

Interview of Herman Dooyeweerd by Magnus Verbrugge

Dated September 23, 1974

Translated by Dr. J. Glenn Friesen (2007)

Note:

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Translator's Introduction:

This is a transcript of an interview of Herman Dooyeweerd by his son-in-law Magnus Verbrugge on September 23, 1974. The questions and answers were in Dutch, except where indicated in the text. I have made this translation from a cassette tape in the Dooyeweerd Archives in Amsterdam.¹ I possess a full copy of this tape, which is now in digitized mp3 format. Excerpts of the interview are available on my website in mp3 format.

Unfortunately, the entire mp3 file is too large for me to post on this website. I hope that it can be posted elsewhere, such as on the website of the Dooyeweerd Centre.

This interview is both important as well as frustrating. It is frustrating because of the poor sound quality. There are strange bangs and buzzes in the background. Both Dooyeweerd and Verbrugge shared a single microphone, and sometimes one of them was too far away from the microphone. Words that are hard to make out or missing are indicated in the text in square brackets.

Apart from the physical quality of the soundtrack of this interview, there is also the problem that Verbrugge was not an attentive interviewer. This is partly due to the fact that he was working from a set of questions prepared for the interview. It seems that these questions were to form the basis of an article in the magazine *Vanguard*.

¹ The Dooyeweerd Archives are in the Historische Documentiecentrum voor het Nederlandse Protestantisme, located at the Free University. I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the Director, J.F. Seijlhouwer.

Verbrugge therefore tends to hurry on to the next question. But the questions that he asks are also too often of a leading nature; he presupposes what Dooyeweerd will answer. Sometimes these presuppositions are wrong, and Verbrugge does not seem to know how to continue in order to really understand what Dooyeweerd really means. He also interrupts Dooyeweerd's responses. In order to make a readable text, I have shown only some of these interruptions; there are far more interruptions in the actual interview. And Verbrugge fails to follow up on some of the most interesting things that Dooyeweerd says, and just plows ahead with his prepared questions. In my footnotes, I have indicated some of these problems. Nevertheless, the interview is one of the few recorded interviews of Dooyeweerd, and some of what it contains is unique. In particular, the interview is important for Dooyeweerd's views concerning the supratemporal starting point of philosophy, his views about the meaning of modal aspects, his views concerning the historical aspect, and for his difference of opinion with the theologian Cornelius van Til.

Interview

VERBRUGGE: Dr. Magnus Verbrugge from Vancouver and Professor Dr. Herman Dooyeweerd of the Free University of Amsterdam, Emeritus Professor in the Philosophy of Law, taken on September 23, 1974.

VERBRUGGE: The first question concerns the Archimedean point in your thought. Can you maybe say something further about it?

DOOYEWEERD: Do you want me to say where the term comes from?

VERBRUGGE: Yes, that would maybe be good.

DOOYEWEERD: You've now turned [the recorder] off?

VERBRUGGE: No, it's turned on.

DOOYEWEERD: Well, the term 'Archimedean point' is derived from a saying of the great Greek natural scientist Archimedes, the defender of Syracuse during the Roman sea attack [*vlootaanval*]. He said, "Give me a point where I can stand, and I will move the earth." He had brought [physical] mechanics to a rather high degree of

perfection so that this [saying] was something that was possible in early Greek thought.

The Archimedean point is derived from this saying. In philosophy, it is necessary to have a point where we can stand, and from which we can obtain a view of totality over the whole of human experience in time, within time, within the order of time.

VERBRUGGE: A kind of lookout post?

DOOYEWEERD: A kind of a lookout post, but one that is set up in such a way that you cannot look out from a particular point of view that is contained within our temporal world of experience [*onze tijdelijke ervaringswereld*]. The viewpoint is one that transcends our temporal world of experience. And from that viewpoint we can indeed obtain a view over the whole. But as long as we remain within that of which we want to obtain an overview, we can only receive a view from out of a particular viewpoint [*een bepaalde gezichtshoek*].

VERBRUGGE: You have to transcend it.

DOOYEWEERD: You have to transcend it [*je moet er bovenuit*]. Indeed.

VERBRUGGE: And what is now the Archimedean point that you have chosen, or found?

DOOYEWEERD: Yes. I currently no longer use the term, and I in fact have not done so for quite some time. It was a term that I used in particular when I was working out the ideas of the Philosophy of the Law-Idea in its first edition, the Dutch edition. I used the term at that time, and I needed it in order to distinguish my standpoint from other views at the time that sought their point of departure within the temporal world itself.² In particular, they sought their standpoint in logical thought, or in sensory

² JGF: The important point here is that Dooyeweerd's philosophy begins from a standpoint that is not within the temporal world. Without his idea of the supratemporal selfhood, which stands outside of time, we cannot understand his philosophy or any part of it. Dooyeweerd has said that the theoretical attitude of thought, the *Gegenstand*-relation cannot be understood apart from this. The idea of the mutual irreducibility of the modal aspects can also not be understood apart from this supratemporal standpoint. The Christian Ground-motive of creation, fall and redemption depends upon it, for

perception, or in some other particular point of view or particular aspect of our experience. So that is the Archimedean point, and we seek for it. And how I have chosen that term—that may perhaps best be explained by the answer to the second question, “What is the relation between your thought and that of Abraham Kuyper?”

It’s not really in Dr. Abraham Kuyper’s great theological works but in the works that he wrote for the general public—the ‘reformed people’ [*het gereformeerde volk*], as he referred to them. In those works, he developed certain ideas that have become of fundamental importance in the Philosophy of the Law-idea. In the first place, it was something that in my opinion is completely Biblical, what the Bible calls “the heart of man, out of which are the issues of his life.”³ That is an idea that appears again and again throughout the whole Bible, both in the Old and the New Testament. In *Ecclesiastes*, it is said “Keep your heart with all diligence, for from out of it are the issues of life.”⁴ In the New Testament, Jesus Christ frequently emphasizes, in his discussions both with his disciples as well as with the Scribes and Pharisees, that the heart of man is the place from which sin proceeds. Jesus says, for example, “From out of the heart of man come forth...,” and he sums up all sorts of sins, whoredom

Dooyeweerd understands these ideas in their supratemporal religious root. And even our understanding of Word-revelation and of Christ’s incarnation depends on it.

³ JGF: This emphasis on the heart being the source of the issues of life is one that we find in J.H. Gunning, Jr. Gunning influenced Abraham Kuyper in this idea of the heart. See my article, “J.H. Gunning, Christian Theosophy, and Reformational Philosophy,” online at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/aevum/Gunning.html>].

⁴ JGF: This reference is found in Prov. 4:23: “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.” Dooyeweerd also refers to *Ecclesiastes* 3:11, which in the Dutch International Bible Society translation says that God has set eternity in our hearts. “Ook al heeft God het besef van de eeuwigheid in het hart van de mensen geplant, toch kan de mens al Gods werk (vanaf het eerste begin tot het absolute einde) niet overzien” [*Pred.3:11*]. See also NIV translation in English: “He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.” The *Statenvertaling* says: 3:11 “Hij heeft ieder ding schoon gemaakt op zijn tijd; ook heeft Hij de eeuw in hun hart gelegd, zonder dat een mens het werk, dat God gemaakt heeft, kan uitvinden, van het begin tot het einde toe.”

and so on.⁵ These sins come forth from the heart of man. And when Jesus summarizes the meaning of God's law, he summarizes it in the central law of love, which was already named in the Old Testament. For when a scribe [*schriftgeleerde*] comes to Jesus in order to ask, and He asks, "Master, what is the first and greatest commandment?" Then Jesus answers, "The first and greatest commandment is to love God above everything else with all your heart and all your understanding [*verstand*] and with all your soul and with all your powers [*krachten*]. And the second commandment, which is equal to the first is to love your neighbour as yourself.⁶ Your neighbour as yourself. You may love yourself, for in your self, your I [*ik*], your ego, is expressed the image of God according to the order of creation, the creation order. Image of God—man has been made in accordance with God's image and likeness. And when the second command says, "Love your neighbour as yourself," then that must not be understood in a moral sense, but it must be understood in a central religious sense. *Why* should I love our neighbour as myself? *Because* the image of God is also expressed in the heart, the religious center of our neighbour.⁷ It has been darkened [*verduisterd*] by sin, but not wholly wiped out. And in Jesus Christ, it is again fully visible [*verschenen*]. Is that clear?

VERBRUGGE: Yes. Indeed. The term 'heart' is being used analogously, because the heart is an organ of man's anatomy, but the heart here is an image [*beeld*] that refers to man's personality [*persoonlijkheid*] as totality as the image-bearer of God?

DOOYEWEERD: Uh, yes [pause]. Man's personality as totality, that's how it is set out, but that then raises the question, "What is totality? And what does it mean for man to

⁵ JGF: The reference is to Matthew 15:18: "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man."

⁶ JGF: The reference is to Matthew 22:37-39: "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second [is] like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

⁷ JGF: Love for neighbour is because the neighbour also expresses the image of God. See my note on 'tat tvam asi,' online at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/jgfriesen/Definitions/Tattvamasi.html>].

be a person?”⁸ But [heart] refers [*duidt aan*] to the religious center, out of which are the issues of life. Man is the only creature here on earth that was created in God’s image. And as image, man received the commission to direct his whole heart, and all temporal powers [*tijdelijke krachten*] with which God had equipped [*toegerust*] him, to *centrally* direct these in the service of love to God and to his neighbour.

VERBRUGGE: So you clearly reject the old view that the heart, or the soul, is something different from the body, as scholasticism held?⁹

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, I reject the dualistic view, which amounts to saying that man was composed [*samengesteld*] out of two substances or independent things as they are called [*zelfstandigheden*], namely a material substance which is the human body, which is perishable [*vergankelijk*] and subject to death, and that which is called his immortal soul, which is supposed to be a spiritual substance, the spiritual independent thing [*zelfstandigheid*]. And of the two [kinds of things], only the body is supposed to be mortal, but the soul as spiritual substance is supposed to be immortal. That is a completely unbiblical, indeed anti-Biblical view, which was derived from Greek philosophy.¹⁰

⁸ JGF: Dooyeweerd seems to be pointing to a difference from Verbrugge’s way of expressing the meaning of heart. Perhaps the issue is Dooyeweerd’s disagreement with Vollenhoven, who saw the heart as a pre-functional but wholly temporal center in man. Dooyeweerd emphasizes here that it is a religious center, and for Dooyeweerd, ‘religious’ always means supratemporal. See Dooyeweerd’s rejection of Vollenhoven’s views at *NC I*, 31, fn 1.

⁹ JGF: Verbrugge’s question is confusing. Dooyeweerd does distinguish between the heart as supratemporal and the body as the temporal expression. What Dooyeweerd rejects is the dualistic view that this heart (soul) and body are two different kinds of substances that are then put together. Dooyeweerd rejects the whole idea of substance. See Dooyeweerd’s article, “The Idea of the Individuality Structure and the Thomistic Concept of Substance,” *Philosophia Reformata* 8 (1943), 65–99; 9 (1944) 1–41, 10(1945) 25ff, 11(1946) 22ff. Excerpts online at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/aevum/Substance.html>].

¹⁰ JGF: Dooyeweerd denies that the soul is an immortal substance. But Dooyeweerd does affirm that man’s supratemporal heart survives death, which is the casting away of the merely temporal body or mantle of functions. See his Responses to Curators, online at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/hermandooyeweerd/Curators.html>].

VERBRUGGE: And over against that view, you set out the Biblical position that from out of the heart of man are the issues of life?

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, and from that we also get the Biblical understanding of human embodiment [*lichaamelijkheid*].¹¹ For where does embodiment cease? It is not purely material [*puur stoffelijk*]. That cannot be, for if it were purely material, then the human body would be equal to a corpse. A corpse, one says that a corpse has become purely matter, for in the process of dissolution you are left with purely material processes. But when you speak of the human body, then in the first place, you must take account of the fact that the body is *living*. Can we even leave it at that [*daar bliven staan*]? No. For the human body also has *feeling*, which we usually call psychical functions. These are not merely vital, organic functions of life, but also feeling functions. And next, the body also has rational [*verstandelijk*] functions, in the brain, huh? The brain is then the instrument, the organ [of man]. By means of the brain, man can think, and if the brain is gone, then thinking ceases, at least thinking as we know it.

VERBRUGGE: Thus, the body that thinks is a concept that is much higher than the concept of body in the old sense, of body in the form of, in the sense of material.

DOOYEWEERD: Of a purely material substance.

VERBRUGGE: Indeed, good.

DOOYEWEERD: Thus, such dualism has in principle been fundamentally cut off by the Philosophy of the Law-Idea [*fundamenteel in principe afgesneden*], because it [the Philosophy of the Law-Idea] proceeds from the religious ground-motive of time [*van de tijd*].¹² Which leaves no place for dualism.

¹¹ JGF: Embodiment is the full temporal expression of man's supratemporal selfhood. Dooyeweerd's point is that such embodiment is more than merely the physical aspect, but includes all temporal aspects.

¹² JGF: Dooyeweerd emphasizes the importance of the idea of cosmic time for his philosophy. It is cosmic time that differentiates the supratemporal totality.

VERBRUGGE: And that resolves [*opheft*] the contradictions in human, in pagan human thought.

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, resolves.

VERBRUGGE: And brings it back to God's Word, which reveals to man the idea that man was created a unity by God, and has not been split in two.

DOOYEWEERD: Yes. Certainly not the two independent substances [*zelfstandigheden*] that can exist separately from each other.

VERBRUGGE: Shall we maybe now go to the third question?

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, but I still have something to add in answer to the second question.

VERBRUGGE: Oh.

DOOYEWEERD: I have still just shown that this was Kuyper's basic idea [*grondgedachte*], which was of fundamental importance for the whole direction of philosophic thought in the Philosophy of the Law-Idea. But Kuyper said more. He developed an idea that had fundamental importance for this philosophy. That was the idea of what was called "sovereignty in its own sphere." It referred to [*sloeg op*] the temporal existence of man, with a great diversity of spheres of life, not only within the social sphere of society, in society, but also the great diversity of what the Philosophy of the Law-Idea calls 'aspects,' which are ways, fundamental *ways* in which man experiences reality.¹³ And at the same time, they are also the fundamental ways of his being and existence [*zijn bestaan, zijn Existenz*]. They are often called ways of being [*zijnswijze*], but the Philosophy of the Law-Idea has intentionally limited the term 'being' to God.¹⁴ With God we arrive at *Being*. And for man, and

¹³ JGF: Dooyeweerd says, "Aspecten, die wijze zijn, fundamentele wijze waarop de mens de werkelijkheid ervaart." Later in this interview, he uses the word 'mode' to describe these ways of experiencing reality.

¹⁴ JGF: Dooyeweerd emphasizes that modes are modes of experience and of existence. They are not aspects of being. In his 1964 lecture, given one year before retirement, Dooyeweerd said that his idea of the modal aspects remained one of the least understood

for all that is created, we only arrive at the dependent [*afhankelijke*] way of existence [*bestaanswijze*] of *meaning* [*de zin*]. But I won't talk about that at this time, that is another point.

But the idea of sovereignty in its own sphere has had such a great influence on the Philosophy of the Law-Idea because Kuyper immediately based it on the revelation concerning creation—that God created all things according to their kind [*aard*], that is something that is expressly said there. Which makes it clear that *kind* is not dependent on human thinking, and not set up [*ingelegd*] by man by means of logical distinctions, but that the various kinds of created things [*schepsels*]*—*everything that bears a created character—has been expressed [*opgedrukt*] by God, or one could say, has been impressed [*ingedrukt*] by God. Eh—¹⁵

VERBRUGGE: So it does not exist thanks to our ability to make logical distinctions, but because God has created it in that way.

DOOYEWEERD: Because God has created it according to its *kind*, thus 'kind' is not something that is created by man's thinking [*uitdenksel*], something that came into existence by man's thinking, but rather something that precedes man's thinking, something that is *given* in advance.

VERBRUGGE: Did Kuyper manage to keep separate these two forms or sides of "sovereignty in its own sphere," on the one hand sovereignty in its own sphere in the sense of independently existing societal institutions (*samenlevingsverbanden*) and on the other hand the independence of the various law-spheres, the aspects?

DOOYEWEERD: Of the irreducibility of the various aspects.¹⁶ No, he did not distinguish them; he confused the two ideas. The way in which Kuyper worked it out

ideas in his philosophy. I believe that is because they were interpreted as aspects of being, as properties of things. In his last article, Dooyeweerd says that it is a "serious misunderstanding" to regard the modal aspects as properties of things.

¹⁵ JGF: A missed opportunity to inquire into the distinction that Dooyeweerd is making between 'expressed' and 'impressed.'

¹⁶ JGF: Irreducibility is not independence.

was not theoretically or philosophically thought through. From our standpoint, it seems that Kuyper writes in various places, and gives various summaries of sovereign spheres of life. For example, he includes under such spheres of life the state, or the church, thus areas of human society, business, school. But then he also includes the example of the human conscience [*geweten*]. But that is not a societal sphere. Nor is it itself a modal aspect or a mode of experience, but it is something much more concrete, and it has a very central significance in ethics. But it cannot be identified with a definite mode of experience, a definite aspect.

VERBRUGGE: But he did do some work in the sense of mode of experience?

DOOYEWEERD: He gave some examples of what the Philosophy of the Law-Idea calls ‘modal aspects.’ ‘Modal’ is derived from the Latin word ‘*modus*’; it means a way [*wijze*]. *Modos quo*, “the way in which” [*de wijze waarop*]. And the word is used together with the word ‘aspect,’ which expresses that it is not the whole of reality that is understood [*gevat*] in that aspect, but that it is only a certain mode of experience [*ervaringswijze*].

VERBRUGGE: Thus, one side of the matter [*zaak*].

DOOYEWEERD: Uh,—

VERBRUGGE: Of perception, [*beschouwing*] I should say.

DOOYEWEERD: Uh, yes— [Dooyeweerd hesitates].

VERBRUGGE: Mode of perception? [*beschouwingwijze*]

DOOYEWEERD: It is at the same time both a mode of experience [*ervaringswijze*] and a mode of existence [*bestaanswijze*].

VERBRUGGE: Yes.¹⁷ So did you derive this idea of the aspects and the law-spheres from Kuyper?

¹⁷ JGF: Verbrugge does not seem to understand this distinction, and does not follow up on what Dooyeweerd says. I have tried to show how Dooyeweerd relates the two, the inner and the outer sense of aspects. See my “Imagination, Image of God and Wisdom of

DOOYEWEERD: Uh, well, the law-spheres, no. Kuyper does not say anything about them. Kuyper does say that various expressions [*uitingen*] of human life each have their own laws. That is something that he does say. For example, he says that logic has its own laws, that human feeling has its own law, and so on. But he made no attempt to obtain a systematic view, to obtain a total view [*totaalblik*] the diversity of aspects of the divine law.

VERBRUGGE: All right then, but he had intuitively seen it?

DOOYEWEERD: Intuitively he had seen it. The idea of law-spheres is implied. I formed this idea [of law-spheres] by orienting it to his expression “sovereignty in its own sphere.” That is to say that each sphere, each sphere of life (of whatever kind) has only a modal character, an aspectual character. It controls [*beheerst*] concrete reality.

VERBRUGGE: In the individuality structures?

DOOYEWEERD: But that was all included under “sovereignty in its own sphere.”

VERBRUGGE: So that is therefore an idea that you derived from Kuyper? Either directly or indirectly, and that you then developed further?

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, yes. I believe that the basic idea [*grondgedachte*] was derived from Kuyper. Yes. And I have tried to show that this is really a reformed line in Kuyper’s thought, which stands unreconciled [*onverzoend*] with the scholastic line [in Kuyper’s thought].¹⁸ Where [in the scholastic line], he forgot all about this—the central significance of the human heart, also for example the thought that he had expressed of the kingship of Christ over all areas of life, and his well known statement at the opening of the Free University, that there is no ‘inch’—to use the English word—of the whole of human life that is not subjected to His sovereignty. The clear conclusion, as Jesus himself says, is that Christ is given all power both in

God: Theosophical themes in Dooyeweerd’s philosophy,” online at [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/hermandoooyeweerd/Imagination.html>].

¹⁸ JGF: See Herman Dooyeweerd: “Kuyper’s Wetenschapsleer,” *Philosophia Reformata* 4 (1939), 193-232.

heaven and on earth.¹⁹ Thus, those are indeed reformational ideas in Kuyper that he did not systematically develop. He gives examples of spheres of life as having sovereignty in their own sphere that cannot possibly have such sovereignty in their own sphere. For example he refers to parts of the state, such as municipalities and provinces, which were also supposed to be sovereign spheres of life. But that cannot be. For the boundaries of a genuine sphere of life are determined by the inner *nature* of that sphere of life. But the boundaries of what I call autonomous bodies within the state [municipalities, provinces], and also parts of the church, and so on—they are determined by the nature of the *whole* of which they are [merely] *parts*. And one particular sovereign sphere of life cannot be a part of another sovereign sphere of life, for what is a part of a whole is determined by the law of life for the *whole*. And if that is the case [that they are a part of a whole], then we cannot speak of sovereignty in its own sphere of the part. We can speak of autonomy.²⁰

VERBRUGGE: But that is of course where you further developed Kuyper's work, expanded it, more precisely defined it.

DOOYEWEERD: Yes. Kuyper did not think it through. He knew it intuitively, he had an intuitive viewpoint which he did not develop, but which was of great significance, and just because it was in the scriptural line. So that is the answer to the second question.

VERBRUGGE: Yes.

DOOYEWEERD: The third question. [Dooyeweerd reads in English] "What developments have taken place in the Amsterdam school in the past two de-cades?"

VERBRUGGE: Decades.

DOOYEWEERD: Decades. [He reads in English] "Is there a discernible pattern in its development?" Yes, that question comes from remarks that have recently been made

¹⁹ JGF: The reference is to Matthew 28:18: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

²⁰ JGF: See Dooyeweerd's views of how Groen van Prinsterer confused this issue. See Dooyeweerd's 1964 lecture, and my footnote 24 in particular.

in certain writings that have appeared in the U.S. I am thinking for example of Van Til's recent writings.

VERBRUGGE: Yes.

DOOYEWEERD: Cornelius van Til. But they come from the seminary, the theological seminary in Philadelphia, eh?

VERBRUGGE: Yes.

DOOYEWEERD: The Presbyterian Church. And these [people at the seminary] believe that there has recently been a fundamental revision in the ideas of the Philosophy of the Law-Idea.

VERBRUGGE: Do you disagree? Or do you agree that such a revision has taken place?

DOOYEWEERD: Various changes have taken place [in my philosophy], but nothing that you could say is fundamental, not a change in the intention of this philosophy, as Van Til asserts.²¹ Van Til believed that he could find this change by the fact that in the English edition of *De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee*,²² instead of *one way* of the transcendental critique, I speak of there being a *second way*. For I thought that in the first way, which I had developed in the Dutch edition, *De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee*, I had not set out the problem clearly enough. And that I had proceeded from ideas that were not shared by everyone in philosophy. And therefore I said at the time that we must critically investigate the theoretical attitude of thought and experience *as such*. For at that time, in the 1930's, the great battle was against the idea that at that time was pretty much all-powerful, the idea of the autonomy of theoretical thought. That was supposed to be true both for philosophy and for science. They said that faith and science must remain sharply distinguished from each other, not only distinguished [*onderscheiden*] from each other but also separated [*verscheiden*] from

²¹ JGF: Dooyeweerd must be speaking of his own philosophy (and of how his philosophy differed from other reformational philosophers). Van Til argued that Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique marked a fundamental change from Dooyeweerd's transcendent philosophy. See *Jerusalem and Athens*, and Dooyeweerd's response in the same book.

²² JGF: The English edition is of course *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*.

each other. For if a link were made between them, and if for example it were said that presuppositions of faith should determine the direction of theoretical thought, then theoretical thought would no longer be autonomous.

VERBRUGGE: And therefore not scientific.

DOOYEWEERD: And therefore not scientific. And no basis was given for that argument except to say that this was the *nature* of science [to be autonomous]. For the nature of science was that the particular hypotheses from which one proceeded in science must always be tested by experience, huh? And if it did not correspond with that, then you would have to give up these hypotheses. And if one proceeded from Christian presuppositions, then it was said that these are not available for correction, except insofar as they were or were not in correspondence with Scriptures. But if they were really derived from Scripture, then they are not available to be corrected, and not available to be given up. Thus, for example, whenever there would be a conflict between Christian presuppositions of faith and the findings of science, then on a Christian standpoint one would be forced to give preference to Christian belief. That is to say, science would be wrong.

VERBRUGGE: And how did that then develop?

DOOYEWEERD: From the very beginning, I subjected these views to a radical critique, which I called ‘the radical transcendental critique.’ And now they [Dooyeweerd’s critics] suppose that there has been a fundamental revision in the Philosophy of the Law-Idea, which they date from the first publication of the English edition, in which I *sharpened* the way—or the method—of the transcendental critique. I did this by not proceeding from particular views of philosophy, namely that it must be a *total* view of reality (a view which I did not give up). But in order to have a discussion with an opponent, to maintain contact with him, to engage in a *broader* and *sharper* way of analysis, I therefore subjected the theoretical attitude of thought and experience, in itself [*zonder meer*], to a transcendental critical investigation. And that implied that I

sought the conditions, the presuppositions, that first make thought possible.²³ And which [conditions] are required by the *inner nature* of theoretical thought and the theoretical attitude of experience. And I then contrasted this transcendental critique with all [merely] transcendent critique, for example a critique that is based on a theological standpoint and which therefore rejects certain philosophical views.

VERBRUGGE: Can you give an example of that?

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, certainly. The example that I always give at first is the objection made by the previous theological faculty at the Free University, and which they complained of to the Curators of the Free University with respect to the Philosophy of the Law-Idea. They said that [the Philosophy of the Law-Idea] rejected the current ideas of man's body and soul.²⁴

VERBRUGGE: Oh, yes.

DOOYEWEERD: That was the view [in the theological faculty at that time] was that man is composed of two substances, or two independent things [*zelfstandigheden*], a material body (material substance) that is mortal, and a spiritual substance, which was called the 'immortal soul' that is imperishable [*onvergankelijk*]. Now the Bible knows nothing at all of an immortal soul. Concerning mortality and immortality, it nowhere says that the human soul is immortal.

VERBRUGGE: Does it refer at all to the human soul in contrast to the human body?

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, there is one text which says that. Jesus says to his disciples, "Fear not those who can kill the body, but fear rather Him who can kill both body and soul and cast them into Hell."²⁵ So now comes the question, what did Jesus mean by 'soul'?

²³ JGF: As Dooyeweerd made clear in *The Encyclopedia of the Science of Law*, these conditions, which make thought possible, are not themselves theoretical presuppositions but ontical conditions which make theory possible in the first place.

²⁴ JGF: See Dooyeweerd's Responses to the Curators.

²⁵ JGF: The reference is to Luke 12:4-5 "And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn

VERBRUGGE: Yes.

DOOYEWEERD: For if you go to the Old Testament, where it says at the beginning that God blew the breath of life in the nostrils of man, and man thereby became a “living soul.” The whole man.

VERBRUGGE: The soul is what makes man human.

DOOYEWEERD: Well, yes, it is what makes him *alive*. Makes alive [*levend maakt*]. But only later was a distinction made between soul and spirit [*geest*]. So ‘soul’ according to the current opinion is the principle of life [*het levensbeginsel*]. The principle of organic life. As Poortman also sees in plants.²⁶

VERBRUGGE: Yes.

DOOYEWEERD: Now this whole view of body and soul as two substances is not Biblical. Two substances, where the soul can also exist without the body. Namely, after death. And then as an immortal spiritual substance. That was an idea that was squarely derived from Greek philosophy. And its Ground-motive was irreconcilable with that of the Scriptures.

VERBRUGGE: And how long have people supposed that you have made a change in your thought?²⁷

DOOYEWEERD: Well with respect to this point of the second way of the transcendental critique, Van Til says that I am now engaging in dialogue with my opponents and that I stand on their own standpoint—that I do not have to give a critique from a Christian standpoint, but I can give a critique from out of their own Ground-motive. That is in fact true. It is required by the transcendental critique. I have said that if you do not

you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.” (*KJV*)

²⁶ JGF: The reference is to the philosopher J.J. Poortman.

²⁷ JGF: Again, I would have wished that Verbrugge would have continued the previous discussion. For Dooyeweerd makes it clear that the supratemporal heart, which is not a soul in the sense of substance, does survive death. See his Responses to the Curators. In the New Critique, Dooyeweerd indicates a proper view of ‘soul’ (*NC II*, 111).

do this, you do not *contact* your opponent. He doesn't even understand what you mean. For you allow your own Ground-motive to play a role, the Ground-motive of creation, fall into sin and redemption. And that is just not accepted by your opponent. And if you begin by saying, "Well that is my point of departure," well then he will respond, "We might as well stop the discussion now, for I don't share that standpoint." And especially if you say, "Now this point of departure controls the whole of my philosophic thought, the Philosophy of the Law-Idea." But if you say that at the outset, then you have broken off the discussion.

VERBRUGGE: So how do you say that we should begin such a discussion?

DOOYEWEERD: Well as I said, I give a definition of what I understand by the transcendental critique of the theoretical attitude of thought and experience. That is an investigation that has no single philosophical prejudice—not that of the autonomy of theoretical thought, or the prejudice that theoretic thought must work without beliefs, since beliefs are supposed to be in a different area, and so on. Those are themselves theoretical prejudices that must be eliminated. At least for the time being. I do not say that they must give up these prejudices, for they cannot yet do that. They have not yet come that far.

VERBRUGGE: But gradually, after a common basis for discussion has been made possible by the choice of position, then at a certain time you can come to the point where you can allow your own Ground-motive of creation, fall and redemption to be displayed, and where he [your opponent] must choose a position?

DOOYEWEERD: And that point is not reached earlier than where I allow to be seen that each attempt to make logical thought to be something independent [*een zelfstandigheid*]—

VERBRUGGE: Separate from man?

DOOYEWEERD: Well, that, too—that this attempt ends in nothing. For logical thought is a faculty, an ability of *man*. It is always *man* who thinks.

VERBRUGGE: Is it the case that if logical thought as such is deemed to be autonomous, then that amounts to a deifying of something that was created in man?

DOOYEWEERD: Yes.

VERBRUGGE: In other words, idolatry.

DOOYEWEERD: Yes.

VERBRUGGE: A form of idolatry.

DOOYEWEERD: Yes. Certainly. But if I say that it is a form of idolatry, we are not yet there. My opponent doesn't even understand what I mean.

VERBRUGGE: No, you can't begin a discussion by saying, "You are a servant of idolatry."

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, like Van Til says in his *Syllabus*, where he gave lectures for many years at [Westminster] seminary on the Philosophy of the Law-Idea, then with respect to the transcendental critique, the first question and so on, he suddenly asks the question, "Why doesn't Dooyeweerd clearly state to his opponents that they are breakers of the covenant?" [laughs] But they wouldn't even understand what you meant!

VERBRUGGE: No.

DOOYEWEERD: They would say, "What is he talking about?"

VERBRUGGE: They don't even know what 'covenant' is.

DOOYEWEERD: Not at all! No. Many Christians would also not understand it.

VERBRUGGE: So it is not then really a change—

DOOYEWEERD: No, there was no fundamental change [in my philosophy]; one can only speak of a "sharpening" of the transcendental critique.

VERBRUGGE: And you probably arrived at it by your experience in discussions with other thinkers?

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, but also by thinking through the issues. I came to the conclusion, I have been too premature [*voorbarig*]. I thought that one could clearly assert that it was necessary for philosophy to have a view of totality and of reality. But yes, these are directions, and this took place in the 1930's, when the revival of Kant's

philosophy played a great role. But they said, “For us, philosophy must remain strictly limited to epistemology.” The only sciences that Kant knew, those were the natural sciences.

VERBRUGGE: Thus, the whole matter, and really the whole misunderstanding, arose in the world by the fact that it seemed to Van Til that your philosophy, if it was to be a Christian philosophy, must be unchangeable. Whereas you have said that in certain respects you did not set out the problems clearly enough and that it must be improved, and that you would be the first to recognize and even recommend that attempts must always be made to improve it, because each human work—

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, and there was something important regarding Van Til. He was wrong in his supposition regarding my *first question*, which does not yet refer to the religious Ground-motive. The first question is, “What then really is theoretical thought?” I began by giving a definition. And then I say that it is the attitude of thought, and the attitude of experience, which sets the logical function, or the analytical function, over against all the non-logical aspects of reality.

VERBRUGGE: Yes.

DOOYEWEERD: And you may agree with me or disagree with me. But this is something that I can discuss with my opponent. Eh?

VERBRUGGE: Yes.

DOOYEWEERD: Now Van Til thinks that in this first question, the Philosophy of the Law-Idea is really entering a neutral territory—[an area] where the Christian religion does not yet arise.

VERBRUGGE: (interrupting) A kind of naturalism.

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, and that is such a terrible misunderstanding. For he [Van Til] should have understood that that interpretation is impossible, for I would then contradict myself. I assert that there is no autonomous theoretical thought. And he thinks I should have begun with that and should have acknowledged it in this first question, “What is the nature of theoretical thought?” But if he had looked more

closely at this question, then he would have immediately discovered the influence of my religious Biblical Ground-motive. For why else do I say that the other, non-logical aspects cannot be reduced to, deduced from the logical aspect? Because I start from the idea of sovereignty in its own sphere. And what is the basis for the sovereignty in each sphere of the aspects? In creation.

VERBRUGGE: In creation. Naturally.

DOOYEWEERD: And that is my Christian, religious point of departure. And it is purely Biblical. Thus, this is a terrible misunderstanding [by Van Til].

VERBRUGGE: Yes. Now I believe that other misunderstandings have also arisen in the world. Now this is related to the logical aspect, but is it not the case that there are various opinions, a great variety of opinions in the various directions of the students, the followers of the Philosophy of the Law-Idea, in which the historical aspect is seen differently or even—

DOOYEWEERD: Is denied.

VERBRUGGE: Or denied.

DOOYEWEERD: Yes.

VERBRUGGE: Don't you also see that as a very important development, and how do you regard it?

DOOYEWEERD: I do not regard it as a development. I see this as a move backwards. I don't see it as development that signifies real progress, but as a very questionable infringement of the basic idea [*grondgedachte*] of the Philosophy of the Law-Idea.

VERBRUGGE: Is this an old idea, this denial of the historical law-sphere?

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, it is in [pauses²⁸] various people who have criticized the law-spheres and so on—

VERBRUGGE: Does that appear in articles in *Philosophia Reformata*?

²⁸ JGF: Dooyeweerd does not name Vollenhoven here, who also denied the historical aspect.

DOOYEWEERD: Uhh, oh yes. [pause]. Yes. Smits. I think that was published in *Philosophia Reformata*. The lecture that Smits gave about history.²⁹

VERBRUGGE: Yes.

DOOYEWEERD: And he has expressly rejected the idea that history can be an aspect of reality.

VERBRUGGE: But that is not something that you have said.

DOOYEWEERD: On the contrary. It is the first thing that I begin with. And it's so crazy. I just read it again this evening, in the collected articles of Stoker³⁰, who also says that he has objections against reducing history to an aspect of reality. And I say in response that the Philosophy of the Law-Idea distinguishes between history and the historical *aspect*. But that doesn't matter [to Stoker]. He continues just as if this were really said in the Philosophy of the Law-Idea—that [my philosophy] says that history is an aspect of reality. And he then continues to analyze it further.

VERBRUGGE: Can you explain in simple terms how you view history? As something other than the historical aspect.

DOOYEWEERD: Well, it's very clear. History, as the word itself [*geschiedenis*] makes clear, is “that which has occurred” [*datgene wat geschied is*]. And this is always based on two expressions. One is an appeal to the Bible, “It is written” [*Er staat geschreven*]. And the other is “And it occurred.” [*En er is geschied*]. That is an appeal to history. But when I refer to the historical aspect, as I have said, that can never be identified with what has occurred [*met wat geschied is*], with history. For it is only an *aspect* of what has occurred. And what has occurred also has many other aspects. Take for example, the battle of Waterloo. What really happened there cannot be adequately reproduced in any historical story. If you tried to do that, then

²⁹ JGF: The reference appears to be to Meijer C. Smit, who, like many other reformational philosophers, denied that the existence of an historical modality.

³⁰ JGF: The reference is to Hendrik Stoker.

you would have to describe each path of each bullet, you would have to describe that for the battle.

VERBRUGGE: Every thought of every soldier—

DOOYEWEERD: Every thought. Every feeling of fear that affected the soldiers. All of that would have to be described, and no human being can do that. So the science of history cannot be what Ranke described as “*Wie es eigentlich gewesen ist.*” “What really happened.” He considered that to be the whole task of the historian.

VERBRUGGE: So that is not what it is. It is not the description of what has happened.

DOOYEWEERD: No. Not *what* has occurred. It concerns only the question, “*how.*” The *modus quo*. Thus, the modal way of experiencing the historical.

VERBRUGGE: And how is that distinguished from, for example, the aspect of love, the ethical aspect? How is the historical aspect distinguished from the ethical aspect, the aspect of love, which determines whether men have love or hate towards each other, and which also provides the norms prescribed for the conduct from person to another? How does the historical aspect differ?

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, for that I need to refer to what has been set out in *De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee* concerning the *structure* of the modal aspects. Structure is what you could call the building scheme [*bouwplan*], which brings a unity within a diversity of moments.³¹

VERBRUGGE: Yes, and then you get the various aspects, and the theory [*leer*] of the aspects.

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, and it then appears that within each aspect is expressed its coherence with all the other aspects.

VERBRUGGE: Yes, and how is the historical aspect distinguished from all the other aspects?

³¹ JGF: In his last article, Dooyeweerd discusses how the modal structures are a later individuation from Totality than the modal aspects.

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, but just wait a minute first. I'm coming to that.

VERBRUGGE: Oh, yes.

DOOYEWEERD: The distinction just referred relates to what *De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee* calls the 'meaning-kernel' [*zin-kern*] of the modal aspect. The meaning-kernels differ, but within a given aspect, I call certain moments "analogical moments" in the structure; they are not the original meaning of the aspect, but they express the relation between the aspect that we have in view and the other aspects. But the meaning-kernel as such carries a completely original character in the aspect that we are concerned with, the aspect that we are investigating. And in my view, in what is called the 'moral aspect,' this [meaning-kernel] is love in its temporal meaning. Love, not just in the sense of general love for one's neighbour, but love in its other differentiations, [love] which carries a different character in each particular sphere, such as the community of family [*gezinsgemeenschap*]. And [love carries] another character when we speak of love of fatherland, which is also a moral figure.³² And again it has another aspect, when we speak of "love for truth" in science. And so on, and so on.

And therefore when we survey the various revelations [*openbaringen*] of moral love, we come across diversity. But what they have in common is that they are all modes of revelation [*openbaringswijzen*] of the meaning-kernel of the moral aspect.³³

Now, as I have shown, we can approach the meaning-kernel of the historical aspect in this way: only man functions as subject within the historical aspect. [Only man] can appear as subject, okay?

³² JGF: The term 'figure' is a technical term for Dooyeweerd. See [<http://www.members.shaw.ca/jgfriesen/Definitions/Image.html>].

³³ JGF: This use of 'revelation' [*openbaring*] is consistent with the way that Dooyeweerd uses it elsewhere. For God, revelation is the expression of the eternal in both the supratemporal and the temporal. For man, revelation is the expression of the supratemporal within the temporal. Dooyeweerd speaks of the revelation of man's supratemporal selfhood within his temporal body and temporal reality. His use of the term in relation to the aspects suggests that the meaning-kernel is itself supratemporal, and that it expresses itself temporally in the analogies.

VERBRUGGE: Yes, as giver of form [*vormgever*].

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, yes. I'll come back to that, so leave it for the time being. But let me say this: in order to track down the meaning-kernel of the historical aspect, you must consider that it only concerns man's *cultural* development. Cultural development.

VERBRUGGE: And what do you understand by 'cultural development?' Do you understand by this the things that man makes according to a free design [*vrij ontwerp*]? The things that are not created in nature as such, but to which man in his originality gives form?

DOOYEWEERD: A free design, yes that belongs to it—the giving of form. Giving form to a material according to a free design. And I clearly distinguish this from the giving of form that takes place in nature. I have given the example of a spider that weaves its web, always in the same way, according to the same pattern.

VERBRUGGE: It is not a free pattern?

DOOYEWEERD: It is not a free design. And it does not presuppose a control [*beheersing*] of the material. In the great cultural mandate that is given to man in creation, to subject the earth, and to have dominion.³⁴ It is a commission [*opdracht*]. That is to say it is a carrying out of power *over*.

VERBRUGGE: Yes, that is completely different from a plant that forms a leaf.

DOOYEWEERD: Yes. That is something totally different, and it does not take place according to a free design of the plant as such.

VERBRUGGE: And because of that it is not an historical event.

DOOYEWEERD: It is not an historical event. There is nothing historical to consider in the history of a certain plant. That is something completely different. The plants can of course also participate in cultural life. For example, consider cultivated plants. Man can cross-breed plants, cultivate plants, and bring about new varieties of plants.

³⁴ JGF: The reference is to Genesis 1:28.

VERBRUGGE: But then man is in control and not the plant.

DOOYEWEERD: Man has the cultural design, the free design, and man in that case exercises power [*macht*] over the material that is given in nature.

VERBRUGGE: And according to you, what is the kernel of the historical aspect?

DOOYEWEERD: If you say, “giving form,” then we are already using an analogical moment. Because form and the giving of form also occur in nature. And form is originally a spatial concept. A spatial figure is a particular form.

VERBRUGGE: But that also makes it so easy to confuse the development in a plant with man’s developments in culture.

DOOYEWEERD: We can especially see this [confusion] expressed at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, under the influence of romanticism—to view the whole of temporal reality within the framework of history. It begins with a natural history, the historical developments in nature, in natural organisms. And then in addition there is the spiritual form of human history. Cultural history.

VERBRUGGE: But those are two very different forms, two different things that we can talk about.

DOOYEWEERD: You can in both cases speak about history. Of course the earth has a history. History [in that sense] is everything that has occurred.

VERBRUGGE: But it is not a cultural history.

DOOYEWEERD: It is not a *cultural* history, and that is why it is not a subject for historical science [*historiewetenschap*]. Huh? That is the point that is important. And that has not been understood by those who deny that the historical is an aspect, and who say that history [*geschiedenis*] is really the subject of the science of history [*historiewetenschap*]. History is like every other reality. It is a concrete reality, this history.

VERBRUGGE: Man who functions in history also functions in all modalities, in all aspects of human existence and not merely in the historical aspect.

DOOYEWEERD: Yes. To give an example, a very instructive question, given by the well-known Austrian economist [Friederich Hayek?] regarding the battle of Waterloo. What led to the battle? The battle of Waterloo is indisputably an historical event. What led up to it? Did the activities of the farmers play a role, who still tried to bring in the harvest from the field of Waterloo? [...] So it is clear that the battle of Waterloo cannot be limited to spatial boundaries.

VERBRUGGE: So in your view, what was it about the battle of Waterloo that made it an historical event, something worth investigating and mentioning historically?

DOOYEWEERD: Because it was a confrontation, a confrontation of power. A military confrontation of power, between Napoleon and the allied armies that reacted and fought against him. So everything that plays a role in the forces of power belongs to the battle of Waterloo. That belongs to the military confrontation of power. From this it appears that the science of history [*historiewetenschap*] requires a foundation in a modal aspect. It needs its own theoretical viewpoint that determines the unity to all the differentiation, all possible differentiation, that makes possible a special historical discipline.

VERBRUGGE: For the historian to be occupied as a historian and not as a moralist or a jurist. He must be specifically occupied as an historian and not as something else.

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, specifically as an historian.

VERBRUGGE: And do you think that there are specific norms for the use of power that is investigated by the historian? That there are norms for the way that man is to play his role in history?

DOOYEWEERD: Well, yes I set that out extensively in *The New Critique*. And especially in my lecture that I gave at the time of the 150 year existence of the Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen.³⁵ And I have there

³⁵ JGF: See Herman Dooyeweerd: “The Criteria of Progressive and Reactionary Tendencies in History,” (Amsterdam: N.V. Noord-Hoooidsche Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1958).

provisionally related norms to the modality, I *limited* them to the historical aspect. I have not yet related them to the individuality structure. For the same historical norm receives a great individualization, a typicalization, when you relate it to the state, the power of the state.

VERBRUGGE: If we can speak of the norm in the ethical aspect as that of loving and not hating our neighbour, how do you see the norm for the use of power, which is studied by historians? What is the norm?

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, *the* norm—there is not just not one norm. But I have given the modal norms for the historical aspect. I have shown that the criterion is between reaction and what is called progression. And it cannot be left to the arbitrariness of parties, who all want to take the attitude of being progressive.

VERBRUGGE: There is a criterion that can be discovered and by which you can use to determine whether what has taken place here, and the way in which power has been used here is progressive or not. Whether it brings you forwards or puts you backwards.

DOOYEWEERD: To see the modal norms, first of all there is a norm of development, and that norm of development is still in itself strongly tied to the aspect of organic life. The whole idea of historical development is most closely related to natural development, in nature. But this norm only acquires a really historical significance by its specification [*preciseering*] within the opening process, which is within the historical aspect.

VERBRUGGE: By that you mean man's development of science and the application of science and man's development of societal institutions—

DOOYEWEERD: [Dooyeweerd tries to interrupt]. In general matters, I was concerned totally with respect to the modal level.

VERBRUGGE: [crestfallen] Yes,—

DOOYEWEERD: And then I saw, the *meaning* of historical development defines itself only in its relation to the later analogical moments. And especially with the

anticipatory moments that proceed from the historical aspect, those later moments that the historical aspect reaches out towards.

VERBRUGGE: Like the juridical?

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, and the economic, and what I first said, the differentiation and integration of human life. Differentiation. So in older societies, primitive societies, there are still undifferentiated situations.

VERBRUGGE: And by 'differentiation' you mean the possibility for the development of knowledge and for specialization of functions within society?

DOOYEWEERD: No, I don't mean that. I am referring to the primitive societal attitude that still carries an undifferentiated character. For example the primitive family relation, contained elements that belong only to the state in a differentiated society [interview interrupted by buzzers]. In primitive cultural facts, we find elements in societies, undifferentiated situations that in a differentiated society are accorded to special [institutions], for example government authority [*overheidsgezag*]. Abraham was called 'lord' [*heer*] by his wife Sarah. And correctly, for Abraham was not only father of the family, and not only spouse of Sarah, but he was King, ruler, and as such he had governmental authority. And he exercised the power of the sword [*zwaardmacht*].

VERBRUGGE: At one point, he was a general.

DOOYEWEERD: He was that in the battle against the allied kings, who drove away the people from Sodom and Gomorrah, where his nephew Lot was. Those are undifferentiated situations. But in the unfolding of human cultural development, these undifferentiated situations of life are broken up. As soon as a real state comes into being, a *res publica*, then the clan relations [*geslachtsverbanden*] disappear. In ancient Roman society they were called the [*..familia?*] and in Germanic societies they were called [*sibs? trustis?*].³⁶ Those were clan relations, which were

³⁶ JGF: The tape is very difficult to understand here, but the terms I have used here are the terms that Dooyeweerd gives at *NC III*, 367.

undifferentiated, in all spheres of life. And these clan relations fought wars with each other. Do you remember the old Roman historical story about the Roman family that was defeated by another one that exercised military power? And they sought protection from the Romans. So as soon as the state appears, then the striving for government is led by the state, in order to break up the undifferentiated clan relations.

VERBRUGGE: And you see this as progress, as opening up, as progression.

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, because God created all things according to their nature, according to their *own* nature. The societal spheres then develop in a differentiated way. In an undifferentiated society, they cannot be revealed in a pure way. For example, the true nature of the marriage relationship. It is overshadowed by [...]

Abraham was called 'lord' by his wife. [And Abraham also controlled] the household religion and so on, and Abraham also exercised the function of priest. That occurs everywhere in an undifferentiated society. That is a characteristic that runs through all those societies. And these undifferentiated spheres of life are now broken up. And that is progress. And so each attempt to return to an earlier situation [such as in industry], or the attempt by Protestants or Roman Catholics to return to the Middle Ages, [where the guilds are under] the supervision of the church, to try to *relive* that time, especially by Roman Catholics—those are all reactionary tendencies. I have shown the same reactionary tendencies in National Socialism, where an advanced society sought to bring the old ethnic elements to new life.

VERBRUGGE: To revive the old *sibs*.

DOOYEWEERD: To revive them, as well as the old customs [*gewoonte*], which often had a pagan signature to them. The Easter bonfires [*paasvuuren*], the solstice festivals, and all those things again. But nationality, that had to be retained, the [anthems?] still had to be sung.

VERBRUGGE: What do you think the danger is if people no longer recognize the historical aspect as an independent aspect? This in fact occurs fairly frequently by those who themselves claim to be adherents of the Philosophy of the Law-Idea. What do you see to be the danger?

DOOYEWEERD: The consequences of not having understood my critique. The historical aspect gives the viewpoint for historical science [*historiewetenschap*]. There must be a unity to the science. It must be the science of history.

VERBRUGGE: And not juridical science.

DOOYEWEERD: And not juridical science. [...] Otherwise it puts us on the wrong track for our epistemology, since there is no unity to the science. Secondly, the whole theory of individuality structures because, as I have shown, the unfolding process in human society is founded in the unfolding of the historical aspect. So if you acknowledge the historical aspect, then you can also speak of an unfolding. And in the individuality structures, with the principle of control—there I have also shown a *leading function*. And I have also shown that there is a *founding* function. And this is also the case for the state. And that is expressed in the definition of the state that I gave, as a monopolistic organization that has the power of the sword—that is therefore its founding function, the area of power. And the *leading* function is the creation of a public community of law, thus a distinction between the government and those who are subjected to it.

VERBRUGGE: And if we do not acknowledge this historical foundation, if we deny that there is a historical aspect, then the idea of the state disappears?

DOOYEWEERD: There is no place for the power of the sword of the state, as a typical form of power. There is no place for it. And yes, then we run the danger that we have no defence against ideas that say that the state is just an organization of power. And as Marx and his predecessors have said, instead of the rule by persons will come the [rule of authority?].

VERBRUGGE: Is it the case that if we do not acknowledge an historical aspect as such, that there will then be no historical norms? Then human conduct can no longer be judged historically, and it can then be judged only by means of aesthetic, or ethical-moral, or juridical concepts. And historical judgment has then disappeared. And then you can no longer determine whether a past development was progressive or reactionary.

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, there is then no criterion. That is also a danger.

VERBRUGGE: Is it also possible that such a rejection [of the historical aspect] could lead to a return of historicism? Is there such a danger?

DOOYEWEERD: There is a danger that they will really have no defence against historicism. They try to say that the words ‘God’, etc. are also historically relative. That doesn’t work, either, [merely] because all of Scripture shows a historical development. Huh? In revelation. It has an historical aspect. But if I absolutize that, and if I say that everything is historical, then also the message, the central message of the revelation of creation, fall and redemption—the fall into sin is placed along with other historical facts. Undoubtedly an important historical fact, but it is then only one historical fact among many. And it is then not seen that the fall into sin occurred on a different level—it concerns the *heart* of man, the religious center. No single historical fact as such concerns—as an historical fact—the heart of man.³⁷

VERBRUGGE: It can only have a moral, or a juridical influence on him. If the historical norm has disappeared.³⁸

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, and then one also has no criterion for the historical aspect of revelation, for revelation did indeed enter into time. It [revelation] thus displays various aspects.³⁹ Also a juridical aspect, also a moral aspect, and so on. Historical aspect and of course a linguistic aspect. And we can continue in that way. All the aspects are within this [cosmic] time. But the *central* way in which God’s Word finally speaks to man’s heart, that [central way] consists in the all-controlling

³⁷ JGF: This is important. The fall is on a different ontological level: the supratemporal level of the heart. Temporal historical facts do not concern the supratemporal heart of man. This is Dooyeweerd’s *radical* [from root, *radix*], view of the fall, and of redemption, which also takes place in the heart as we participate in Christ, the New Root.

³⁸ JGF: Verbrugge misses Dooyeweerd’s point here, that the fall is not historical. For Dooyeweerd, the fall is in the supratemporal religious root.

³⁹ JGF: In his 1964 lecture, Dooyeweerd says that we cannot understand Word revelation or even the incarnation of Christ if we fail to recognize the distinction between the heart as supratemporal center and the temporal periphery in which it expresses or reveals itself.

significance of creation, the fall into sin by man in which he was held, and redemption in Christ Jesus in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. And in this way we come of course to the question of the [religious] Ground-motive.

VERBRUGGE: Yes, and we won't go into that now.⁴⁰ Is there something else that you would like to say?

DOOYEWEERD: [inaudible] [Reads in English:] "What are today's critical issues in philosophy, that Christians should be aware of? How have these issues changed during your lifetime?" Yes, that relates to the time that the Philosophy of the Law-Idea first appeared. [inaudible]

VERBRUGGE: No, that is probably not something that would interest readers of *Vanguard* magazine.

DOOYEWEERD: [Reads in English:] "What kind of reception has your work found among philosophers and lay people, both Christian and non-Christian, in various parts of the world?" Now this philosophy was first published as a whole, that is, systematically, in the trilogy *De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee*, and later in the more extended form of *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, which today is universally acknowledged and accepted as an important philosophical current.

VERBRUGGE: Also in non-Christian circles?

DOOYEWEERD: In non-Christian circles, for example...

VERBRUGGE: Prof. Langemeier?

DOOYEWEERD: Prof. Langemeier, who is himself a humanist, but has said that this philosophy is the most original that has been produced in the Netherlands, Spinoza

⁴⁰ JGF: Another missed opportunity in this interview.

not excepted.⁴¹ Which is true only to a certain extent, in that I did in fact go in a new direction.⁴² I could not become an adherent of any existing *philosophical* school.

VERBRUGGE: Is it also true to say that this philosophy has contributed outside of Christian circles to the development of philosophy as such?

DOOYEWEERD: I expect so, yes. In the first place, the transcendental critique of theoretical thought, that is today generally acknowledged.

VERBRUGGE: Also by humanists?

DOOYEWEERD: Yes. Correct. Now in Christian circles, it is interesting that those who have grown up in Kuyprian tradition, the tradition from Kuypier—not his scholastic thinking, but his other line—those people have from the very beginning greeted this philosophy with joy, and they have paid a lot of attention to it, much more than is shown merely by the membership list [of the Association for Calvinistic Philosophy], which now has some 850 members. And an article was written by [inaudible] in the States, who is not even a member [inaudible]. And the fault is that in the Netherlands, there is a rule that you can only become a member if you are nominated [by someone else]. You can't just rely on the membership list [to determine the influence]. So the membership list as such doesn't say very much. The real list of adherents is much larger.

But on the other hand, it must be said that the Philosophy of the Law-Idea continues to be rejected by those who follow the scholastic line of thought.

VERBRUGGE: And does that have anything to do with the scholastic line in theology?

DOOYEWEERD: Without any doubt, yes. Without any doubt.

VERBRUGGE: And which continues to be strongly influential in Protestant churches?

DOOYEWEERD: Oh, yes. Certainly.

⁴¹ JGF: Statement by Prof. G.E. Langemeier that Dooyeweerd was the most original Dutch philosopher, Spinoza not excepted (*Trouw*, October 4, 1964).

⁴² JGF: Elsewhere, Dooyeweerd denies that his thought is original. See his Response to the Curators, and see *WdW* III, vii-viii.

VERBRUGGE: Where reformational thought has not yet penetrated.

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, these are difficult matters—reformation in the area of the church.

In what is called dialectical theology, there is a strong influence [of scholasticism], without a doubt. But originally, Barth simply rejected all Christian philosophy. He saw it as a Christian form of humanism. He wondered if the monopoly of theology [inaudible]

VERBRUGGE: Good.

DOOYEWEERD: Thus in the scholastic direction, the Philosophy of the Law-Idea has no adherents, but rather opposition.

VERBRUGGE: Well, it's not possible to be a friend to everybody.

DOOYEWEERD: No. Unfortunately not.

VERBRUGGE: Maybe we can briefly look at the last questions. What do you see to be the strengths and weaknesses in the attempts by Christian students to study philosophical problems?

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, this question is written in a confused way. I don't know precisely what they mean. What do they mean by "Christian students?"

VERBRUGGE: Probably those who consider themselves to be followers of you.

DOOYEWEERD: Oh! Is that what is intended? They are referring to me. In [my] followers—not all of them—there is of course the tendency to more or less canonize the Philosophy of the Law-Idea, to regard it as a fruit of Christian thought that cannot be touched.

VERBRUGGE: As a closed system that cannot be argued with.

DOOYEWEERD: And Kuyper also did not escape that. There was a time when Kuyper's followers regarded his words as the words of the Master. Now, from the very beginning, I [warned against this].

VERBRUGGE: You would see it as a great weakness in the followers of the Philosophy of the Law-Idea if they did not change it when they thought it should be changed?

DOOYEWEERD: If it is necessary, and I should say that some articles in *Philosophia Reformata* have given critique of various points of the Philosophy of the Law-Idea.

VERBRUGGE: And you see that in itself as a good sign?

DOOYEWEERD: I find it a good sign. At least if it is properly argued.

VERBRUGGE: In a scientific way.

DOOYEWEERD: Yes. I do not find it not at all a good phenomenon when it is superficial.⁴³

VERBRUGGE: Of course not.⁴⁴ Maybe we can look at the following question.

DOOYEWEERD: [reads in English] “From your vantage point as a Christian statesman, and your knowledge of developments in the world, where do you see the real battle lines being drawn for Christians in this decade?”

Battle lines? Front Lines? *Strijdlijnen?*

VERBRUGGE: Yes, the boundaries between the troops. The front line.

DOOYEWEERD: Well yes, I can’t summarize that in a short way. At the moment there are so many points [of conflict]. For example there is at the moment what we call cultural critique [*maatschappijkritiek*], where there is a battle between Marxists, and neo-Marxists, who are also finding their victims within Christian circles.

VERBRUGGE: Do you think that cultural critique, which as you say is practiced mainly by neo-Marxists, will be where the battle line will be drawn in the future? By Christians, who undoubtedly must take part regarding injustice, and [who must take part] in cultural critique, but who cannot share the solutions by neo-Marxists? That there, the difference between what Christians say must happen and must change, and

⁴³ JGF: See Dooyeweerd’s 1964 lecture, where he rejects some of the criticism that had been given. For example, he regards Stoker’s criticism as not proceeding from the same religious center as his own philosophy. And see Dooyeweerd’s last article, where he strongly rejects the criticism by D.F.M. Strauss.

⁴⁴ JGF: Again, a missed opportunity to ask Dooyeweerd which criticism he regarded as superficial.

what neo-Marxists say must change? Is that where the real battle will be? Or do you think that Christians will react in a reactionary way, and say, “No, we won’t tolerate any critique”?

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, we have of course also seen this phenomenon of a reactionary attitude among Christians [...] in what was called the counter-revolutionary current in the previous century, before the Anti-revolutionary Party was founded, a strong counter-revolutionary current, among both the Roman [Catholic] and Protestant Christians, eh?

VERBRUGGE: A reconstruction?

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, it also appeared in da Costa and others. Ideas with an influence from romanticism. German idealism and so on.

VERBRUGGE: Yes, that is the past, and we don’t have time for that in this interview.⁴⁵
But how do you see it develop for the future? Have you any idea?

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, I mean if you intend me to set out a *program* for the future from a Christian standpoint, that is not my task.

VERBRUGGE: No.

DOOYEWEERD: I am not in a political party at the moment.

VERBRUGGE: No.

DOOYEWEERD: Yes, and that is therefore really the task of a Christian party.

VERBRUGGE: Yes,

DOOYEWEERD: And it has then no value if just one man develops a program. That must be a conviction that is shared by a community, and which then comes to expression.

⁴⁵ JGF: Again, Verbrugge does not follow up on Dooyeweerd’s apparent critique of the Anti-revolutionary Party (ARP). We can see other critique by Dooyeweerd in his 1964 lecture, and in his last interview (the following year, in 1975), where he criticizes Groen van Prinsterer. Unfortunately, Verbrugge does not pursue these ideas.

VERBRUGGE: I think it is therefore best to remove that question?

DOOYEWEERD: To take that question out.

VERBRUGGE: What do think about question #8?

DOOYEWEERD: [reads in English] “Does the work of a professional Christian philosopher contribute to the life of the Christian community as a whole?” Yes, it can contribute to the Christian community in this way: that this philosophy makes visible the final driving forces [*drijfkrachten*] of philosophic thinking, and that it similarly shows that these same driving forces are also at work in practical politics, in business life, in science, in art—everywhere.

VERBRUGGE: In all human activities?

DOOYEWEERD: Yes. See for example the fine book by [Hans] Rookmaaker in the area of art, *The Death of a Culture*.⁴⁶ There are various other works that have appeared in this area. Kuyper had also given his vision of art.

VERBRUGGE: Thus a radical Christian philosophy—

DOOYEWEERD: Has significance for all of life.

VERBRUGGE: —can thus bring change, if it is a true philosophy, in the vision of those who practice the various scientific disciplines, and of the practical people who are busy exercising power in those areas.

DOOYEWEERD: Yes. They can warn against pitfalls [Dooyeweerd uses the English word ‘pitfalls’] that have not yet been discovered.

VERBRUGGE: Mistakes [*vergissingen*].

DOOYEWEERD: Eh? No. Pitfalls. What is the [Dutch] word?

VERBRUGGE: ‘*Valkuil*.’

⁴⁶ JGF: See Hans Rookmaaker: *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture* (Intervarsity Press, 1970).

DOOYEWEERD: Yes. Which are for example again today highly evident in the old idea of historicism. Which is [an idea that is] influencing modern theology, even modern Reformed theology.

VERBRUGGE: Yes.

DOOYEWEERD: To a *strong* degree. Kuitert goes very far in that direction.⁴⁷ And I have spoken about this in amazement, because I have devoted a great part of my life to lay bare the snares [*valstrikken*] of just such dangerous currents, of the 'isms. Of historicism, logicism, materialism, biologism, and so on. All those currents, which absolutize a certain aspect, and which in that way take away the fixed ground from under people's feet.

VERBRUGGE: Now philosophy has just as much influence as theology?

DOOYEWEERD: Without any doubt.

VERBRUGGE: At least that is the case at the moment?

DOOYEWEERD: Yes. That is the case. Just as the contrary is also the case. But *both* theology and philosophy need a transcendental self-critique. They must be forced to ask the question, what is now really the central driving force [*drijfkracht*] of their thought. That must especially be said against the scholastic school of thought. For scholasticism [was a new form within Christianity]. For scholasticism always comes from a synthetic linking of Christian ideas and non-Christian ideas. And it comes to clear expression in the Ground-motive of nature and grace. It [posits a] natural domain, where reason [*verstand*] is autonomous [...] in that domain, it does not believe it needs the help of Christian faith. And the super-natural area is then supposed to be the area of theology.

⁴⁷ JGF: The reference is to the theologian Harry M. Kuitert, who was at the time teaching in the theological faculty at the Free University.