Taught by Dooyeweerd: Some Basic Philosophical Propositions

Chris van Haeften

(1). Philosophy is the theory how everything actually weaves itself coherently into the whole ("the theory of totality," "Wie alles sich zusammenwebt," *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* [NC], Vol.1: 2).

(2). Like all human enterprises, philosophy is bound to ontic conditions ("ontic presupposita," *Transcendental Problems of Philosophical Thought* [TPPT] 19). Moreover, as concerned with totality, philosophy is also bound to ontological conditions ("ontological presuppositions," (TPPT 19). Because of these ontic and ontological conditions, apart from which no philosophy can exist, philosophy is not autonomous in its own sphere. Its ontological conditions show themselves in its necessary transcendental ideas.

(3). The prime ontic condition is the human ego, the "cosmic selfhood" (*Normatieve Rechtsleer*, cited by Verburg, page 36). This "subjective totality" (NC1: 5) of human consciousness is the root of cosmic reality. Like all human activity, all theoretical thought can only proceed from this root.

(4). Therefore, neither the cosmic selfhood, nor its origin, is accessible for philosophy. To think so would imply a theoretical reversal of the ontic relation between the self and its theoretical activity. Root-and-origin are known non-theoretically, "religiously."

(5). Philosophical self-knowledge, theoretical knowledge of the structures of cosmic reality, as well as non-theoretical knowledge of the origin, hinge on the subjective totality.

(6). The subjective cosmic self is a "personal focus" of religiously (existentially) concerned passions (*Philosophia Reformata* [PhR]1940: 182).

(7). Philosophical self-knowledge can only be acquired by recognizing the passionate, existential nature of the self.

(8). Its full nature can only be understood if the self is revealed to itself as "created, fallen, and [possibly] redeemed."

(9). Since cosmic experience is only real as occurring, and since the actual reality of everything abstracted from it presuppose time-duration, cosmic time is to be taken as the continuous, actual bottom-layer of all cosmic experience and reality (NC3: 65). In its continuous actuality time is, just as little as the cosmic selfhood, not accessible for theoretical thought (PhR1940: 160).

(10). For its theoretical knowledge of the cosmic structures of our experience the human ego has no other access but by abstraction from the continuous bottom-layer of its experience.

(11). Because of this ongoing continuity, the formation of concepts of the cosmic structures is cumbersome: it involves "the theoretical problem" (NC1: 18).

(12). The method for the formation of theoretical concepts of the cosmic structures is the method of *epochè* ("arrest"). In a sense time has to be stopped in order to catch its fleeting meaning-moments by the tail and form a concept of them. They need to be "bracketed."

(13). In the course of reflexively scanning the cosmic time of our concrete theoretical thinking we find that we hit upon a diversity of ontic meanings.

(14). These meanings appear to be irreducible to one another.

(15). They appear to be ordered in a real temporal sequence of before and after: In thinking of one specific meaning we find that we have already implicitly presupposed other meanings, and that we are driven to think "ahead" of again other meanings.

(16). This is to say that the irreducible meanings refer to one another and are expressive of one another. This referring and expressing is universal. It defines meaning (NC1: 4).

(17). The references to the presupposed, "earlier" meanings can be understood as retrocipations in the irreducible meaning under consideration.

(18). The references that drive us "forward" to think of "later" meanings can be understood as anticipations in the irreducible meaning under consideration.

(19). Following this structure of retrocipations and anticipations, we find an irreversible order between the various irreducible meanings. This is the cosmic time-order, the order of cosmic reality and cosmic experience.

(20). Considering the fact that these irreducible meanings were found by abstraction from the continuous stream of our cosmic temporal experience, they can be said to be modes of cosmic time.

(21). So far 15 modes have been found.

(22). The "first" mode has no retrocipations. This is the mode of numbers and their structure (the arithmetical mode).

(23). The "final" mode is the mode of faith (*pistis*), the mode in which we "anticipate" root-and-origin.

(24). Ever since its origination, the human race is involved in cosmic experience, while, conversely, cosmic reality is reality-as-for-man.

(25). Mankind, in its cosmic experience, knows of two ways in which the various modes of reality are successively opened. For an example of the first way, the physical-chemical functioning in plants is opened up towards the biotic functioning of the plant. For an example of the second way, the historical way, it was "a huge step for mankind" when the discovery was made that 3 fishes is the same amount as 3 days. Other examples are the discovery of electricity by Volta, Faraday, and others, and the discovery of really existing electrons by J.J. Thomson. Likewise, man discloses normative modes, such as the logical, the jural, the aesthetic, and the pistic.

(26). The second way of opening hinges on the historical mode of cosmic reality, which is found somewhere "between" the first and the final cosmic mode.

(27). The historical opening-process is guided by the final "anticipation" of root-and-origin, i.e. the historical process takes place by the lead of *pistis*. The human activity of opening cosmic reality is guided by the faith-understanding of the ultimate meaning of cosmic reality.

(28). The human race thus functions "towards" its origin and the fulfillment of its meaning. Early on Dooyeweerd characterized this dynamic direction of history as the "movement" towards its "goal" (*De troosteloosheid van het Wagnerianisme*, quoted by Verburg, p. 22).

(29). Philosophical self-knowledge, as part of the theory of totality, involves an understanding of the relation of the human self to the rest of cosmic reality.

(30). Since the cosmic self is not accessible for theoretical investiga-tion, philosophical self-knowledge requires a non-theoretical understanding of the

origin and the meaning-fulfillment of cosmic reality, including the cosmic self-hood.

(31). Dooyeweerd calls these universally necessary presuppositions "religious." They "guide" and "direct" philosophy in the form of the transcendental ground-ideas about coherence, root, and origin, which are at the base of every philosophy. Only some of these basic ideas can be said to represent Christian faith-presuppositions, namely the ones that are theoretically relevant to the basic structure of philosophy as concerned with coherence, root, and origin.

(32) These faith-presuppositions are creation, fall, and redemption. Together they constitute the basic motive of the scriptures in the Spirit of the Christ.

(33). The human ego is "related to" and concerned about itself. This is its ipseity, its experience of selfhood.

(34). The self's existential ("religious") concern for its reality shows in its passionate nature (PhR1940: 182).

(35). In his self-experience man is conscious of the fact that he did not bring himself forth. He experientially knows himself to be "created," that he exists in spite of himself. This is the radical meaning of creation (*In the Twilight of Western Thought* [Tw] 188). We are concrete unities of self-awareness and awareness of God (PhR1939: 204).

(36). We cannot truly know ourselves apart from true knowledge of our Origin.

(37). This true knowledge is obtained when we are revealed to ourselves (Tw 189).

(38). This revelation occurs by "the Word", by "God speaking."

(39). It can only come about if we "listen with our heart" (NC2: 307-308) to the "Word of God."

(40). The Word of God, which is the Word of life, reaches us through our very existence, through its crises and through regained resilience (cf. *Flores Mystici,* nr. 39). Thus being reached by the Word of life will permeate our "inner man" with "religious" love (NC2: 149).

(41). In 1935 Dooyeweerd introduced the term "heart" to refer to this inner man. "Heart" is the everyday biblical expression for the ego in its self-experience, and is by Holy Scripture again and again revealed as the religious root of the entire human existence (*De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee* [WdW], p. vi). Dooyeweerd later explicitly equated inner man, heart, ego, soul, and mind. The heart is the inner man (PhR1959: 116). The heart is the ego (PhR1961: 44); the heart is the soul, is the mind (PhR2020: 103).

(42). Human self-consciousness is immanent in time (Crisis 103). Man is bound to time (NC1: 24). This bond is not external to time. Man exists in a *status of being-universally-bound-to-time* (NC1: 24).

(43). But the self is identical through time. Man is "not lost in time" (NC1: 32). "I […] remain the central point of reference […] of my temporal existence" (NC1: 5). In this way, man has a veritable notion of time (NC1: 32). He experiences time as past, present, and future (PhR1940: 209). This is the first reason why the heart can be said to be "supra-temporal."

(44). The second reason for calling the heart supra-temporal lies in the fact that man is conscious that his cosmic existence is not at all necessary. Man knows himself to be "created," together with the cosmic reality in which he is coherently interwoven so as to form a totality. Man knows of "eternity." He is a unity of self-

knowledge and knowledge of God (PhR1939: 204). Apparently, man's relation to eternity is of a passionate nature.

(45). There have been two mutually exclusive conceptions of "eternity." One conception takes eternity as completely disjunct from time. The other conception thinks of eternity as time-without-end.

(46). It is futile to try to decide between these two conceptions. It may well be that they are both equally speculative. What counts is that man radically knows his cosmic reality to be "of divine origin" (WdW1: 6). In his very existence itself man is aware of "the divine." We are unities of self-knowledge and knowledge of God.

Literature

Dooyeweerd, Herman. (1912-1913). *Flores Mystici*. The Romantic Poetry of Herman Dooyeweerd, edited by Dr. J. Glenn Friesen, online at: https://jgfriesen.files.wordpress.com/2016/12/poetry.pdf

Dooyeweerd, H. (1915). De troosteloosheid van het Wagnerianisme (The Desolation of Wagnerianism). Unpublished, see Verburg (1989), p. 22

Dooyeweerd, H. (1923). Normatieve Rechtsleer (Normative Theory of Law). Not published, but a large part printed in Calvinism contra Neo-Kantianism, see Verburg (1989), p. 33, n.37

Dooyeweerd, H. (1926). Calvinisme contra Neo-kantianisme, in: *Tijd-schrift voor Wijsbegeerte*, pp. 29-74

Dooyeweerd, H. (1935-1936). De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee, 3 Volumes

Dooyeweerd, H. (1939). Kuyper's wetenschapsleer (Kuyper's Theory of Science), *Philosophia Reformata* 4, pp. 193-232

Dooyeweerd, H. (1940). Het tijdsprobleem in de wijsbegeerte der wets-idee (The Problem of Time in the Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea, http://jgfriesen.files.wordpress.com/2016/12/tijdsprobleeem.pdf), *Philosophia Reformata* 5, pp. 160-182, 193-234

Dooyeweerd, H. (1948). Transcendental Problems of Philosophical Thought

Dooyeweerd, H. (1959). Schepping en evolutie (Creation and Evolu-tion), *Philosophia Reformata* 24, pp. 113-159

Dooyeweerd, H. (1961). De taak ener wijsgerige anthropologie en de doodlopende wegen tot wijsgerige zelfkennis (The Task of Philosophical Anthropology and the Dead End Paths towards Philosophical Self-knowledge), *Philosophia Reformata* 26, pp. 35-58

Dooyeweerd, H. (1969). A New Critique of Theoretical Thought, 4 Volumes

Dooyeweerd, H. (1972). In the Twilight of Western Thought

Dooyeweerd, H. (2020). The Theory of Analogy in Thomistic Philosophy and in the Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea, *Philosophia Reformata* 85, pp. 91-107

Verburg, M. (1989). Herman Dooyeweerd, Leven en werk van een Nederlands christen-wijsgeer