking about history and historical processes can have for our ongoing human action in the making of history. Fifth, his theories relate Christian insights to historical thinking in intrinsic ways, not merely as a theology superimposed upon or parallel with our historical thinking.

Many suggestions emerge out of the criticisms that we may voice about Dooyeweerd’s theories, suggestions well worth pursuing, both for understanding historical processes and for

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<sup>26</sup> I note certain important exceptions to this: for example, Dray, *Perspectives on History* (cited in note 3 above) and Dale Porter, *The Emergence of the Past: A Theory of Historical Explanation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

illuminating what goes on in historical study. I shall indicate a few.<sup>27</sup> First, I think the signs point to treating the historical character of reality as total and transmodal—all things in existence, both human and nonhuman, are historical and manifest their historical character by means of all the other features there are. And everything may be studied historically. Second, in place of a theory of development as primary, it would be valuable to reflect upon a general theory of human creativity for the expression of shalom. By that I do not mean the elitist idea of the “truly creative few” or the self-serving idea that we may create out of nothing whatever we choose. I have in mind the ordinary yet wonderful human task of bringing things into being, maintaining and modifying them, and sometimes bringing them to an end. In this broad sense, we are all history makers and, by being so, we may all be agents of justice, love, and faith, agents of shalom. In this connection, we would do well to continue reflecting on how our human creativity in the making of history may be understood as a response to and manifestation of the divine work in the constitution of reality, God created reality. Third, Dooyeweerd’s general modal theory may help educate historians to see structural diversity in history and to eschew single factor explanations of any kind. We could benefit from translating modal theory into a theory of the multiplicity of factors operative in the making and unmaking of phenomena in the course of history—multifactor explanations that vary according to the case. Fourth, his understanding of religion, both as pervasive in all of human existence and as dynamic in human action, merits ongoing study. We might overcome the common faults of using it as a single factor explanation or treating it as merely one factor among many. It is worth investigating how all kinds of human action, eating as well as worshiping, and all kinds of human factors, economic as well as cultic, are at the same time also religious in character.

All in all, however we might disagree with much of it, Dooyeweerd’s philosophy of history is filled with insight. He is one of the thinkers from whom we may all learn in our reflection on historical processes and the study of history.

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<sup>27</sup> For more of the theoretical point of view from which my criticisms are made, see McIntire, "Historical Study and the Historical Dimension of Our World" (cited in note 9 above), 17-40.