

# **Philosophy as Dependable Analysis**

## **Roy Clouser's Contribution to Christian Scholarship**

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## Preface

This is the third annotated bibliography I have compiled.

It gives me great pleasure to complete this first edition of **Philosophy as Dependable Analysis** and I hope that in a year or so another edition can be published, to include further annotations of writings that Roy Clouser is yet to write. He doesn't seem to show any signs of letting up.

I first met Roy in 1986 at Zeist, and then again in 1991 in Atlanta.

As can be seen from my introductory essay, I'm particularly pleased that in Roy's work reformational philosophy has found a clear voice at least in ear-shot of the Anglo-American intellectual tradition.

My own 1992 responses to Roy's Myth can be read [here](#) and [here](#).

The first of these was written for an "Author Meets Critics" session of the Annual Meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, convened in Crystal City Washington D.C in November 1992. I'm not sure whether, as convenor, I even presented my paper. Roy was the author and Myth was the book. It was not a very successful session. I recall how one of the presenters, a English academic-clergyman from a Dutch university, strongly opposed Roy's argument and indeed seemed to suggest that it was rather presumptuous of him to consider presenting his argument at such a scientific gathering. I had convened the session, not only with the hope of giving Roy's book "exposure" but with the expectation that trenchant and critical commentary might result. It proved rather difficult to develop discussion when the discussion you are trying to promote is ruled invalid by one of the discussants!

As I read it, Myth contributes, in a cogent way, to an ongoing debate that remains unresolved within North American sociology. And the assumed relation of religious beliefs and theories that is held within the discipline needs to be critically unravelled if any cogent alternative is to be set forth. This is the kind of difficult work that beckons once Clouser's challenge in Myth has been heard. What I am referring to is the need for a "sociological" addition to the "casebook-studies" by which the author of Myth illustrates his major thesis. In Dooyeweerd's terms we might say that that would involve a "transcendental critique of sociological thought". In Clouser's terms it would be an exploration that examines the hidden role of religious belief in sociological theories and research. Such a "chapter" would augment the critical work Clouser has already provided for the disciplines of mathematics, physics and psychology.

And so, in these terms, **Philosophy as Dependable Analysis** serves as my own "progress report" on foundational research for a "sociological casebook". If it appears, it will be due in no small measure to the arguments Roy Clouser has developed in his own writings.

Steve Bishop continues to do good work managing the **All of Life Redeemed** website. It is good to see so much being made of this on-line archive. It is a labour of love and he deserves our thanks and support.

Many thanks to Roy Clouser for his encouragement and particularly for generously making so many of his works available.

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# Philosophy as Dependable Analysis

## Part I

### Roy Clouser's Philosophical Contribution and North American Higher Education

#### Introduction: How Does Christian Belief Relate to Theories?

It was in 1965 that Roy Clouser's academic career began when he landed a job as instructor in symbolic logic at Rutgers University, New Jersey. Since then, he has worked full-time as an academic, doing what philosophers usually do these days - undertake various research projects, deliver lectures and publish books. In a recent article (2009 No. 44), he explained his early philosophical interest with these words:

*An interest in philosophy had infected me at an early age and, as everyone who has it knows, it is incurable. And right from its onset, my concern was always how to deal with philosophical issues from a Christian point of view. So I wrestled with such questions as: Is philosophy merely non-Christian theology? If not, just how does Christian belief relate to theories?*

In this essay I introduce the collection of Roy Clouser's writings. The two books for which he is becoming well known are The Myth of Religious Neutrality (1999 No. 17 & 2005 No. 35) and Knowing with the Heart (1999 No. 27 & 2007 No. 39). Most of his other writings can be accessed from the [All of Life Redeemed](#) website, and are the published results of his philosophical wrestling with the basic questions he refers to in the quote above. So, in this essay I am seeking to address students who, like Clouser, are thinking about philosophical issues but who first want an answer to a preliminary question - **How does what I believe relate to theories?**

Let me try to summarise Clouser's answer in a few paragraphs: any theory, he writes, is regulated by the theorist's "divinity belief". Humans will believe in one divinity or another. And theories never arise without a reliance upon, or appeal to, "divinity beliefs". "Divinity" is what is believed to be non-dependently real, that upon which everything, including that which is theorised about, ultimately depends. So, he argues, all theories are controlled by some such belief, and this understanding of how religious beliefs relate to theories applies to all theorists, the Christian and the Hindu as much as the materialist and the agnostic who might yet maintain that their theories are religiously neutral. The religious neutrality of theories is a myth, says Clouser. The attempt to keep science and religion separate is itself dependent upon an alternative religious position, one that aims to cloak its non-dependency belief, and hide the fact that this belief is an integral facet of the theorist's life and experience. The theoretical act of abstraction to form concepts does not happen without the theorist's "divinity beliefs" controlling the theory-making.

In that sense, Christian belief relates to theories in the same way that any other religious belief relates to theories. Christian belief is theistic and holds that all of creation depends upon the Creator who has been revealed to us in Jesus Christ. But Christian belief does not have some kind of exclusive corner

on religious belief. Those who have other religious beliefs cannot avoid ascribing "divinity" to some thing, or some principle - and if such ascription is not to the Creator then it will be to something the Created has created i.e. something of the creation. And so, a Christian will also recognise the religious possibility of idolatrous belief. Such a possibility is not just about what the "other guys" believe; it is a religious tendency that the Christian is called by the scriptures to resist, since it is a tendency in the centre of our lives and thus active in the theorising task itself.

The Christian belief leads us to a view of theorising that a theory will imply either belief in the true God who has been revealed to us in Jesus Christ, or it will make its "ultimate" appeal to an idol. The Christian's "ultimate" or "absolute" point of reference is given in the Word made flesh, God incarnate, the Son of God. And the knowledge of God the Son, scripture teaches, impacts all knowledge (1 Cor 1:5, 12:8, Eph 5:9).

And so, the knowledge theories provide are dependent upon what is ultimate and must involve the theorist in a "divinity belief", a belief about what is "ultimate" or "absolute" in our reality. To repeat: to engage in theory-making, a theorist will necessarily appeal to a "divinity belief", to that which is simply believed to be "the way things are", "that upon which everything else depends". And that, in very brief compass, summarises Clouser's answer to the persistent question that was of concern to him long before he became an academic.

I have given this essay the title: **Philosophy as Dependable Analysis**. For Roy Clouser, philosophy can indeed provide us with dependable analysis because of the Dependable One, the God who has made all things, rules over them and whose laws and promises are completely reliable. We will subsequently find that this title refers merely to the first part of Clouser's more comprehensive definition of philosophical reflection.

This annotated bibliography covers Clouser's writings from 1965 to 2009. It is made available to encourage a new generation of students examine his provocative answer to this important question, and to let its implications infuse the way they are approaching their studies. In my judgment the formulation of Clouser's philosophical "answer" is the most important Christian contribution to philosophy, at least over the past 30 years. And so, I would encourage anyone reading this, who finds the preceding paragraphs too difficult, to go back and read them again, slowly and deliberately.

I would even go further and suggest that Clouser's exposé of "the myth of religious neutrality", and the logical consequences of the critical method he outlines, provide philosophy with a rare challenge. I am confident that, if Clouser's "answer" is given the critical examination it deserves, then it will help to strengthen the contributions of all special sciences which, in their theory-making, necessarily rely upon philosophical presuppositions about what makes theoretical conceptualisation possible.

Since 1968, Professor Clouser has taught philosophy and religion at the College of New Jersey - formerly Trenton State College. This teaching position has been his opportunity to give sustained attention to such basic questions. With an attentive and critical eye for the ways in which his students (and readers) interpret his philosophical arguments, Clouser has methodically developed a step-by-step account of why this question about the relation of religious belief to theories should be given high priority in our science and scholarship. He has explained its implications, addressed various misunderstandings and expanded upon its application to the special sciences.

## Outline of Discussion

Some readers may have begun reading this essay hoping to get a brief statement of the basic idea of Clouser's Christian philosophy before tackling his writings. Well, I hope they have found that in what I have just formulated. If they wish, and without further ado, they may now turn to the annotated bibliography to read of his work and to turn to it for first-hand exposure. This essay is not written specifically for them. Those who already know Clouser's work, or who have some knowledge of current philosophical trends, might have to wait until Part II. This essay in its entirety, and especially this Part I, is written to assist Christian students who, like Clouser in his earliest study of philosophy, have become aware of unresolved philosophical issues and want to deal with them from a Christian standpoint. They may be just about to enter university after finishing high-school, or they may be considering further post-graduate studies after completing their first degree. This does not mean that what follows is easy. On the contrary it may prove to be rather difficult, but I would encourage those who continue to read to try to follow the line of discussion to see where it goes. I hope it can stimulate your thinking about developing philosophy from a Christian standpoint.

We will first examine some of the problems we have to face when we confront philosophy in the context of those organized institutions of higher education we call universities. Clouser has been employed as a Professor of Philosophy and Religion, and so, for this discussion, I have deemed it useful to discuss the kind of "work" he has done in this academic position.

First, we will discuss some of the issues that may come to mind when a student is thinking about enrolling in a philosophy course. We will outline some of the anomalies that occur when we try to define philosophy as peculiar kind of "activity" and then we will give some attention to philosophy as a peculiar kind of "thinking". By reflecting upon philosophy in these ways we will begin to identify some major characteristics of philosophy as well as highlighting some ways in which the contemporary university functions in our life. We will try to give students a framework from which to pinpoint some of the ambiguities that are encountered when enrolling in Philosophy 101 as a university subject. I believe that Clouser's philosophical discussion can help students develop a coherent appraisal of their study situations and negotiate the ambiguities they confront in their lives as students as well as in the content of their courses.

The aim here is to try to sketch some key aspects of the educational context in which Clouser has also had to do his work. His style is that of the university teacher of logic who takes the student step-by-step through a particular argument. As I stated at the outset, Clouser's academic career began in 1965 as an instructor in logic. Does this help us understand his style of presentation? I think it does.

Part II considers the impact of the philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977) upon Clouser's work. Two sections are related to Clouser's work with Dooyeweerd's philosophy. He has expounded this philosophy's content, showing its relevance for the special sciences. **Dooyeweerd's Contribution to Clouser's Philosophical Studies** explains the impact of Dooyeweerd's philosophy upon Clouser's reflections. **Clouser's Promotion of the Study of Dooyeweerd's Philosophy** looks at how Clouser has tried to commend Dooyeweerd's philosophy in the North American and English-speaking context. Since he is convinced that this philosophy should be received by scholars as a genuine philosophical contribution, this has been a major goal of his work.

The final sections cover other published material. He has considered the arguments of other schools of Christian philosophy and put his scholarly talents to work in the discussion of political and social issues. I conclude with a brief summary of Clouser's explanation of philosophy's provision of a dependable account of how theoretical analysis provides us with reliable conceptual knowledge of the properties and laws we uncover in creation.

## What Do Philosophers Do?

Let us now consider the term "philosophy" as it relates to the choices that students will have to make when they enter university or college. One common way of speaking about intellectual pursuits is to say that scholarship is what a scholar does, that science is what a scientist does<sup>1</sup>. So, if we are to say that philosophy is what philosophers do, what is it that a philosopher does? Surely we should be able to see the impact of philosophy before immersing ourselves in it! If we say that what a "philosopher" does is "thinking", then that doesn't clarify the role because, quite apart from the fact that "thinking" is part of normal human functioning, "thinking" is also what all scholars and scientists do. So is it a matter of seeing a philosopher "at work"? If so, where would that be? If a scholar is typically at work in a library, and a scientist can be spotted experimenting in her laboratory, where do we see the "philosopher" at work? Is it significant that in our normal everyday language that the concept of "philosopher", unlike that of "scientist" and "scholar", does not connote any specific location? Perhaps. This is something the reader might reflect upon and explore further.

We may say that a person "doing philosophy" is a "philosopher" but that doesn't tell us very much about what it is that this person is doing. And as we think about this, we recall that the person we are calling a "philosopher" does more than merely think and write and lecture in a "philosophical" way. "Philosophy", we observe, is only one of the activities the person, who we have dubbed "philosopher", does. This person will shop, drive a car, raise a family, pay the mortgage, vote at election time and play scrabble, among many, many other things. And so, as we begin to distinguish "philosophy", as one kind of human activity, from all the other human activities that such a person might do, we realise that this hunt for the "philosopher" is not as simple as we may have first thought. It is true that not everyone "does" philosophy, nor is everyone who is engaged in philosophy necessarily a philosopher. Many people seek a general education and "read philosophy" and may do so intensively. But a person does not have to be a philosopher to engage in intensive philosophical research. Already, we detect a great deal of relativity with the way the terms "philosophy" and "philosopher" are put to use in our language. When we try to gain insight into what a philosopher does by treating philosophy as an activity, we seem to have identified what philosophy is not rather than what it is.

While we have been thinking about philosophy as an activity, we have yet to specify the actual activity we are referring to. The attempt to distinguish "philosophy" from other kinds of activities any person may do, does not yet tell

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1 Consider Percy W Bridgman's 1949 statement: "No one standing on the outside can predict what the individual scientist will do or what method he will follow. In short, science is what scientists do, and there are as many scientific methods as there are individual scientists" (Quoted from Reflections of a Physicist (1949) in Hume Dow Science Speaks Chesire 1962 pp. 44-5). I simply let this stand here as an example of a widely held view, and note, without attempting to offer any extended examination of Bridgman's (operationalist) philosophy, that he is assuming that, whatever philosophy is, it is the expression of human autonomy. In this definition, therefore, we indeed confront Bridgman's "divinity belief".

us what is distinctive about this peculiar activity. To add "doing philosophy" to the list (shop, drive, pay bills, vote, play, do philosophy) tells us little more than that "doing philosophy" takes up a portion of a person's waking life. "Doing philosophy" may simply be code for the academic job that a person has, whereas another academic will list "doing statistics" or "doing art history". On the list of activities we might compile for a professional person, it might be "doing business" or "nursing". In that sense it may be the person's "occupation", the means of drawing an income.

But there are also many occupations in which reflective thinking is a major characteristic. And those engaged in these occupations are not necessarily philosophers. These occupations are indeed concerned with developing dependable insight, just as philosophy is. We might call them intellectual pursuits, and a well-rounded appreciation of philosophy as a particular intellectual pursuit will also show its appreciation for all the others. We have referred to philosophy as an activity and have thereby tried to distinguish it from the other activities a person does. But in realising that a person can engage in a variety of intellectual pursuits, along with all the other activities a person may do, we are now confronted by the fact that thinking is one kind of human activity that we all "do" concurrently with all (or most) of the other activities we do. And so in trying to distinguish philosophy as a particular kind of activity, we have simply come full circle to affirm that philosophy is one kind of intellectual pursuit.

Why does our attempt to define what a philosopher does seem to go around in these indeterminate circles? The answer, I guess, is that we are thinking about human thinking activities. Or more specifically, our attempt to define philosophy, even from a practical point of view, already presupposes some philosophical standpoint. That is something we should stop to ponder.

There are activities that require people, just like us, to exercise concentrated thinking. There are occupations in which people are employed to think about a particular range of issues. There are financial advisors, policy makers, social researchers, experimental scientists and ... the list can go on and on. And there is also specialised thinking about the human activity we call thinking. Counsellors and psychiatrists are working with the ways people are thinking about themselves. So if the "philosopher" is one engaged in thinking about thinking, even here we discover that this activity does not seem to be exclusively the domain of "the philosopher".

Apart from universities and research institutes, I do not know of a philosopher being employed for the sole purpose of engaging in thinking per se; I can imagine a philosophical foundation employing its own philosopher to promote the foundation's philosophy or the philosophical discipline or, indeed, both. Such an employee will usually have a list of tasks to be fulfilled - these may include lecturing, holding seminars and publishing the results of research in articles. At regular intervals this person may have to give an account of these "philosophical activities" to the Board that oversees the work of the foundation.

Keeping the above seemingly indeterminate discussion in mind, let us try to clarify philosophy's role by considering the way the various sciences appeal to philosophy. At this point we explicitly concede that whatever philosophy is, it has something to do with the colleges and universities that these days train people to think scientifically. There is a division of labour among the sciences - there are sciences which, focusing upon the "natural world", see themselves as different from sciences that focus upon "history", "culture" and "society". The

study of insects requires different laboratory apparatus from the study of the heavens. The study of mechanics focuses upon physical motion which is different from the zoological study of animal reaction (or emotion), and both are different from the historical study of a political commotion, the linguistic explanation of a how a term may be used in a variety of ways or the ethical study of a worker's demotion. And those involved in the sciences will have to justify these differently focused studies and they do this by appealing to what is, effectively, an underlying philosophy. "This is the study of this, and this is not that!" Philosophy, however, seems to consider the entire spectrum of the sciences and not only explains the division of labour between sciences, it explains the way reality itself guarantees that the results of these different scientific investigations will be interconnected. Philosophy identifies what is common to them all as they go about their special scientific work formulating theories, testing hypotheses, building concepts, constructing explanations and weighing evidence. Philosophy takes the different scientific explanations from the various sciences and gives an account of how reliable scientific argument is constructed.

So, from this standpoint, we can say that philosophical thinking is one kind of theoretical or abstract thinking. It focuses upon theory-making by giving an account of the context in which theories are developed, by explaining what theories should do.<sup>2</sup> It explains the prominent characteristics of theories and gives an account of how concepts are formed. So, its peculiar task is to take account of various kinds of abstraction and explain how abstract thinking itself is possible. It identifies the presuppositions that inevitably guide the theory-making process in scientific reflection.

As we read Clouser's writings we will read how he refers to philosophy's contribution to theoretical thinking by considering the philosophical questions raised by each of the special sciences. In brief, we might say that the special sciences focus abstractly upon particular laws and properties found in human experience.

Philosophy gives an account of how these laws and properties coherently hang together. It provides an explanation of how it is possible to identify these laws and properties through abstract thinking. In its own reflection upon abstract thinking, philosophy makes a special effort to reflect upon the processes of abstraction and concept-making that is also basic to its own task.

But, as we have said, this person we call a "philosopher", a philosophical thinker, will also reflect upon the world in a variety of other ways. This person will consider what kind of gift to buy for a grandchild, decide what to wear given the weather forecast, reflect upon what is needed in the soil if a good crop of home-grown tomatoes is to be harvested, react quickly to avert danger on the highway and come to understand why the sermon delivered last Sunday at church mis-represented the passage from the Gospels. All of these other activities, reflections and judgments, cannot be uninfluenced by the "philosopher's" special work but they should not be confused with them.

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2 There have been various attempts to argue that scientific explanation should not allow norms and values to cloud scientific judgment. Nevertheless, the view that scientific theory should be "value free" cannot escape putting forward the view that a "value free" approach should characterize scientific explanation. We won't explore this ambiguity here except to say that Clouser's philosophy, following Dooyeweerd's "transcendental critique", provides a cogent explanation of how this ambiguity arises from a commitment to scientific neutrality. Thinking, in all its modes, is normative activity.

Well, as we have discussed this we have "distinguished" some things from other things - the "philosopher" is also a church member, a grand-parent and a driver of a VW. But this distinction does not mean a separation - it is after all the same person. That we can "distinguish" one role from the many others a person plays should not lead us to assume that this role is a separate reality. It is a distinct side of, or part of, reality which allows it to be distinguished, but distinction is only separation in an abstract logical sense. We can distinguish one thing from other things or one kind of law from all the other kinds of laws, but these distinctions do not mean absolute separation, in the sense that by slicing an apple into separate pieces we can give one piece to that child and another to this child. The occupational "distinctions" we have made are not about separate slices of reality, separate parts of a whole, but about different activities which the person we designate "philosopher" is involved with and cannot avoid.

Well then, what are these other "things" that a person, in this case Roy Clouser, could be involved with? Our previous discussion has revealed enough to suggest that there are many things that could be listed here (spectator of baseball, visitor of pubs, choir member, grandparent) but for the purpose of this discussion I am suggesting that we restrict our discussion to three important "activities" that help us clarify what we would refer to as **Clouser's philosophical "activity" as an academic**. Keep in mind that the aim here is to assist those wanting to examine Clouser's writings which are listed in this bibliography. The three "things" we will focus upon are:

- teaching philosophy - academic work
- studying philosophy - student work
- formulating philosophical arguments for wider distribution via articles, books and invited lectures - philosophical reflection

As we have said, these are three distinct activities, which are related to each other. They are a part of an academic's career, but also more than that. Each is slightly different from the others and yet they have presupposed each other to some extent during Clouser's academic career. And together, the three of them are scarcely conceivable without at least some basic level of philosophical reflection.

How do these distinct activities, or tasks, relate to our evaluation of Clouser's writings? Well, as we have noted, to consider these three "things" is also to investigate Clouser's academic career. As well as being recognised as a "philosopher" (by those who read his writings), Clouser was employed for over 40 years as a teacher of philosophy and religion. In 1964-5 he was employed as a "special ed" teacher in Camden, NJ, but since then his teaching work has been in "higher education" and not at the secondary school level. In time he became a Professor, and is now Professor Emeritus, from The College of New Jersey.

Clouser's initial teaching appointments were as Instructor in Symbolic Logic at Rutgers University (1965-1966) and as Instructor in Philosophy at La Salle University (1966-1968). So we can surmise from these early developments in his work-life that to become a teacher of philosophy and religion, he first had to have been a student of philosophy and religion. To take up this kind of teaching work, and remain in it, meant that he had to be a "summa cum laude" student with the necessary degrees in these subject areas. After having begun studies in music at Nyack College, he completed his BA in philosophy (1961) at Gordon

College, Wenham, Massachusetts, and then a BD in theology (1962) from Reformed Episcopal Seminary, Philadelphia. We note an early educational involvement in Christian colleges, but as time went on his work was more and more related to what transpires in "mainline institutions". He also took some graduate courses in the History and Philosophy of Religion at Harvard University (1961-1962). In 1965 he was awarded an MA in philosophy from the University of Pennsylvania ("Aristotle's Theory of Moral Incontinence"). In 1968 he obtained an appointment to teach philosophy and religion as an Assistant Professor at Trenton State College, when it was expanding its operations and becoming a 4-year liberal arts institution. And so, at that time, enrolled as a PhD student at the University of Pennsylvania, he was hoping for an academic career at the university level. The expectation was that with a university appointment he would be able to teach, while continuing with his research and publish articles and books. This was the assumed path for anyone seeking to actively formulate philosophical argument for wider distribution. Clouser's position as Assistant Professor at TSC allowed him to provide for his family while gaining a doctorate. In 1972 he was awarded the doctorate in philosophy from the University of Pennsylvania for a thesis titled "Transcendental Critique, Ontological Reduction, and Religious Belief in the Philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd". His supervisor was Professor James Ross, an analytical philosopher who continues to contribute to the philosophy of religion and to Aquinas studies<sup>3</sup>. In 1973, Clouser he was promoted to Associate Professor of Philosophy and Religion and 18 years later (1991) he was made full Professor until his retirement as Professor Emeritus in 2002.

This is by no means a full account of Clouser's academic career, and we are not able to provide a detailed investigation of his pedagogy. But from all accounts, and from what we can infer from his published writings, Clouser the teacher appreciates his students' intellectual or theoretical difficulties, and is a sensitive teacher who has not forgotten his own complex pathway in "higher ed". I suppose that means he would adapt his lecture content to acknowledge the fads and foibles that come onto campus with each new year's fresh wave of students. Hopefully these students come willing to learn, and are not just expecting their professors to allow them to go through the motions. But philosophy, the academic discipline, also has its fads and foibles of its own, and its curriculum is not immune from the dominant cultural forces shaping education and scientific research.

### Academic "work"

Let us then briefly explore the academic "work" of Clouser the teacher. At a College's enrolment, Professors will be "on duty" to assist prospective students by answering their questions:

**"But what do philosophers do?"**

Philosophy faculty, well-trained in answering questions, will be used to answering this one. But, as a question asked at enrolment, considered solely in terms of the words used, it is somewhat ambiguous. It might be a simple request for information for which the answer is:

**"Here is a syllabus! That's what we do here! Read it and if you are interested come back and put your name on the class list!"**

But, as we have pointed out, the question can easily mean various others

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3 See the list of publications for James F. Ross at <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~jross/resume.htm>

things and philosophy faculty are trained to spot ambiguities. The resulting discussion might even get complex, and the faculty member's attempt to clarify the meaning of the initial question might even be confusing for the student. Addressing ambiguity is what makes philosophy into a frustrating, and also stimulating, endeavour.

So, if the question meant:

**Professor Clouser, what do you, as a member of the philosophy department, do?**

then the answer will be:

**I teach philosophy courses and engage in philosophic research and write articles - here's a copy of one, [Faith Tectonics](#) - if you want to discuss it, make an appointment and I'll be glad to hear what you have to say about it!**

Such articles and books may reflect the Professor's basic commitment and explain what he has been trying to teach over the years in his classes.

You can get a sense of what Roy Clouser's philosophical colleagues now *do* by looking at this site from the [Department of Philosophy and Religion at The College of New Jersey](#).

From the 1970s, Trenton State College, as it was then known, was administered as a teaching institution, seeking to maintain highest standards. But in recent decades, as the College of New Jersey, it has built and maintained a consistently high reputation so that it is now a much sought after under-graduate institution within the state. Judged by SAT scores, it is regularly given high ranking, second only to Princeton University in the State of New Jersey. Meanwhile its student population has been kept low (5,600 students).

The transition from TSC to TCNJ follows a pattern of institutional "upgrade" which, understandably, may not be an easy topic for the academics involved to talk about. Keep in mind the intense competitive environment in which US higher education functions. Any institution will be continually comparing itself with others and a College's administration will be charged to keep a keen eye on where the College now sits in the regularly published "league tables". So when a College upgrades we should not avoid the contribution of the faculty - after all it is the faculty and the students who together constitute the "core business" of the College. And when we reflect upon this well-known phenomenon of "institutional upgrade" it is likely that it has come about off the backs of overworked faculty who have been retained at lower levels with higher teaching loads. It works like this:

the highly qualified and low paid members of staff increase the school's reputation with the students, and more students are thereby attracted to the department's major and the other courses it is offering. The College's reputation is enhanced. And then the College administration begins to apply standards appropriate for more prestigious institutions - where promotion and tenure are based on research and publication record. But at those places, opportunities are also given for research by giving staff lighter teaching loads and the provision of study leave. But, because the "upgrading" College had adopted such an intensive teaching programme, adding night-time courses and courses over the summer, it cannot afford to promote its staff or to provide research assistance. So, if an academic doesn't publish then an application for promotion is turned down. If the academic suggests

a teaching programme that would facilitate research and writing, the response would be that the College was primarily concerned with teaching. This is a situation in which vulnerable and good value academics are seriously exploited.

In fact, that describes pretty well the kind of institutional dilemma Clouser faced in his "philosophical workplace" over many years. The question was: how did he develop a well-rounded philosophical contribution under those conditions?

After reading through the items listed in his bibliography, we can suggest that an answer to this question should include the words "persistent" and "determined". Under such conditions of "institutional upgrade" it could not happen quickly, particularly if the research was to maintain high standards.

Keep in mind the three "things" we have identified as important facets of any philosophy "career" which need to be carefully distinguished from the art or skill of philosophical reflection itself.

- teaching philosophy
- studying philosophy
- formulating philosophical argument for wider distribution via articles, books and invited lectures

It does not take much reflection to recognise that a College that is following such an "institutional upgrade" path by giving primary emphasis to (in this case) the teaching of philosophy, will make it difficult for its philosophy faculty to adequately attend to those activities that are expected of professional philosophers at institutions where the profession's standards are set.

According to Clouser's own account, the philosophy programme at TSC also resisted some fashionable academic trends which meant, for example, that courses in logic for the philosophy major did not become optional. The Department of Philosophy and Religion at TSC also maintained highest standards of its students in an era when many came to college expecting to be coddled. This initially meant that its faculty had to wear the consequences of lower student enrolments in their department's courses, in a situation that still left little or no time for sustained research or writing. Four or five courses per semester, usually meant eight or nine different courses during a school year, and there may also have been extra night time classes. Over the summer, since the college's teaching contract meant it would pay faculty for their services over the 10 months of the school year, it was not unusual for faculty to teach "summer semester" courses elsewhere.

At this point, we might surmise that, since the demands of teaching were so heavy, there was little choice but to put ongoing research projects and writing "on the back burner". As well, we should also note that there were not the opportunities for the teaching of Masters courses or for examining and supervising PhD students. This needs to be kept in mind as we seek to clarify the significance of Clouser's contribution.

### **Student "work"**

Let us return to the question, "But what do philosophers do?" The inquiring student could be meaning to ask, "What can someone who graduates with a philosophy major do?" Then the faculty member's answer will outline some of the benefits that may derive from a particular course of study and how these relate to a student's future career. How does what a student studies here and

now help in the search for meaningful work later, after graduation? Take a look at the same [TCNJ site](#) and note how Clouser's department understands its place in relation to the labour market. As well, [his own account](#) of why a student should study philosophy is worth reading.

As a Christian, Clouser appreciates the need for students to think through the issues which confront them day by day. For this reason, he has not only written to emphasize the "everyday relevance" of philosophical reflection, but has explained why everyday issues, for instance the seemingly inconsequential passing of the salt-shaker at the dinner table can be an act highly relevant for philosophical thinking (see No. 33 [Is There a Christian view of Everything from Soup to Nuts?](#))

Clouser approaches his "work" with a recognition that philosophical analysis needs to be learned within the fabric of complex and diverse demands that are upon all of us. We all wear many (normative) "hats"; we all have diverse responsibilities and are accountable in a variety of ways. And the "hat" of the philosophy student and the "hat" of the philosophy professor are similar. In certain respects the philosophy professor is merely a more experienced student, who is paid to introduce the discipline and guide the student's learning of its many facets. The study of philosophy is not only good for an "intellectual occupation", nor are its benefits confined to what we have called "academic pursuits".

To fulfil its vocation, philosophical reflection should take its place within science and scholarship and encourage dependable analysis and problem-solving. Dependable analysis is necessary for responsible living: in our living together in households, as families, as marriage partners, as those who need to learn how to converse with clarity about matters trivial and complex, as citizens who seek justice, as loyal members of associations, as members of workplaces, and as discerning stewards in the market place.

To learn and develop the thinking skills needed for dependable analysis will take time. The mere act of distinguishing one thing from another is not magic and is a skill that needs to be learned. It all takes time.

## Philosophical Reflection

But then, the question "**But what do philosophers do?**" could also be a student's theoretical probe in the sense of: "**What am I doing when I think in a philosophical way?**" Some keen students will "cut to the chase" as soon as they hit campus and, as Clouser says, there were questions like this one that he was wanting to clarify some years before he embarked upon the academic study of philosophy. In this case, the question turns out to be one that leads on to further questions that distinguish the philosophical way of thinking from other ways of thinking: from "everyday" reflection, from practical problem solving, and also from those specific perspectives that are uncovered by the special sciences. This variation of the question turns out to be unavoidable for those engaged in theoretical studies and it leads to questions about our own taken-for-granted beliefs and how those beliefs give shape to our concepts and our theories. We have already covered this issue above.

As we work our way through this annotated bibliography, we will see that it is this third way of asking this question which Clouser has generally tried to answer in his writings. Of course, it is not the only question he has addressed, but it is the question that helps us to get a sense of what he has been trying to do over the years when, as an academic, he has been able to find the time for writing his articles and publishing his books. Still, it would distort our

understanding of his work if we ignore the fact that the first two ways of asking, and answering, the initial question can predominate and crowd out any consideration of this crucial third way of asking the question. And although Clouser's writings only occasionally address his academic context, they can all be read as evidence of the way he has taught, and studied and argued. They may focus very much upon how a philosopher might think but by reading these works we will also gain a sense of how Roy Clouser, the teacher of philosophy, has contributed and continues to contribute, to the lives of his students and his colleagues, as they, like him, live out their lives.

The critical questions about the way our thinking is structured and takes part in our life, also raises other important questions about the task of academic institutions and the way we approach our work, our career, the professions we belong to, as well as our civic and political responsibilities. The three different ways in which we can ask the question "But what do philosophers do?" are each relevant to our examination of Clouser's philosophical contribution, and to what I am describing as his ongoing professional attempt to explain the characteristics of dependable theoretical analysis.

Philosophy takes time and the composing of complex philosophical argument is usually not possible if one does not have the leisure to quietly and painstakingly develop dependable analysis. Framing philosophical argument is complex and sometimes, as is true in Clouser's case, the conditions under which we work are not conducive for undertaking important facets of the work we are convinced need to be done. Without such a working environment, one must simply learn patience, which, we are assured, is not something we can conjure up but is a gift of grace, a fruit of the Holy Spirit dwelling in our lives.

This is not a large list of publications, but what Clouser gives us is a carefully elaborated argument that seeks to show how religious beliefs have a decisive impact upon theories and concepts. Following Calvin, he takes seriously the biblical teaching that the knowledge of God decisively forms all other knowledge and if it is not the true God, then knowledge will inevitably be regulated by the demands of a no-god, a substitute divinity.

Clouser's two major books [The Myth of Religious Neutrality](#) (1991 No. 17 & 2005 No. 35) and [Knowing with the Heart](#) (1999 No. 27 & 2007 No. 39) testify to his persistence over decades. Along with his published articles, many of which are made available at the [All of Life Redeemed site](#), these books constitute a compact and consistent body of work. To read them chronologically is to confront the author's consistent attempt to make his own philosophical contribution. Many of the later articles are revised versions of arguments and observations made earlier. Complex philosophical discussion is discussed, criticised and sometimes unravelled in step-by-step discussion and illustrated with examples that can be readily understood. In the various discussions, the points he puts forward aim to stimulate further reflection and research. Clouser has been busy laying a [non-reductionist](#) philosophical foundation for dependable analysis. He seeks to formulate philosophical arguments that will assist scientific understanding of the properties and laws governing all that God has made. For Clouser, philosophy is theory-making about how all aspects of reality relate to one another. And so philosophy as one kind of dependable analysis requires hypotheses that take an overview of all (created) reality. In this, Clouser appreciates the statement of philosophy's aim put forward by Wilfred Sellars:

*The aim of philosophy, abstractly formulated, is to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term.*<sup>4</sup>

## Philosophy's Ambiguous Place in the Faculty

Let us approach the examination of Clouser's writings from another angle. What can we say in general terms about the cultural and intellectual trends that have dominated over the half century since Clouser began his BA studies in philosophy (ie since about 1958). Instead of summarising five decades in two paragraphs let me suggest a "thought experiment". Examine the 1965 standard text, E J Lemmon **Beginning Logic**. Reflect upon the difficulties to be faced by a couple of reforming academics, whatever the country, who propose to teach a course based on that book, making it a compulsory first-year subject across the entire Arts degree. Why engage in such a "thought experiment"? Well, it might help us sharpen our understanding of the problematic place that "philosophy" has in the contemporary university and college curriculum. Over this period, another "philosophy" has been deeply embedding itself in the administration of university Arts degrees around the world and it requires that the "philosophy department" be segmented along with all of the other "departments" in the Arts faculty. Conventional subjects in the philosophy curriculum may still be maintained as "core" for philosophy majors. There may be the occasional co-requisites for entrance into higher level units offered by non-philosophy departments. And there may be efforts at initiating "core curriculum" projects or even "inter-disciplinary studies" or "history and philosophy of science" components of other specialised courses. But despite all attempts at amelioration, academic philosophy now inherits its own "historic" niche - it's institutionally segmented "slice of the apple" - by teaching subjects which formerly were basic to the entire curriculum provided by the academy. And one consequence is that Philosophy Departments will often be viewed as offering outdated intellectual relics from pre-post-modern times.

It is often suggested that the paradigm shift to a post-modern academy began sometime in the 1960s. Even if the post-modern tide in higher education is now in an ebbing phase, who will deny that since the 1980s this tide has significantly altered the landscape of university teaching in all disciplines, including philosophy? Policies seeking to expose higher education to "market demands", take for granted the departmental segmentation of university education - as with the separate pieces of the apple mentioned earlier. University marketing departments see this as merely part of the internal differentiation of (educational) "product" which facilitates student "choice". The rise of post-modern perspectives across all faculties has closely affixed itself to such a market-driven perspective in higher education. Any suggestion that markets need to be educated by science and scholarship sounds far-fetched, if not bombastic, since the ears of students, let alone of academics, have been tuned to hear and expect variations of "born to shop" commercials, in education and wherever else we live out our lives.

And the demanding task of gaining coherent theoretical insight is not made any easier by the dominance of a philosophical pragmatism that confidently avoids the structural ambiguity of philosophy in the university curriculum because it is more concerned to espouse the view that all we ever experience and know is determined by language and that language is our own creation. And so, philosophy's ambiguity is viewed as our own creation and therefore we

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4 This is the opening sentence of Wilfred Sellars "Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man" (1962). <http://www.ditext.com/sellars/psim.html>

should make the most of it. Any resolution will simply create new ambiguities. This view is treacherous. It leaves students in a no-where land so that when they graduate they have the apparently failsafe logical conclusion that all we can ever experience and know is simply a result of our own devising. In that sense, post-modern philosophy simply trains people to be trained by the world that is dominated by the language of advertising and the most powerful propagandists (see [No. 25](#)).

## Clouser's Style

It should be clear by now why I have made so much of the fact that, over the years, Clouser has mainly taught at an undergraduate level. His writings take seriously the serious questions that he anticipates will arise from perceptive students (and readers). His writing is characterised by a level of argumentation that respects a student's need to be taken step-by-step through complex and frustrating argument.

This is not to suggest that his writings could be characterised as variations on an "Idiot's Guide" theme. Nor am I suggesting that academics who regularly teach at more advanced levels don't argue clearly; the observation is made here in order to identify a prominent characteristic of Clouser's habitual way of forming philosophical argument in his writings. There is a sense that what is being argued is elementary, and the underlying insight is that the laws of logical inference hold just as much for an introductory course in logic as they do for more advanced courses. The laws that guide logical argument don't change just because our insight deepens and we are able to construct complex hypotheses and argue for them with greater finesse.

Consider, for example, Clouser's "casebook" chapters in Myth (Nos. 17 & 35). His aim is to provide examples of how divinity beliefs are evident in the arguments of various leading theorists even when a mythic commitment to religious neutrality demands that they be cloaked. Such an analysis provides an indispensable first step to the critical investigation of prominent theories in maths, physics and psychology. These critical studies are framed in order to stimulate the study of these disciplines as well as assisting in the critical investigation of the contributions made by these leading thinkers. Therefore, it would be a serious mistake to view the casebook studies as put forward as a (provisional) end of the matter. Rather, they are set forth as a starting point, the formulation of an hypothesis that has to be further tested and refined by further research. They are critical building blocks needed by students who go on to further specialised theoretical study.

Much more needs to be done, and Myth makes a salient beginning to a project which would examine the prominent theories of different disciplines to identify their divinity beliefs. That project has the potential of becoming part of a significant **international research effort** among scholars who, with Clouser, seek to "bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor 10:5).

Indeed, Clouser's work has also gained the attention of scholars outside his own North American academic context. Mythnet, an internet list, was set up to discuss his 1991 book The Myth of Religious Neutrality. The name of the list was subsequently changed to Thinknet. A significant percentage of the discussion on this email list comes from outside the USA, from the UK, Australia, New Zealand as well as Canada, the Netherlands and South Africa. In recent times, his work has captured the attention of scholars from Indonesia, the Philippines, Mexico and Brazil. As well, a German translation of Myth is underway.

In Myth (1991 & 2005) and Knowing with the Heart (1999 & 2007), Clouser's argument relies to some extent upon the reader's general understanding of the rules of logical inference and a level of general knowledge we can expect from an under-graduate education. Still, many younger students may feel that his style, let alone the content, is out-of-sync with what they have been taught to expect. The world-wide impact of neo-liberal ideology, bolstered since 1989 by the end of the cold war, should not be under-estimated. It has embedded itself within national educational systems and is part and parcel of the rationale for public examinations in all areas of the school curriculum. At all levels of education, children are repeatedly taught in a framework in which personal survival and advancement, are given priority. It is likely that a student who is deeply immersed in this ideology will find Clouser's arguments counter-intuitive. Still, Clouser's ongoing effort to form philosophical analysis aims to provide a dependable argument that, among other things, explains why post-modern philosophy is untenable and completely unreliable. It simply cannot be depended upon.

This is the sub-text of his second book **Knowing with the Heart: Religious Experience and Belief in God** (Nos. 27 & 39). Clouser's "dialogues" in this book, anticipate and answer his student's questions. To read this book is to imagine the philosophy professor as a white-water canoeist with a young companion who has learned to deftly negotiate the rapids of schooling and higher education by maintaining the belief that there can never be any definitive end to this hazardous journey - the point seems to be that one's personal responsibility is fulfilled by holding on and experiencing the risks and the thrills - in this life that is all there is, and getting the most out of it is "the way to go".

Readers who want to explore one of Clouser's specific analyses of the "king tides" that have washed over academic philosophy, might turn to his critical exposé of pragmatism and Richard Rorty's attempt to accommodate historical relativism in [A Critique of Historicism](#) (1997 No. 25). This article can be read alongside the "casebook" chapters in Myth, because it explores a prominent, if not dominant, theoretical framework that has prevailed in the social and historical sciences in recent decades.

*Although the Hegelian and Marxist forms of historicism are now out of fashion, scholars in a variety of fields are presently endorsing new forms of that theory. In fact, the influence of historicism has spread with such amazing rapidity that its concomitant relativism has become the HIV infection of the contemporary scene.*

But let me add a caveat. Those interested may have to study this argument very carefully, even reading it through 3 or 4 times, before the "penny drops". The critical point can be identified and this is not to suggest that the article is not well-written. Rather, it is to suggest that the critique developed by this article is profound not just because it challenges the content of a contemporary philosophical argument, nor merely because it effectively explains the failed logic of (Rorty's) historicism. It is rather the exposé of the underlying "religious ground motive" or, in Clouser's terms, the taken for granted "divinity belief", that regulates theorising in the "human sciences" by assuming

*... that all theories, traditions, interpretations, and most - if not all - concepts, are nothing more than cultural artifacts of a particular time and place (p. 41).*

## Part II

### Clouser and Dooyeweerd

#### Dooyeweerd's Contribution to Clouser's Philosophical Studies

Those who work their way through Clouser's published *oeuvre* will notice a remarkable consistency. This consistency has everything to do with Clouser's discovery of Herman Dooyeweerd's (1894-1977) remarkable philosophical writings. In Dooyeweerd, Clouser found a reliable Christian guide to the philosopher's task. Dooyeweerd's philosophy comprehensively explained the normative demands to which theoretical thought in all its dimensions is subject. There may be problems with Dooyeweerd's philosophy, some of which Clouser has identified, but it is the Dutchman's clarification of the philosophical task which provided Clouser with a map by which he could chart his own odyssey on the turbulent seas of philosophy. It is also this influence that helps us understand why Clouser has returned, again and again, to the same, or similar, theoretical issues over these decades. So what is that view? What is that clarification? What do Clouser's writings tell us about the philosopher's task? How can the philosopher's task remain consistent when the academic context for professor and student is apparently in a state of constant flux?

Clouser gained from Dooyeweerd a credible Christian account of how and why it is possible for the philosopher to provide dependable theoretical analysis.

*[For Dooyeweerd] ... belief in God (or any other divinity belief) can impact every kind of truth, including theories. Roughly, his account goes like this. A theory offers a hypothesis to explain something: we call the hypothesis an "explainer". Whatever is explained is presented as importantly **dependent** on the explainer postulated by that hypothesis. To be precise, a theory needs to specify whether the explainer itself is dependent on yet other explainers or not. If it is dependent, we at least know the kind of thing(s) it depends on. But either an explainer depends on something else, or it does not. If it does not, then it is - by our definition - divine. If it does, then whatever it ultimately depends on is divine. Therefore, any theory that takes some part, aspect, principle, etc., drawn from creation as the ultimate explainer has given it divine status. And whatever is given that status guides theory-making in such a way that subsequent theories differ from what they would be were something different given that status ([Is There a Christian view of Everything from Soup to Nuts?](#) 2003 No. 33 p.5).*

This also means that the philosopher cannot avoid giving a decisive account, if not explicitly then implicitly, of how abstraction is possible, and how the formulation of theoretical concepts for the testing of hypotheses comes about when we are occupied with theory-making. Philosophy inevitably defers to an implicit account of how theory-making is possible. A philosophical account of theory-making will explain why it is important that we critically examine our theories - for consistency, logical coherence, and whether the appeal to evidence is warranted. It should also bring to light our pre-scientific beliefs about the way the cosmos is governed. Our theorising is subject to this and necessarily refers to it.

These statements summarise, in a nutshell, the major stand-out thesis of all the 44 plus items of his *oeuvre* which are listed here. It is the viewpoint derived from the philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd. Clouser's 1972 PhD dissertation from the University of Pennsylvania was titled "Transcendental Critique, Ontological Reduction and Religious Belief in the Philosophy of

Herman Dooyeweerd". This work is the "pit" from which the materials for Myth were mined.

Clouser's 1980 article for *Philosophia Reformata* [A Critique of Descartes and Heisenberg](#) (No. 8) explores Dooyeweerd's philosophy and makes public his initial critical review of the "transcendental critique". That was not the final version of Clouser's critique of Dooyeweerd's critique, and in his most recent article, *Transcendental Critique Revisited and Revised* (2009 No. 44), Clouser's criticisms are refocused by identifying and correcting the critique's internal problems, specifically in relation to its Dooyeweerd's "2nd question".<sup>5</sup>

The issue concerns the place of abstraction in theory-making, and what Clouser claims are Dooyeweerd's faulty assertions about non-Christian theorising. Dooyeweerd's arguments may be applicable to Aristotle and Descartes, but theoretical arguments in the late 20th century have generally sought to establish their basis by strategies that were different from those Dooyeweerd assumed, for instance by claims to explanatory superiority. The more serious part of Clouser's critique explores Dooyeweerd's assumptions about the abstraction of a particular law or property and he finds these to be "dead wrong".

In the 1980 publication, Clouser's discussion tended to focus upon its terminology and Dooyeweerd's unavoidable immersion in the post-Kuyperian Dutch scholarly response to neo-Kantian and phenomenological philosophy in the early decades of the 20th century. Recognising the evident problems with the interpretation of this "prolegomenal" dimension of Dooyeweerd's philosophy, Clouser then set about offering a careful "re-translation" that would more readily comport with Anglo-American philosophical terminology.

The problems with Dooyeweerd's formulation of the "transcendental critique" have been well recognised by other reformational scholars (including Henk Geertsema, Dick Stafleu and Danie Strauss), and an effective resolution has not yet been found. Over the years, Clouser has found this to be a significant intellectual challenge.

Problems with the "transcendental critique" aside, Clouser has found in Dooyeweerd's philosophy a *dependable* account of the philosophical task as it theoretically confronts the many-sided reality of creation. It has been an indispensable stimulus to Clouser's explanation of theory-making. This is most evident in his attempt to explain the project to stimulate the root and branch renovation of scientific investigation by a radically non-reductionist scientific agenda (1996 [No. 24](#); 2007 [No. 40](#); see also Nos. 45 & 46).

Philosophy must abide by the norms that govern conceptual thinking. Part of Clouser's contribution has also been to address the way concepts that do not

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5 There are various versions of Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique questions and the 1953 formulation of the second question which has proved most problematic for Clouser is found in his magnum opus *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* Vol. 1 p.45, and reads: "From what standpoint can we re-unite synthetically the logical and the non-logical aspects of experience which were set apart in opposition to each other in the theoretical antithesis?" Clouser's critical observation is that though Dooyeweerd affirms that the "theoretical attitude of thought can present itself only within the temporal total-structure of the act of thinking" (p.39), we cannot even think of any abstraction as unconnected to every other abstraction, and hence the second question requires fundamental reformulation to save the critique from complete collapse. Can an aspect be identified, let alone, conceptualised without it being identified, named, with an assumed place in the overall scheme of things? Clouser's critical appraisal of Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique has been developing with the critical views put forward by other scholars (Strauss, Stafleu, Geertsema).

presuppose abstraction make their own contribution within the philosophical horizon. But also, by clarifying the place of norms in theory-making or, to put it another way, by demonstrating how conceptualisation is governed by its own distinctive norms, Clouser has added significantly to an insight of T P van der Kooy, the Vrije Universiteit economist, given emphasis by Bob Goudzwaard, concerning the "simultaneous realization of norms" (Capitalism and Progress 1979 p. 65). The norms that govern logical thinking are integral to the philosophical task and we might even want to say that the distinctive individuality of the philosophical task is qualified by logical norms. But this does not mean that philosophical reflection is ever separated off from other normative considerations of a non-logical nature. Nor can the non-logical normative dimensions be conceptualised without adherence to the norms that govern logical thinking.

Let me give an example of how a published article, say one of Clouser's op-ed pieces for *Public Justice Report*, functions in a variety of ways related to Clouser's own raft of responsibilities, public and private. Let us say that the article is on "truancy" which has become a current political issue. As a philosopher writing on this current topic, he will want to present a cogent and logically coherent piece that in its own way commends his major professional occupation to the reader. The article can illustrate the fact that College Professors in Philosophy can make wise and pertinent contributions, as readers of the magazine think about ways to solve the problem. The President of his College may come across the magazine and read the piece and may decide that this article deserves special mention because it reflects positively on the College as a place that encourages cogent and logical argument in civic affairs. But the published article is not simply the "outlet" of a "philosophical" (or academic) responsibility, it is also an expression of the writer's own contribution as a citizen. The "public intellectual" function of College academics is given expression in this case. Maybe the writer is a member in the association that publishes the magazine. Its appearance is evidence that he is not just a sleeping member of the association, allowing the Executive Editor to do all the policy work, but is also making his contribution and doing his bit to encourage political debate among the membership. Now, as a father, the writer has to be careful. After all, he knows that his own son has been on report at school for truancy. In writing the article he might be indirectly "sending a message" to the Principal of his son's school, but he has to be careful that the article, as written, does not expose his son to unfair embarrassment or compromise his son in some way known only to them both. He cannot not be the child's father as he writes the op-ed piece but must form the article accordingly. He might ask his son to read the article and tell him what he thinks, before submitting it for publication. This is simply an example of how one cultural artefact - an article in a magazine - functions variously in relation to the many-sided responsibilities of the writer of the article. It is evidence of a simultaneous realization of various normative demands at work in the same event. The logical coherence of the article, coincides with his fiduciary responsibility as a public intellectual, his promotion of public justice as a citizen, his loyalty as an association member and his paternal care as a father.

Along with all other theoretical reflection, philosophy must abide by the norms that govern the formation of concepts. The fulfilment of such norms in philosophical argument has everything to do with what a philosopher believes theoretical argument ultimately *depends* upon. But it is important to emphasize that this is **not** intended as a reductionist approach, i.e. the endorsement of a scientific strategy which would reduce concepts, hypotheses and theory-making to the beliefs which regulate them. Reductionism is, and has

been, a persistent feature of philosophy and theory-making since the Ancient Greeks. A philosophy that is non-reductionist at its roots will also need to give a credible (dependable) account of the various reductionist strategies that have been employed in philosophy over the centuries, as well as identifying the (limited) validity of conceptual reduction as a means of sharpening theoretical insight (ref here phlogiston theory and also theories about the fabric of the heavens). In this regard, Clouser's contribution is carefully argued with subtle distinctions as part of his effort to clarify important facets of the theory-making task.

The centre-piece of Clouser's philosophy is indeed Myth. Dooyeweerd viewed his major contribution in terms of a "transcendental critique" which made "the dogma of the autonomy of theoretical thought" into a critical problem. By way of contrast, Clouser has sought to expose "the myth of religious neutrality" by an essay explaining "the hidden role of religious belief in theories." By carefully considering the wording of this sub-title from his major work, we discern Clouser's agenda for his ongoing philosophical project which his publications have significantly encouraged. The task is not achieved simply by the announcement that from henceforth one's own religious beliefs will have a decisive impact upon one's theories. Nor is it to merely hope that one's theories from now on will bring to expression the true beliefs upon which one has been basing one's theorising. The critical philosophical work involves exploring theories and discovering how arguments seem to be so successful in hiding the role of religious beliefs, of identifying how any particular theory has turned from the self-critical path to the confident dogmatism that relies on the abstracted reality brought to light by reason and science.

Now when Clouser's thesis - "Belief in God (or any other divinity belief) can impact every kind of truth, including theories" - is read in relation to the post World War II North American "reformational movement", it would seem at first glance to simply be his own peculiar formulation of the phrase "all of life is religion" made famous by Calvin College professor and member of the prestigious Harvard Society of Fellows, H. Evan Runner. Runner's students have been among the prominent adherents of Dooyeweerd's philosophy since the 1960s.

I would suggest, however, that it might be better to view Clouser's effort to clarify the nature of religious belief, and to thereby explain the impact of belief in God (or alternative divinity) upon theories, as an attempt to reform the way Dooyeweerd's philosophy has been appropriated in the North American and English-speaking context. It is, I contend, an attempt to continue the reforming work of this philosophy, and to encourage those engaged in theory-making to take greater care and avoid the tendency to world-view dogmatism.

This interpretation of Clouser's response to other interpretations of Dooyeweerd's philosophy in North America is borne out by his paper [Dooyeweerd on Religion and Faith - A Response](#) (1985 No 11). This outlines his minor and major criticisms of James Olthuis's interpretation of Dooyeweerd in "Dooyeweerd on Religion and Faith" in C T McIntire (ed) 1985 *The Legacy of Herman Dooyeweerd: Reflections on Critical Philosophy in the Christian Tradition*. Keep in mind that Clouser the academic had also been developing a reformational perspective for the teaching of the philosophy of religion (see 1977 No. 4 & 1979 [No. 6](#)) and in this regard he explicitly counters the accusation that the distinctiveness of Dooyeweerd's philosophy was to be found in its alternative reductionism; namely a philosophy in which concepts, hypotheses and theory-making were reduced to (his) religious beliefs. It may

aid critical reflection at this point, if we were to ask whether Clouser's critique is actually suggesting that Olthuis is developing a philosophical approach that would make all academic disciplines sub-disciplines of the philosophy of religion, even as it claims to be derived from Dooyeweerd's philosophy. These are perhaps weighty questions and have to do with the way a philosophical movement deals with its own varied contributions. Still, the insights of this philosophy do point persistently to a radically non-reductionist project in science and scholarship. The ability to engage in criticism of fellow philosophers, and those who are participating in the same movement, is one thing. But there is much more that has to be done and the work is by no means easy.

*... interpreting the universe as entirely dependent on God, so that no one part of the universe explains or generates all the rest, is not reductionist. Such an interpretation does not reduce the universe to God, even though God is what it all depends on. For in the dependency of all creation directly on God, every side and facet of creation is left equally real, and no side of it is reduced in its role or importance relative to the rest. In theism there is dependency without reduction. The program that Dooyeweerd has developed for theories isn't an easy one ([Is There a Christian view of Everything from Soup to Nuts?](#) 2003 No. 33 pp. 9-10).*

It isn't an easy task when one is developing a philosophy's scientific rationale; but then it is also not easy when it comes to confronting other theories, with other divinity beliefs as well.

*For if any belief in something as utterly non-dependent is a religious belief **no matter how the divine is conceived**, then it will follow that many beliefs which are not ordinarily thought of as religious, and which have no worship attached to them, are in fact religious beliefs all the same (1992 No. 19 [Faith Tectonics](#) p. 78c).*

It also becomes obvious that Clouser, Professor of Philosophy and Religion, has made his own comparative study of religions an important part of his philosophical reflection. His study of religions and religious belief has helped him clarify the way religious beliefs impact every kind of knowledge and in particular of the knowledge we develop with our theories. This, in turn, has brought precision into his account of philosophy and, in particular, philosophy that has been impacted by Christian theistic beliefs.

Philosophy is a form of theoretical argument and cannot avoid deferring to some explanation of how such abstract conceptual argument is possible, an explanation that gives its arguments anchorage as well as motivating such argument to seek its true destination. Because theoretical argument requires abstraction, philosophical analysis can not avoid giving some account of how abstraction is possible, how abstraction contributes to the formation of the theoretical concepts that are an intrinsic part of scientific investigation, how these concepts are related to other concepts and how concepts *per se* are necessarily related to the law-order of created reality. Philosophical reflection has an unavoidable role in the ongoing forming and re-forming of theoretical, scientific and metaphysical concepts which are part of our efforts to explain the laws and properties that govern human experience in its totality. We theorise in terms of our beliefs about the way any one thing within created reality relates to every other thing, and how they all hang together (Colossians 1:17). The theories we form in scientific research are part of our human effort to understand how everything in created reality depends upon the laws by which the Creator subjects all things to Himself. Ultimately, the theories formed in scientific research are decisively supported and impacted by ultimate "divinity beliefs", beliefs about that on which everything in this world depends.

Of course, when we discuss concept-making and abstraction in terms of what a thinker believes, we realise that philosophy cannot avoid its intrinsically personal and inter-personal character. And so, philosophy cannot be merely a matter of the passive absorption of course-work material after enrolling in a course called "philosophy" - as Clouser intimates: his involvement in philosophical questioning indeed has its roots in his own questions as a young Christian about the way he was thinking about reality and, having given much thought to these questions, he then took up further study of philosophy. But since he was consciously approaching this study as a Christian, other questions arose. Wasn't the Christian way of approaching these matters already mapped out for him by theology? Wasn't theology the way to relate belief in God to all the different theories that have arisen in all the different sciences? As a young Christian seeking answers to such questions, he came in time to identify two prevailing views, both of which left him profoundly dissatisfied:

*The first position is to say that any theory that doesn't outright contradict revealed truth is a candidate for Christian acceptance. The other is to try to derive theories from scripture on the assumption that it contains truths for nearly every major academic discipline (2009 No. 44).*

On the one hand, the first view renders most theories religiously neutral because most theories simply don't address issues related to religious belief and hence don't contradict them. On the other hand, using the bible as a theory manual avoids the religious question as to why the scriptures have been given to us in the first place. Dooyeweerd's philosophy does not erect a *cordon sanitaire* around theories, walling them off from belief in God as is assumed by the first position. Just because theories do not deal with religious belief, does not mean that they are thereby religiously neutral! On the other hand, the idea that a Christian should expect the scripture to provide specific content for all the various sciences, can hardly be derived from scripture itself. Dooyeweerd avoided both positions with a constructive and positive scholarly approach.

*Instead, he showed how belief in God can regulate theories by requiring that nothing in the cosmos be regarded as that which produces everything else in the cosmos, on the ground that only the transcendent Creator holds that status (2009 No. 44).*

## Clouser's Promotion of the Study of Dooyeweerd's Philosophy

Clouser accepted the Christian rationale basic to Dooyeweerd's **A New Critique of Theoretical Thought** (1953-1955), and so he saw his way clear to take up the study of philosophy. That was the beginning. But complex issues arose. How should this *Christian* philosophy explain itself as a *bona fide* philosophy? What is the content of this philosophy?

The short answer to both of these questions is straight-forward: if a student wants to explain why Dooyeweerd's philosophy should be considered as a *bona fide* contribution, the first and obvious thing to do is to write a PhD which demonstrates the fact. In all the world, there have not been many PhDs written that expound Dooyeweerd's philosophy. Clouser and Jim Skillen are the two most prominent North American scholars who have done this as part of their ongoing efforts to commend this philosophy. Finding supervisors for such a task would not be easy.

By viewing Clouser's writings as his answers to these two questions, we may deepen our understanding of the scholarly difficulties faced when we seek to introduce a philosophical argument that claims to expose the myth of "religious neutrality".

## Demonstrating *bona fides*

So, any attempt to address the first question about the philosophy's *bona fides*, has to face the fact that Dooyeweerd's philosophy is virtually unknown, if standard philosophical text books and encyclopaedias are any guide. The fact that two American PhDs exist from the 1970s does not constitute grounds for including a paragraph on Dooyeweerd in a philosophical encyclopaedia. [Consider, as an example, Robert Audi (ed) **The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy** (Cambridge University Press 2nd ed. 1999.) After more than fifty years of **A New Critique** in English, and known to a substantial number of qualified scholars around the world, this philosophy is only very occasionally discussed on the fringes where philosophical discussion takes place i.e. at conferences, in journals, in publications and in lecture theatres. As a result, adherents still find it necessary to carefully explain this philosophy's basic rationale and it is not an easy task to explain why it deserves attention. In this writer's view, that is not always a disadvantage, particularly in an academic context awash in post-modern prejudices which seem to be little more than the intellectual equivalent of consumerist values. But, nevertheless, it is a taxing and demanding exercise to introduce Dooyeweerd's philosophy. The scholar introducing the philosophy also needs insight into why, for all intents and purposes, Dooyeweerd's contribution continues to be ignored.

It needs pointing out that when any student claims to have discovered much needed clarification about theory-making from Dooyeweerd's philosophy, then a delicate situation arises since it may well be that the student has come into the "front-line" in terms of expounding the philosophy's value. To suggest that the question of philosophy's relationship to religious belief deserves consideration, is to participate in philosophical argument as Dooyeweerd presented it. But to then draw attention to the underlying "religious ground motive" (or in Clouser's terms "divinity belief") of a particular theoretical argument, which has put itself forward in terms of its own religious neutrality, is nothing other than a challenge to the theory's logic and its concepts. One is drawing attention to a thinker's pre-scientific standpoint which regulates the subsequent theorising. To *begin* to do this, even if it is as a student seeking clarification in a tentative way, is to challenge more than the theory under consideration - in certain respects it is to unmask the various religious viewpoints that have dominated the philosophical tradition in the name of "neutrality". It may result in serious class-room confrontation or something even more serious.

I am suggesting that it is important for those reading Clouser's philosophy to understand the possibilities for serious and intense spiritual dislocation in the midst of academic and philosophical argument. Dooyeweerd himself recognised this:

*I am fully conscious that any method of criticism which tries to penetrate to the religious motives of a thinker is in danger of causing an emotional reaction and giving offense. In tracking down a philosophical train of thought to its deepest religious foundations I am in no way attacking my adversaries personally, nor am I exalting myself in ex cathedra style. Such misunderstanding of my intention is very distressing to me. An act of passing judgment on the personal religious condition of an adversary would be a kind of human pride which supposes it can exalt itself to God's judgment seat. I have continually laid emphasis on the fact that the philosophy which I have developed, even in the sharp penetrating criticism which it exercises against non-Christian immanence philosophy, constantly remains within the domain of principles. I wish to repudiate any self-satisfied scientific attitude in confronting immanence-philosophy. The detailed criticism of the Humanistic immanence-philosophy ... must be understood as self-criticism, as a case which the Christian thinker pleads **with himself**. Unless this fact is understood, the intention*

of this philosophy has not been comprehended (H. Dooyeweerd "Foreword" *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* Vol I p. VIII).

And so, it will also require much work, on many different fronts, even to offer marginal assistance to the students who find value in Clouser's work. Such an ongoing effort should include an extensive appraisal of how this wide-ranging philosophy views itself in relation to the philosophical tradition. And so, in the formulation of [Four Options in the Philosophy of Religion](#) (1979 No. 6), we note a schematic argument, which could be termed "problem-historical", that places Dooyeweerd's work alongside that of Calvin and Pascal as examples of an approach designated "fideism."<sup>6</sup> That, he then implies, constitutes a valid way of introducing Dooyeweerd's philosophy to contemporary reflection within the philosophy of religion.

By adopting this route, he avoids any suggestion that his philosophy, or his philosophising, stands outside the intellectual tradition, in order to make definitive judgment upon it. The four options are assumed to be living options and, by virtue of what is evident in the philosophical tradition overall, are still being chosen. This perspective on the philosophy of religion not only does not stand outside the tradition; *it emphasizes that a specifically Christian philosophy of religion should not try to do so*. It should contribute to these trends by understanding them from its own standpoint, by seeking to critically address and then reform the philosophical arguments to which they give rise. This is clearly a rejection of any suggestion that Dooyeweerd's philosophy aims to place the Christian scholar beyond the reach of the intellectual tradition or that one's fideist theories place the results beyond any judgement of rational analysis. Clouser provides a rough and schematic outline of how Dooyeweerd's contribution can be located within the history of the philosophy of religion, suggesting a way by which those working with this philosophy might also introduce its theoretical insights to reflections that take place within these other trends and arguments.

The four-fold typology is as follows: 1. rationalism, 2. irrationalism, 3. fideism (but see footnote 6 below) and 4. scholasticism - Dooyeweerd's philosophy is assigned its place under the third option, with the claim that he has made a significant contribution alongside of Augustine (who *"flirted with this view without ever wholly accepting it"*), Luther, Calvin and Pascal. The overall question concerns the way in which philosophy approaches (the study of) religion. Critically, it should be asked whether, on this scheme, there may also be a "religious irrationalism" option within the fourth scholastic approach, or maybe Clouser's concept of fideism was at this point insufficiently distinguished from the "religious irrationalist" trend.

This approach is similar in some respects to the contribution Clouser has made to the debate about "religion and science". His articles develop a critical perspective on the overall trends and expounds another view, the view that critically examines the assumptions of the debate from a standpoint he has

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6 It needs to be explicitly pointed out at this point that what Clouser was there referring to as "fideism" is not what is usually meant when that term is used in contemporary philosophy. See the comment by William Hasker in the entry EVIDENTIALISM in Robert Audi *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* 2nd Ed Cambridge University Press 1999 p. 294 "A contrasting view is fideism, best understood as the claim that one's fundamental religious convictions are not subject to independent rational assessment. A reason often given for this is that devotion to God should be one's ultimate concern," and to subject faith to the judgment of reason is to place reason above God and make of it an idol. Proponents of fideism include Tertullian, Kierkegaard, Karl Barth, and some Wittgensteinians."

formulated with help from Dooyeweerd's philosophy<sup>7</sup>.

We have already noted Clouser's attempt to recast Dooyeweerd's "transcendental critique" in [A Critique of Descartes and Heisenberg](#) (1980 No. 8). In that article he identified the "abstraction criterion" as an unavoidable dimension of the philosopher's critical reflections about the theory-making process. This also opens up a way by which careful logical analysis of theoretical argument can pinpoint the *religious* faith controlling the mathematical theories of Descartes and Heisenberg. It is not just that these theorists consider mathematical concepts to be more clear, distinct and reliable than any other kind, but that they are viewed in this way because a divine status has been ascribed to them within the theory-making process itself.

In the "Four Options" discussion about the philosophy of religion, the full details of Dooyeweerd's philosophy are not expounded but his view of the relationship between philosophy and religion is described as one example of one of the options found within the discipline. In the discussion about Descartes and Heisenberg, the analysis demonstrates the critical value of Dooyeweerd's philosophy for understanding prominent contemporary philosophical argument. These are two examples of how the relevance of Dooyeweerd's philosophy can be demonstrated within the parameters of current philosophical thought.

Of course, there are other ways of commending Dooyeweerd's philosophy - via footnoted references in the midst of other debates, as we find in Clouser's discussion of how the biblical record should be read when it is being considered in relation to science. This, of course, will involve specialist studies in biblical hermeneutics as well as exchanges with Christian thinkers who adopt other philosophical approaches.<sup>8</sup>

Such references can assist in the exploration of those insights which this philosophy emphasizes. It is an attempt to explain and elaborate a non-reductionist theory of reality in a dependable way.

### **Expounding the Philosophy's Content:**

The second issue, concerned with the exposition of the content of this philosophy, is also complex. It is related to the development of a specific field of "Dooyeweerd studies", that merges necessarily with attempts by scholars to give creative interpretations of how the philosophy applies to the emergent theoretical configuration of the various special sciences. Dooyeweerd's philosophy came into the North American academic context by way of translation from the Dutch, with its own philosophical vocabulary. And so, when it is initially applied in its new context, the argument needs dependable representation that can be readily understood by other scholars. It also requires clear and forthright examples of how the philosophy contributes to the resolution of many other long-term intellectual problems and puzzles. If those expounding this philosophy are to provide such clarifications then they also need to be able to appraise the theoretical problems from within the scientific frames of reference in which they have come to light. It can not just be a matter of announcement, nor of bringing in a philosophical view from elsewhere, but rather of making the case, step by step, for a new critical articulation of how the scientific concepts are formed (and re-formed) within a

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7 See 1991 No. [16](#); 1996 No. [23](#); 2001 No. [32](#); 2003 No. [33](#); 2006 Nos. [36](#), [37](#); 2008 No. [42](#)

8 See 1983 No. [9](#); 1988 No. [12](#); 1991 No. [15](#); 1999 No. [28](#); 2001 No. [31](#); 2003 No. [34](#); 2006 No. [37](#)

philosophical framework. That is the much needed clarification and stimulus for ongoing scientific research that Dooyeweerd envisaged for his philosophy.

*I am strongly convinced that for the fruitful working out of this philosophy, in a genuinely scientific manner, there is needed a staff of fellow-labourers who would be in a position to independently to think through its basic ideas in the special scientific fields. It is a matter of life and death for this young philosophy that Christian scholars in all fields of science seek to put it to work in their own specialty (H Dooyeweerd "Foreword" A New Critique 1955 Vol I p.VII).*

Has Clouser simply re-stated the basic insights of Dooyeweerd's philosophy for a North American philosophic context? No. Keep in mind that, as a Professor in a Department of Philosophy and Religion, Clouser has, as we have outlined above, also put this philosophy to work in the scientific study of religion. The dependable analysis which is called for from philosophical reflection has a purpose that reaches beyond debate confined strictly to the philosophical discipline itself. Dependable analysis is not simply a matter confined to language and logic; it is developed in order to support and assist all dimensions of scientific investigation, and, as has already been noted, beyond science in the fulfilment of "everyday" responsibilities. The kind of work is therefore extremely painstaking and has to be able to deal with creational complexities. These writings provide the results of Clouser's careful study of religious belief which has served to sharpen insight into Dooyeweerd's account of how "religious ground motives" are always at work in philosophy and science.

American philosophy is often viewed in terms of successive waves of recent European thought reaching the shores of the North American academy. Clouser writes as one aware of the tendency among his fellow Anglo-American philosophers to import the latest so-called "continental" perspective to bring philosophical argument "up to date". And, of course, he is also aware that by bringing a Dutch Christian philosopher into philosophical discussion may be interpreted as an attempt to add a reformational "continental" icing to a pragmatist North American philosophical cake.<sup>9</sup> That, of course, was certainly not Clouser's intention but it has been seriously suggested that Dooyeweerd's philosophy should be read as "proto-post-modern".<sup>10</sup>

Clouser's work also provides a philosophical justification for treating Dooyeweerd's philosophy as a genuine philosophical viewpoint. He does this with a persistent emphasis upon the need to adhere to the laws of logical inference so that logical clarity is achieved about the **distinctive philosophical contributions** that are derived from Dooyeweerd's philosophical reasoning. It should be said that this emphatic logical approach contrasts, to a significant extent, with other North American attempts to draw attention to Dooyeweerd's philosophy over these 50-plus years. Some have commended Dooyeweerd's philosophy by stressing its potential as a bastion from which to defend a Christian world-view. For others, Dooyeweerd's philosophy was to be an adjunct to reformed theological apologetics. And others seem to have incorporated the philosophy into the rationale for renewing North American reformational Christianity under the banner, "all of life is religion". In this connection, we have already mentioned Clouser's 1985 discussion of James Olthuis's criticism of Dooyeweerd in [Dooyeweerd on Religion and Faith - A Response](#) (1985 No. 10).

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9 See 1997 No. 25 for Clouser's examination of Rorty's attempt to historicize Dewey's pragmatism.

10 See James K A Smith Editorial Introduction to Herman Dooyeweerd In the Twilight of Western Thought: Studies in the Pretended Autonomy of Theoretical Thought Edwin Mellen Press, 1999 pp. v-xiii at p. xii.

We have already noted Clouser's long-term contribution to the difficult task of interpreting Dooyeweerd's "transcendental critique". We noted that in his most recent critical article (2009 No. 44), he builds upon the argument he put forward much earlier when he sought to show how Dooyeweerd's reformational philosophy could make a constructive and critical intervention in the ongoing efforts to interpret the mathematicized theories of Descartes and Heisenberg (1980 [No. 8](#)). Already in that earlier article, Clouser had observed that the English-speaking and North American reception of Dooyeweerd's work repeatedly misinterpreted the intention of this philosophy.

*I've found that once I use that term [transcendental], my partner in discussion presumes that Dooyeweerd is some sort of subjective idealist, that he is committed to some version of a doctrine of fixed 'categories' of thought, and no doubt maintains a highly problematic cleavage between sensation and conceptualization (p.157).<sup>11</sup>*

Clouser observed that in his time (i.e. 1930s in the Netherlands) Dooyeweerd had taken the word "transcendental" used by Kant and gave it a new application. For Kant transcendental knowledge is knowledge about how it is possible to experience objects as objects. He uses the term to refer to the universal and necessary conditions for knowledge, whereas Dooyeweerd uses the term to refer to his critical examination of the activities that every thinker must perform in order to make a theory. Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique is a critical examination of theory-making in philosophy and science, and any theory should not be at odds with the activities that are required to form it. A philosophical appreciation of Dooyeweerd's insight in this respect, opens the way for an approach that follows "in his line" but is not precious about the terminology in which it was initially formulated, nor even about its reputed theoretical achievements.

Later in that article, Clouser explains the importance of philosophical self-reflection, and deftly identifies the ongoing personal reflection that is needed if we are to give an account of abstraction in theory-making.

*All this isolating business going on in thought can be reflectively noticed in progress, so there is no excuse for us to fail to recognize it as our own contribution to theoretical thinking (p.170).*

There are, of course, other articles and book chapters where Clouser expounds his understanding of the basic contours of Dooyeweerd's monumental philosophy. Clearly his formulations are made with an eye to what would be understood as cogent theoretical explanation by the average college student. As we have said, Myth is Clouser's *magnum opus*<sup>12</sup> but the following four essays also deserve special attention:

- [The Uniqueness of Dooyeweerd's Program for Philosophy and Science: Whence the Difference?](#) (1995 No. 22) explains Dooyeweerd's philosophical orientation by way of comparison with significant trends

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11 This theme has characterized Clouser's work at least from his 1977 Philosophy syllabus "The Religious A Priori of Theoretical Thought". It is noteworthy that Dooyeweerd was acutely aware that his philosophy could be mistaken for a Christian version of "critical idealism" or "subjective idealism" or "naïve idealism". Such views were held even by those who were part of the movement for reformational philosophy. See his comments on the South African H G Stoker in "The Epistemological Gegenstand-relation and the Logical Subject-Object Relation" *Philosophia Reformata* 41e Jrg 1976 pp. 1-8 at pp. 5-6.

12 The granting of the PhD in 1972 was followed by promotion to Associate Professor in 1973. The publication of Myth in 1991 coincided with his promotion to full Professor.

in Christian thought since Augustine, and adopts the distinctive Cappadocian/ Calvinist view of God's nature. Only God has non-dependent being; to attribute non-dependence to anything in addition to God is polytheism

- [On the General Relation of Religion, Metaphysics, and Science](#) (1996 No. 23), a rationale for a non-reductionist metaphysics, provides a scientific enumeration of the diverse aspects of reality, not to allow reduction to go ahead unhindered but rather to show how all the things, actions, structures and events of creaturely life can indeed be subject to a genuine non-reductionistic scientific investigation.
- [A Sketch of Dooyeweerd's Philosophy of Science](#) (1996 No 24) outlines major facets of Dooyeweerd's general theory of modal aspects, with special attention to how one thing can be scientifically distinguished from other things, how the idea of individuality is to be employed, how the analogical ordering of concepts opens the way to recognising how concepts reflect all modal aspects, how "enkapsis" is a valid alternative to whole/part metaphysical construal of diversely structured entities, how the role of religious ground motives is to be understood and also how theoretical conflicts should be processes as part of the task of uncovering antinomies in scientific research.
- [A Blueprint for a Non-Reductionist Theory of Reality](#) (2007 No. 40) explains the view that there can be no justification for the belief that any particular kind of entity can be independent of all other kinds. Clouser reiterates his categorisation of the objectionable uses of reductionism in theory-making whilst also summarising basic tenets of a non-reductionist ontology derived from Dooyeweerd (see also Nos. 43, 45 &47).

## Clouser's Contributions to Other Christian Philosophies

Admittedly, by the 1960s, Dooyeweerd's philosophy had gained some prominence in some reformed and evangelical colleges and their respective denominations. These are also the academic, theological and ecclesiastical circles in which the movement known as "reformed epistemology" gained adherents and has attained, relatively speaking, widespread recognition, in subsequent decades. Clouser's critical assessments of the philosophical arguments of Alvin Plantinga (see 1983 Nos. 9 & 1996 23) and his critique of Nicholas Wolterstorff (1999 No. 28) are important contributions to the "reformed epistemology" movement. It will be just as important to read the rejoinders to these criticisms by these two reformed philosophers when they appear.

Clouser's [Reason and Belief in God](#) (2003 No. 34), is an exchange with Eduardo Echeverria about the way in which Dooyeweerd's philosophy had been compared and contrasted with John Paul II's *Fides et Ratio*. It is worth mentioning in this context because Clouser's critique of Echeverria shows his understanding of how the philosopher with theistic beliefs is called upon to contribute to philosophical reflection based in a (non-reformed and Roman Catholic) "scholastic" option.<sup>13</sup>

But it should be kept in mind that the story of Clouser's philosophical contribution is also part of the story by which Dooyeweerd's philosophy came to be progressively ignored in the reformed and evangelical context after it had

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13 See 1979 [No. 6](#)

gained its initial hearing - Dooyeweerd had embarked upon a 5-month trip to the USA and Canada in June 1958.<sup>14</sup>

We might surmise that Clouser who, over the years has been a sometime pastor and member of Methodist, Lutheran and Episcopalian congregations, did not easily qualify for a hearing among those who wanted to refer to Dooyeweerd's philosophy to justify their efforts to bring in changes to the educational institutions of their own reformed denomination.

## Clouser's Other Contributions to Christian Scholarship

But nevertheless, there is a pressing "class-room issue" here that needs to be explained - if this is a valid philosophical approach, why is it so glaringly absent from the literature? What accounts for its continued absence? This question needs to be addressed: Why has there been such a sustained long-term absence over the long-term of this Christian philosophy? This absence has to be accounted for in a meaningful way so that students can readily understand what is going on here. The explanation can not simply contrast one cultural context - the Dutch-European context in which Dooyeweerd formulated his philosophy - with the local American academic culture that had not heard of this philosophy. That would simply turn it into a late 20th century North Atlantic migration problem.

Clouser chose to elaborate the details of Dooyeweerd's philosophy as a Christian account of theory-making, hand-in-hand with an explanation of the historical development of Christian thinking in the western world. And so, he closely followed Dooyeweerd's American lectures, "studies in the pretended autonomy of theoretical thought" that were first published in 1960 as *In the Twilight of Western Thought*.

In the 1970s, Clouser also benefited from discussions with Jim Skillen, Robert Knudsen and others who were also occupied with the question of how to translate this account of theory-making, and the history of theory-making, for their own academic specialities. They were seeking to explain the possibilities of philosophy, and this philosophy in particular, in terms of the creational law-order. But an account of theory-making that explains its creational possibility in terms of the biblical "ground motive" seems to regularly get derailed. Why? We have already noted the intense spiritual confrontation that is an unavoidable part of the religious background to this Christian philosophy. And we also note that Clouser, Professor of Philosophy and Religion, has given considerable attention to the comparative study of religions. To reflect upon the historical development of Christian thinking is also to confront questions about the comparative impact of "religious ground motives" upon philosophical reflection and cultural formation. There are not only the differences between the "religions of the book" - Judaism, Christianity, Islam - which together claim Abrahamic inheritance, but there is also the ongoing and pervasive influence of Greek philosophy from pre-Christian time as well as, since the 15th and 16th centuries, "the rise of modern paganism" (see here e.g Peter Gay The Enlightenment: an Interpretation - the Rise of Modern Paganism 1966). Then there are also the eastern religions (Hinduism and the varieties of Buddhism) and many animist religions which are these days not only found in remote regions of the world while in the "civilized" countries there is a resurgence of

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14 A most helpful essay on the publishing history of Dooyeweerd's *In the Twilight of Western Thought* is Paul Otto "In the Twilight of Dooyeweerd's Corpus. The Publishing History of *In the Twilight of Western Thought* and the Future of Dooyeweerd Studies" *Philosophia Reformata* Volume 70 (2005) 1, 23-40.

ancient paganism.

We have already drawn attention to the development of Clouser's thinking about the philosophy of religion and metaphysics. His 1979 discussion in No. 6 [The Four Options in Philosophy of Religion](#) was excerpted from a 1977 *Philosophy Syllabus* written for classes at TSC. It discusses the various approaches to "religion" within the philosophical discipline. It is framed in order to develop a critical dialogue.

The 1996 article, [On the General Relation of Religion, Metaphysics, and Science](#) (No. 23), gives an overview of all the specific ways in which religion, metaphysics and science do, or could, relate. In his discussion, Clouser lists "The Three Most Popular Answers": **rationalism** - rational principles are neutral with regard to every subject matter and are common to all people; **scholasticism** - all humans have reason, only the faithful have the gift of faith. Reason has access to nature and faith has access to supernature; **religious irrationalism or insulationism**, is related to Galileo's view of the Bible which "tells us how to go to heaven not how the heavens go". This latter view, developed philosophically by Kant, taken up by Schleiermacher and Kierkegaard, assumed religious belief pertains to an area of knowledge which is completely different from that occupied by science and philosophy. In contrast to all three answers, Calvin, Kuyper and Dooyeweerd are said to provide an account of theory-making in which belief in God impinges on every sort of subject matter. Knowledge of God is crucial to every kind of true knowledge.

The essays noted in footnote 7 above are also examples of Clouser's contribution to Christian reflection about creationism, intelligent design, evolutionism, making his own contributions to the American Scientific Affiliation and conferences convened by the Templeton Foundation and, in recent time, of the Metanexus Institute.

## Other Salient Contributions

Apart from his initial [exegetical contribution to Aristotle studies](#), which Herman Dooyeweerd himself chose to publish in *Philosophia Reformata*, Clouser has exercised his sharp analytical skills in discussing political topics. [Puritanism on Authority](#) (1979 No. 6) and the 2007 Kuyper Lecture [A Third View of Rights and Law](#) (No. 40) are noteworthy contributions for understanding the logical inconsistencies and underlying tensions in the Puritan and American approaches to politics.

He has had editorial pieces published in [Public Justice Report](#) on the following topics: American national character ([No. 13](#)), American militarism ([No. 18](#)), the dominance of un-elected interest groups in congress ([No. 20](#)), just war principles ([No. 26](#)), the role of the NRA and gun control ([No. 29](#)), the death penalty ([No. 30](#)), and nuclear arms and national prestige ([No. 38](#)). These are all tightly argued viewpoints on a range of political issues. Each could be taken as an example of careful logical discussion of contemporary public issues. They would be good examples to show our eager freshman who was intent on asking: "But what do philosophers do?"

There are reviews of books - one on Christian anthropological dualisms ([No. 15](#)) and another on Christian responses to Marxism and neo-Marxism ([No. 10](#)). There is a contribution to a symposium considering Glenn Tinder's discussion of love and justice ([No. 14](#)) as well as a notable conference paper which considers how religious belief relates to social norms ([No. 21](#)). In these writings Clouser has shown an intuitive understanding for the way philosophical thinking informs

political theory, ethics and sociology.

## Philosophy as Dependable Analysis

And so, we can say that from this perspective, the development of a philosophy has everything to do with whatever it is that the philosopher, and not just the philosopher's abstracted argument, *depends* upon. By describing Clouser's contribution in these terms, we can say that his philosophy has been constructed in the belief that the Creator-Redeemer who has made Himself known to us in Jesus Christ is the One on whom everyone and everything depends. The term "everything" also includes all the different kinds of argument, the rules of logical inference, concepts and philosophical analysis itself. Everything here means everything, or more exactly, everything creaturely, everything that is part of creation including:

*... the host of abstract animals in the great corral of Plato's Other World ...*  
([\*Religious Language: A New Look at an Old Problem\* 1984 No. 9 p. 386](#)).

Creation depends on the Creator. Reality consists of God and creatures, Creator and creation, the dependent and the Divine. The abstractions of theory-making are directed to created reality and are regulated by our beliefs in God or a substitute divinity. That we can depend upon the Lord the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, is the surest basis we have for doing philosophy and seeking to provide reliable philosophical analysis.

Simply saying this, and thereby describing the "religious ground-motive" of Clouser's philosophy, does not mean that we have succeeded in putting forward a cogent case as to why his philosophical analysis deserves careful consideration. This particular contribution to philosophy now needs to be argued philosophically. Simply admitting that one believes that logical thinking has been made possible by the way God created us, does not, of itself, demonstrate that one has mastered an understanding of the laws that govern a logically formed argument. Nor have we given an elaborated theoretical account of the place of logical thinking in our lives. But to grant that is not to say that one's belief in God, one's religious belief, defies logic. Not at all. But religious belief decisively directs logical thinking according to the norms that govern thinking.

Grappling with issues like these, and seeking to find a way of presenting a logical and cogent case for the philosophical vocation, means that one will soon become immersed in complex arguments that have long histories. These arguments may involve assumptions that appeal to other "religious ground-motives", to other professed dependabilities, and therefore diverge at root from a Christian philosophical standpoint. Our intellectual tradition is an ongoing discussion and debate between rival traditions about alternative ways of explaining the philosophical task. Clouser's philosophical analysis has sought to give a cogent account of this inherited philosophic divergence.

Bruce C Wearne  
Point Lonsdale AUSTRALIA  
3 June 2009 AD

# Roy A. Clouser

## Annotated Bibliography 1965-2008

### 1965

1. "Aristotle's Theory of Moral Incontinence". University of Pennsylvania: M.A Dissertation in Philosophy

Advisor: Glenn Morrow

The year is 1965. Clouser is 28. He has already gained a BA from Gordon College (1961), a BD from Reformed Episcopal Seminary (1962) and has followed graduate studies at Harvard in the history and philosophy of religion (1961-1962). This then is clearly the work of someone who has decided to become a student - he has taken on the scholarly vocation as his life's work. When we examine the rest of Clouser's list of publications we wonder why he would choose a dissertation on "Aristotle's theory of moral incontinence." Whether he chose this with some particular goal in mind, or whether he simply had to find a topic that was acceptable to the university philosophy department, is a relevant question, but what the article shows is a recognition of the importance of immersing oneself in the *logical* details of philosophical argument. It is a confrontation with the history of the interpretation of Aristotle's theory of moral incontinence by means of a careful exegesis of the text, and a critical examination of the various recent interpretations that have been put forward. And so it was important to have also mastered, to some extent, ancient Greek. To this point in time, Clouser has been a church pastor and a teacher in public schools. He has also completed theological training. The investigation of Aristotle's philosophy, and confronting and accounting for the diverse and conflicting appropriations of that philosophy, is implicit in the topic chosen for the dissertation. The kind of task that is thereby implied also has its own important place in the entire scheme of scholarship. And what is learned in such an investigation is by no means irrelevant to the task of theoretically deepening understanding about what is going on in the world.

1968

2. ["Aristotle's Theory of Moral Incontinence"](#) *Philosophia Reformata* 33, 1 & 2 Qrs pp. 90-99

The exercise is one of examining the various interpretations of Aristotle's theory of incontinence, to then compare these interpretations with the original statement of the argument in order to decide which, if any, is the right one. The aim is to set forth a cogent and validated interpretation of Aristotle's theory. Hence Clouser begins the essay with his strong dissent from commentators on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* who allege that Aristotle's view on the matter (does anyone commit an act knowing it to be bad?) is the same as Socrates. Such assertions are without sufficient textual basis, says Clouser.

Clouser not only interacts with the details of scholarly debate, he also confronts the ways in which different scholars understand the normative requirements of logical inference. That is why at the outset of the argument he sets out four statements that together summarize Aristotle's viewpoint in its logical progression. But to assess the argument of Aristotle, let alone Clouser's representation of the argument, one will need to have some appreciation for the science of logic. This will mean that readers will have to have acquainted themselves with the curious language of this science, of what is being referred to when mention is made of major and minor premisses, as well as appreciating the meaning of the logical laws of identity, non-contradiction and excluded middle. This is taken-for-granted in the article and was then part of the regular academic training in philosophy.

Herman Dooyeweerd, as editor, was pleased to include this summarised re-writing of Clouser's MA dissertation in this volume of *Philosophia Reformata*.

## 1972

3. "Transcendental Critique, Ontological Reduction, and Religious Belief in the Philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd". Ph.D. Dissertation in Philosophy: University of Pennsylvania.

Advisor: James Ross.

University of Rhode Island, Graduate Colloquium: "Transcendental Critique in Kant and Dooyeweerd", Oct. 1971

Clouser's academic career has been a concerted effort to extend and develop the results of his doctoral program. His most recent publications (Nos. 41-42) - 36 years later - develop this critique of what has been considered the centre-piece of Dooyeweerd's philosophy, the transcendental critique of theoretical thought. Having encountered the Dutchman's writings, Clouser realised that if he were to gain a doctorate he should at least try to master the thought of this man who, quite clearly, had made the most significant contribution to Christian philosophy in the 20th century. From Clouser's published writings, it is clear that he is still working on his PhD! That is, after all, how it should be.

## 1977

4. "The Religious A Priori of Theoretical Thought" Philosophy Syllabus, Trenton State College, New Jersey. 111 pp.

The work is divided into two chapters each with three parts.

### **CHAPTER ONE**

#### Part One - Introductory Survey of the Subject

1. Possible conceptions of the relation of theory to religious belief; brief history of those positions pp. 1-7
2. Outline of Dooyeweerd's defense of Fideism; the scope of this work pp. 7-10

#### Part Two - What is Philosophy? What is Science?

1. Similarities of philosophical and scientific theories; what philosophy is not pp. 11-14
2. The hallmark of philosophical theories pp. 14-17
3. The hallmark of scientific theories pp. 17

#### Part Three - What is Religion?

1. Preliminary difficulties in obtaining a definition of religion pp. 18-19
2. An alternative approach to the problem of definition; defence of the definition resulting from this approach pp. 20-24
3. Rebuttal of the criticism that Fideism is intrinsically incoherent pp. 24-27
4. Definition of "presuppose" pp. 27-28
5. Other sense of "faith" pp. 28-30

## CHAPTER TWO

### Part One - The Idea of a Critique

1. *The possibility of a meta-philosophical stance and of a criterion for determining the justifiability in principle of any theory pp. 31-38*
2. *The meta-philosophical nature of the critique pp. 38-40*
3. *The analysis of the distinctive features of abstract thought; why abstraction is necessary to the production of theories pp. 40-52*

### Part Two - More About Aspects

1. *Further clarification of the meaning of "aspect"; the results of the critique for obtaining a correct list of aspects pp. 53-57*
2. *The basic alternatives for theories of the relations between aspects; the sense in which these theories unavoidably involve religious beliefs pp. 57-62*
3. *Criticisms of various ways of attempting to avoid regarding anything as absolute pp. 63-64*
4. *reasons why scientific as well as ontological theories presuppose religious belief pp. 64-75*

### Part Three: Replies to Objections

1. *Exactly what is the definition of an aspect? pp. 76-81*
2. *Is there any genuinely pre-theoretical experience? pp. 81-84.*
3. *Can abstraction account for basic concepts in every science? Pp. 84-87*
  - A. *mathematical and geometrical concepts pp. 87-93*
  - B. *law concepts pp. 93-95*
  - C. *value concepts and the framework of laws hypothesis pp. 95-100*
4. *Isn't Dooyeweerd's position a version of naïve realism? pp. 100-104*
5. *The problem of other minds.*
  - A. *individuality structure and abstraction pp. 104-106*
  - B. *The biblical view of the human self pp. 107-110*
6. *Summary pp. 110-111*

Clearly this is a "working document". A close reading of this will reveal basic lines of argument which were further modified in later articles.

It will be interesting to examine Clouser's view of Fideism in this document (and in No. 6 below) and compare that with later formulations. The term, as he uses it here, is quite different from how the term is usually understood in philosophy. He came to abandon the term - see footnote 6. p. 25 above.

## 5. "The Approach of 1984" (24 pp.)

This paper surveys the role of government among all social institutions and articulates the author's understanding of "social pluralism" (pp. 1-13). Then the discussion turns to apply the pluralistic viewpoint to the relation between government and school (pp. 14-24). The motivation for the paper is that there is something wrong in principle with the current state of affairs. The social pluralism he outlines: *is derived from the Judeo-Christian teaching of a transcendent creator ... [and] that these basic religious beliefs imply an alternative set of assumptions that can preserve our liberty.*

The essay is an exposition of a particular viewpoint which dissents from prevailing views. It discusses the way humans institutionalise the social interests which are of great value to them. There may be no serious alternatives to government, family, school and business but the author points out that people are willing to take great risks to uphold the values they hold. These various spheres of interest are universal even if "they may be given greater or lesser attention, development and differentiation from one society to another." The author considers that the spheres themselves are not human inventions. Human inventiveness makes its appearance in the different forms these spheres of interest take on in different societies throughout history. The prevailing question concerns how they are to be organised or arranged in terms of one another. Aristotle's view of government as the highest of all social institutions incorporating all others within itself is briefly expounded, with a brief outline of the long history of such hierarchical social ordering in "the west". When the democratic tradition emerged it failed to properly challenge the hierarchical view of society by simply inverting the hierarchic order - democratic ideology decrees that "the people" will be absolute rulers: *... in principle the state still retains its position of dominating and including all other social institutions.*

Israel provides the author with an exception to the almost universally accepted idea of a hierarchical, government-dominated society. And then a discussion of how Augustine and Calvin gave this some recognition in their writings, leading to a brief exposition of "sphere sovereignty" according to Abraham Kuyper. In this view every person has some interest in all spheres of social life, a view which does not reject hierarchy within one or other institution; it is the hierarchical arrangement **between** institutions, spanning the social spheres, which is rejected in principle in their pluralist viewpoint.

The discussion comes to Jefferson's so-called "wall of separation" and the author suggests that the argument should not be confined to discussion of church and state. At this point the author introduces the social philosophy of Dooyeweerd, in which social institutions are always analysed for their inter-dependence while maintaining their own authority, their "sphere sovereignty". From the standpoint of this perspective, the author proceeds to outline a method to identify the way government, in particular, but also other social institutions, can over-reach their boundaries. His aim is to prepare the ground for a discussion of academic freedom. This is the topic of the second half of the paper - the following questions are broached: what is a state school? How should student affairs be organised? How should the faculty operate? The title of the paper is a subtle reference to the dangers of thought control under state-controlled education.

1979

6. ["Four Options in the Philosophy of Religion"](#) *Anakainosis* 1:3  
April pp. 15-18

The article by-line tells us that it is excerpted from Clouser's 1977 *Philosophy Syllabus* which he wrote as Professor of Philosophy at Trenton State College, NJ (see No. 4). It discusses the various ways "religion" is approached from within the philosophical discipline, developing a critical dialogue with the academic study of the philosophy of religion. By adopting what seems like a "problem-historical" frame of reference, and specifically locating his own contribution within one of the four options, Clouser avoids any suggestion that he might be trying to start *de nouveau*. Instead he seeks to develop a reformational perspective on the philosophy of religion and lays this out in a philosophical magazine published by an institution (ICS) that was entertaining a philosophical approach that would view all academic disciplines as sub-disciplines of a philosophy of religion derived from Dooyeweerd's philosophy. By identifying the four major trends in the philosophy of religion, Clouser suggests that a specifically Christian philosophy of religion should not ignore current philosophical debate by trying to locate itself outside the philosophical tradition. Instead it should contribute with understanding these trends it is seeking to reform. With this neat overview of the sub-discipline, Clouser not only provides a rough and schematic outline of how Dooyeweerd's contribution can be located within the history of the philosophy of religion, but also suggests a path by which reformational philosophy might be introduced within courses in contemporary academic philosophy, contributing its own theoretical insights to these other trends and arguments. He develops a four-fold typology - 1. religious rationalism, 2. religious irrationalism, 3. fideism and 4. scholasticism. Clouser locates the philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd within the third option, claiming that he has made a most significant contribution alongside of Augustine (who "*flirted with this view without ever wholly accepting it*"), Luther, Calvin and Pascal. The four-fold typology classifies the historically evident options that are manifest in the philosophy of religion. The *question* concerns the way in which philosophy approaches (the study of) religion. On this scheme there may also be a "religious irrationalism" option within the fourth scholastic approach.

7. ["Puritanism on Authority"](#) *Anakainosis* 1:4 June pp.18-19

This was initially part of a speech entitled "*The religious roots of two American political ideas*". In 2007 Clouser delivered the annual Kuyper lecture of the Center for Public Justice. It was held at the law school of Harvard University and the lecture was titled "A Third View of Rights and Law" (see No. 41 below). The argument is historical, identifying with careful diagnostic rigour how different conceptions of authority are held together in tension within political systems. Within the Puritans, says Clouser - and his key witness is John Milton - we find a complex amalgam of Calvin and Aristotle.

*... in the Puritan movement there was an unstable mixture of the ideal of democracy based on the belief in human intelligence and the virtue as the source of authority, and the ideal of rights based on the biblical (Calvinist) belief in God as the sole supreme authority and hence in the pluriformity and limitation of each kind of earthly authority.*

This then is background to the view that he argued later that there is at the

core of the American polity, a contradiction, a tension between two traditional views about the relationship of rights to law. One comes from the Declaration of Independence and the other from the Constitution.

The excerpt of the lecture is relevant for understanding the religious background of the American constitution, and also shows an ability to pin-point ambiguities in political life. It is also relevant for those who want to understand the tensions in other "post-Puritan" polities.

## 1980

### 8. ["A Critique of Descartes and Heisenberg"](#) *Philosophia Reformata* 45, 2 pp. 157-177

Over the years, an important part of Clouser's academic work has been concerned with the interpretation, application and criticism of the philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd. Clouser has aimed to give this philosophy a hearing in North America and also in the wider English-speaking world. In this 1980 article, his second for the Dutch journal of which the late Herman Dooyeweerd had been founding editor, Clouser opens his discussion by asserting that Dooyeweerd's idea of critique had not had a widespread hearing in North America. He announces the need to translate this philosophy into a technical language that can demonstrate the fruitfulness of Dooyeweerd's critique to those trained in the Anglo-American philosophical tradition.

This article can be read as the first in a series of critical re-presentations of Dooyeweerd's thought that Clouser has written over the years - see also Nos. 11 (1985), 22 (1995), 24 (1996), 34 (2003), 43 (2008). His published books of course should also be included in this list ([The Myth of Religious Neutrality](#) 17/35 and [Knowing with the Heart](#) 27/39). The title is slightly misleading but it flags Clouser's intention to draw attention to the relevance of Dooyeweerd's critique for understanding conventional and contemporary philosophical arguments and philosophers. Of the 21 pages, a little more than five are devoted to Descartes and Heisenberg. The focus is upon Dooyeweerd's transcendental (Clouser's term is *metatheoretical*) critique and then it shifts to apply this critique to the theories of two prominent advocates of a mathematicised / humanistic view of reality.

Clouser explains the critical contribution Dooyeweerd intended to make. Traditional 'internal' criteria judge theories and between theories by comparing one theory with another: logical consistency; explanatory power; public accessibility of evidential data; testability and simplicity. Questions about consistency and economy are appeals to internal criteria. Dooyeweerd's "meta-theoretical" critique is concerned with the justifiability (or otherwise) of the process by which a theory is constructed; this is distinct from any justification of its content in terms of the evaluation of the evidence brought forward to confirm or reject a particular hypothesis. The question is: are the concepts and hypotheses compatible with the processes needed to produce a scientific argument?

Dooyeweerd's challenge is to those who would defend the autonomy of theoretical thought to show that this postulate has been derived within the process of theoretical thought itself i.e. to test whether it is a non-scientific prejudice about the theoretical process smuggled into scientific argument. Abstraction is thus identified as a meta-theoretical criterion for the production of scientific and philosophical theories, and is "closely analogous" to how the inserted thermometer "interferes" with, and alters, the relations that pertain between itself and that which it is measuring in order to give us a reading. Abstraction alters the perceived relationship of that which is abstracted to the thinker and it also changes the relationship between what is abstracted to its background. Clouser describes the (logical) problem that arises when the results of an abstraction activity are assumed to be *identical* with "reality itself".

The process of hypothesis formulation and testing, theory-making, and conceptualisation cannot demonstrate that an abstraction is merely the reality from which it was initially derived. To suggest that this is so requires more of the abstraction than can ever be demonstrated.

Clouser asks his readers to interpret Dooyeweerd's critique in terms of a suggested 'thought experiment' about theory-making in which we use our own critical introspection to assess our own thought activity in relation to the additional activities we undertake when we engage in abstraction. Such additional abstracting activities are different in degree, but also border on a difference in the kind of thought that is required. It is suggested that these differences are brought about by the intensity of the focus brought to the activity of identifying and then isolating entities and properties. In this sense, the abstracting activity can be said to interfere with, break apart, or disrupt the continuity in our experience. At least that is Clouser's account at this time, a re-interpretation of how Dooyeweerd could refer to the "splitting up" of reality, as a result of theoretical analysis.

Clouser's substantive claim is about distinctions drawn at the pre-abstraction level to clarify what Dooyeweerd intends by his metatheoretical ("transcendental") critique. Having presented his analytical description of Dooyeweerd's critique he moves on to show how the critique approaches Descartes and Heisenberg. For Descartes it is the abstracting isolation and separation between objects which, allegedly, confirms their (substantial) distinctiveness. Clouser confines himself to a rough sketch of Dooyeweerd's critique and explains that the abstracting results in a logical concept and hence no conceptual isolation can ever be complete relative to logical properties and laws. Hence Descartes is mistaken when he makes the claim that his concept of spatial extension is completely isolated from every nonspatial element. An abstraction cannot suspend the law of noncontradiction and there are other nonlogical laws and properties that pertain to things and statements. Descartes' confession of faith in reason leads him onto an insistence that all that is mathematically conceivable is 'externally' real, and all the 'externally' real is mathematically conceivable. The same over-estimation of mathematical thinking manifests itself in Heisenberg's interpretation of indeterminacy. Heisenberg commits himself to the Cartesian view that what is real is mathematically calculable. Mathematical concepts as more clear, distinct and reliable than any other kind of concept. Being the object of mathematical thought is equivalent to being real. Whatever is not mathematically calculable is not real. This is the basis for the Copenhagen (ontic) interpretation of indeterminacy. Dooyeweerd's critique not only shows that all theories employ assumptions taken on faith, but that such faith is religious. For Descartes and Heisenberg the basic truths of mathematics are accepted as Divine. And the article concludes with Heisenberg's explicit embrace of the Pythagorean religion.

## 1983

9. ["Religious Language: A New Look at an Old Problem"](#), in H.Hart, J van der Hoeven and N Wolterstorff eds Rationality in the Calvinian Tradition University Press of America 1983 pp. 385-407.

Calvin College: "Religious Language: A New Look at an Old Problem", Oct. 1979.

These are 16 papers from an August 3-8 1981 "Rationality in the Calvinian Tradition". conference held in Toronto. The first six papers are grouped together in 3 sub-sections under the heading **Historical Setting**. The second part of the book headed **Present Positions on Key Problems** includes Clouser's essay which is the final one in the book. It is twinned with Alvin Plantinga's essay "The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology" in the section titled *Part Five: Thinking About God*. The positive contribution of what is contained in this essay for the debates and philosophical complexities raised elsewhere in this book has not really received much notice, either from the book's other contributors or from those who claim to be working in the Calvinian tradition. Clouser is referring to philosophical discussion about the distinction between Creator and Creature, and taking his leave from the protestant reformers view that this distinction is exhaustive.

The position taken on the Creator/creature distinction proves to be decisive for the approach he takes to explore religious language. Clouser discusses *Universal Creationism* and showing that the scriptures provide warrant for the belief that everything other than God is dependent upon God. A brief annotated index of some key Scriptural passages is provided. In bringing his index to a close, Clouser refers to Romans 1 to point out that Paul's doctrine of the two ways means people can either serve God or render service to that which has been wrongfully accorded God's status in their lives. There are no other alternatives. The New Testament affirms again and again that *reality is either God or something that depends on God*. The conclusion is this: to regard anything other than the Creator as uncreated is *to regard it as being every bit as divine as Yahweh*. It is not just a matter of how we view what God controls by His Sovereign hand. To accord divine status to anything is to embrace crypto-polytheism.

Clouser's examination of *Analogy Theory*, explores the traditional way philosophy addresses the problematic question *as to how terms of any human language can be truly predicated of God*. The terms used of God must connote or denote properties and relations which are known to us from our experience of creation. This raises a philosophical puzzle that Clouser suggests should be definitively resolved. His *New Proposal* asks what would be wrong with admitting that there is something about God which is created? Why simply take the other tack and suppose that some aspect of creation is uncreated? It sounds like a wholesale adoption of a speculative approach which intuitively may seem impossible. But Clouser then explores the biblical doctrine of creation and asks whether, with creation, God created His own relation to His creature(s) - He created the relation of standing in relation to what had been created and thus ascribed the property of being Creator to Himself. It thus becomes logically compelling to consider God's other (revealed) properties as His creations.

So is this how our God-talk to be characterised? Clouser suggests that God's divine being (His non-dependence) and His ability as creator should not be

viewed as properties. This is the point at which such reflection confronts the complex philosophical debates that have been a part of philosophical [Western] thought since the ancient Greeks. He is developing an ontology with a specific concept of "properties and laws" which always exist in correlation with what they govern. It is Clouser's cryptic formulation of a principle enunciated by Dooyeweerd: **Individuality** can be ascribed to something but it is not a property. Neither can we have a *concept* of individuality; an *idea* of individuality, what Clouser calls a *limiting idea*, is the best we can manage. Likewise, God's **being** is not a property which God possesses alongside, and in addition to, His other (created) properties. Being is no property of God. All of creation may have the property of dependence upon the Creator but God's divinity, that He can bring all else into existence, is not a created fact or a property. God cannot be thought of as a thing with properties. [Some assert that because we cannot conceptualise God's properties then God can not exist; this is solipsism - "what my net can't catch can't be fish".]

God can be known and our language, as a creaturely dimension, carries ordinary meaning for the terms we use for God's personal characteristics, and His laws. All our knowledge of God includes our conceptual understanding of the properties He has created to relate to us. Luther and Calvin recognized that what the Scriptures reveal about God does not require us to pry into His Being, His uncreated essence, as if our thinking could somehow go behind Him in order to measure His extent. This is *no* proof for the truth of the Biblical view of God. Nor is it a guaranteed credit check on God, or His reliability and trustworthiness. Clouser considers *Logical Objections* raised in opposition to this position. Plantinga's "Universal possibilism" cannot be the right interpretation. Logical possibilism makes God and not just creatures subject to the logical laws of possibility and necessity. A different reality would not violate the laws which currently obtain. For anything to violate a law, the law must hold. The correlation of laws and the things governed by those laws is part of the "universal creationist" position. And the laws not only govern how things can be, but how we can think about them and conceptualise them. "Universal possibilism" fails because possibility is what appears as a result of God's creating - possibilities are God's creatures. The idea that God can violate logical laws ignores the fact that God's sovereignty pertains over all laws, including logical laws, and so He is not subject to logical laws in the first place. To reflect upon whether God could have created differently is, as Augustine pointed out, to reflect upon time; that God created time, that it did not exist before He called it into being. Finally, *Religious Objections* examine how the doctrine of the *Trinity* has been understood in Christian reflection. God's three-fold revelation of Himself is also a created quantity and true of the way(s) God relates to His creation. No one Person is any more truly God than any other; in God unity is not basic to diversity, nor diversity to unity. Clouser also considers the *Image of God*. This is the revelation of what it means to be fully human, found for us only in Jesus Christ, in whom God has accommodated **Himself** to us. Clouser reiterates that the universal creationist view of religious language presupposes and remains consistent with, the biblical doctrine of God's transcendence, which, on both counts, the analogy theory does not achieve. Religious language holds its meaning and the view espoused also throws new light on some crucial biblical doctrines and their rightful interpretation.

## 1984

10. [Review](#) of J Vander Stelt (ed) The Challenge of Marxist and NeoMarxist Ideology for Christian Scholarship Sioux Center: Dorcht College Press, 1982 in *Westminster Theological Journal*, Vol. LXVI, Spring, pp. 161-163

In this review of the ICPCHE conference proceedings, with major contributions by so-called "Dooyeweerdians" (Vander Stelt, Skillen, Griffieon, Hart, Zylstra) Clouser, following Griffieon, asks whether reformational scholarship is capable of rising to the Marxist and neo-Marxist challenge? Griffieon suggested that reformational scholarship is not ready to meet the challenge. The emphasis in the review is that the volume is about developing a sound scholarly response to the challenge. Skillen, the author of the second article in the book, had considered how Christianity does and should interpret Marxism, developing a view that starts with creation and a much-needed re-reading of the first two chapters of Genesis. The focus is global and the conference specifically focused upon the challenge of Marxism to education. Notably, Clouser commends Klaus Bockmuehl, author of The Challenge of Marxism 1980 - [b]oth in respect of the thinkers covered, and the clarity of his exposition and criticism - and also refers readers to the book by Johan Vander Hoeven Karl Marx: the Roots of His Thought.

## 1985

### 11. [Dooyeweerd on Religion and Faith - A Response](#)

In this paper, Clouser outlines his minor and major criticisms of the interpretation of Herman Dooyeweerd put forward by James Olthuis in his contribution "Dooyeweerd on Religion and Faith" in C T McIntire (ed) 1985 *The Legacy of Herman Dooyeweerd: Reflections on Critical Philosophy in the Christian Tradition*. His critique begins with reformational-scholar to reformational-scholar conceding that Dooyeweerd's philosophy is not easy to master. He explains his **Minor Disagreements**:

**1. Theory.** For Dooyeweerd, a theory is a hypothesis or a series of them which are postulated in order to explain something. As an upfront initial statement, a measure of logical rigour is injected into the discussion. Attention is drawn to the problematic construal of Dooyeweerd's philosophy as, in the first instance, a philosophy of religion. Clouser suggests that Olthuis misunderstands Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique as a "theory of theory", a misunderstanding which he had also held.

**2. Meaning.** Clouser counters Olthuis' view that "meaning emphasizes more expression from rather than reference to God". This is exactly back-to-front. Olthuis' later statement about "the expressive character of reality is also religious in nature" contradicts Dooyeweerd's view that it is the human self-hood rather than all reality which expresses itself in this religious way.

**3. Temporal - Supratemporal.** Clouser dissents from Olthuis's assertion that in Dooyeweerd's philosophy time is the boundary between the supratemporal sphere of human existence and the temporal diversity of meaning. How can time function as the separator of itself from the supratemporal? He asks, Is this merely infelicitous wording?

**4. Self and Body.** Clouser takes issue with Olthuis's use of the word "separate" to assert that the human self is separate from the temporal, diverse and mortal body.

**5. Without Faith Reality Cannot Exist.** Clouser suggests the discussion either include Dooyeweerd's "preparatory discussion" of the point (NC II 52-53) or be deleted.

**6. A Supposed Confusion About Faith.** In reply to Olthuis's view that Dooyeweerd's view of faith makes false faith impossible, Clouser refers to *New Critique* II 304.

**7. Faith is a Calling.** Clouser points out that Dooyeweerd never says anything of the sort. Rather, for Dooyeweerd, faith is a natural function of the human personality and not an option. He also comments upon Olthuis's use of the phrase "faith decision".

**8. Faith and Reason.** Clouser identifies some issues that just don't make sense to him. In conclusion to the section, Clouser suggests that the term "rational" is probably being used in a variety of ways without these being spelled out explicitly.

**9. Closed and Opened Faith.** Olthuis criticizes Dooyeweerd's view by suggesting there is a shift in meaning from open and closed culture to a true and false faith. Dooyeweerd had elaborated his theory in terms of how the different modal-aspects relate to culture forming and how faith leads the

normative disclosure of human socio-cultural activity. Any aspect can be "closed", and faith directed back toward some facet or feature of the universe rather than being opened up toward God is closed. Being closed is the same as being false. Contrary to Olthuis, Clouser asserts that Dooyeweerd has not equivocated on the terms "open" and "closed". This is also related to another of Olthuis's criticisms that Dooyeweerd has somehow absolutized the Christian religious ground motive.

The **Major Disagreements** are listed under three headings:

**1. The Supposed Petitio in the Explanation of the Relation of Faith to Culture:** Clouser rejects the assertion that Dooyeweerd's argument about faith and culture is circular. Olthuis asserts that Dooyeweerd holds that the growth of a faith which is not culture-retardant requires the achievement of a minimal level of culture. The quoted passages (NC II p. 320 and II p. 179) have the appearance of proof-texting rather than nuanced interpretation in relation to the context.

**2. Criticism of the Biblical Ground Motive.** It seems that Dooyeweerd sometimes discusses religious ground motives in regard to our general understanding of human life in creation, and at other times with regard to the manifestation of these ground motives in cultural development and philosophical reflection. Clouser discounts Olthuis' charge that "creation-fall-redemption" is the absolutization of one particular, parochial interpretation of Biblical religion. Rather than being parochial, the formulation of creation-fall-redemption by Jesus Christ in the communion of the Holy Spirit is a fully ecumenical articulation of Christian faith.

**3. Proposed Revisions in the Understanding of Religion.** Clouser says that Olthuis's formulation is a straightforward confusion between being dependent upon God and being aware of being dependent upon God or a God-surrogate. Only people are religious although to be creaturely is to be in relation to God.

**Addendum: An Agreement about Renaming the Faith Aspect:** Clouser agrees with Olthuis that the aspect of reality Dooyeweerd names the faith aspect should be renamed. Olthuis suggests "certitudinal" and Clouser posits "the aspect of trustworthiness". He formulates his view of religious trust as his conclusion, Luther's Commentary on the First Commandment is quoted: "But whatever your heart clings and entrusts itself to is, I say, really your God."

12. ["Divine Accommodation: An Alternative Theory of Religious Language"](#) *Tijdskrif vir Christelike Wetenskap*, August, 94-127

This is a re-write based on the material argued in No. 9. The first thing to note is that its title is changed from "Religious Language: A New Look at an Old Problem." The new edition has a re-jigged introduction and includes references to Karl Barth's critique of the analogical theory of being. The theory is incompatible, Barth says, with the biblical teaching concerning God's creatorship and transcendence. Clouser begins in a slightly new way which by use of the technical term "predication", refers to the contemporary philosophical discussion of religion and God and at the same time highlights the recognition by Christian and Jewish thinkers that there is an unsolved problem concerning the apparent incompatibility of two biblical doctrines: 1. God is creator of everything; 2. human language conveys truth about God.

Apart from the title and the re-vamping of the introduction, the heading "Universal Creationism" is replaced by *Universal Creation*. This section is pretty much the same as the earlier version until the final three paragraphs. A previous footnote about "visible and invisible" (Ephesians 1:21-23 and II Cor. 4:18) makes the **logical** point that there are no exceptions - everything other than God is either visible or invisible.

Section *II Analogy Theory* is completely re-written and gives special attention to the version of the theory put forward by Thomas Aquinas. God does not really have exactly the same properties as creatures but the "something" that is shared between the Creator and the creature is referred to by altering its mode of possession in each case. Clouser points out that in this view our language can only succeed in stating something like what is true about God. In a strict sense, God and creatures share no common property (quality plus mode of possession). If then a realistic theory of universals is adopted, the theory won't work at all - why? Because God would be said to possess an infinite degree of a property which creatures can only possess in a finite degree, but for this to happen there would have to be a numerically identical universal quality which both degrees share in common; the critical question is this: is this shared universal quality created though possessed by God or uncreated and possessed by creatures? So then does the denial of the realistic view of universals - there is an infinite (uncreated) instance of it in God while there is a numerically finite instance of it which God created in the created universe - make the analogy theory work? This still fails to avoid the dilemma. The reason it fails is that there would then be two distinct qualities: one created and the other not. God may be viewed as the transcendent creator with respect to the properties of the universe but the theory avoids his creatorship and transcendence of the laws which govern the orderliness and the creational properties of things. But the properties ascribed to God in scripture also relate to laws or norms to which properties are subject. The discussion works within the parameters of the theory to see where it leads, identifying its underlying dilemmas.

*III A New Proposal* begins by repeating the first four paragraphs of the previous version. At this point Clouser's philosophical understanding shows his indebtedness to the gospel. As a proposal it is a theory, he says, since it is not explicitly taught in Scripture even though it is strongly suggested by the

discussion of the creation of wisdom, the first of God's creations, formed (and/or possessed) before the heavens and the earth. Clouser maintains that the understanding of God's covenantal relationship with us is based solely on God's accommodation and does not require an elaborate theory of language employing a metaphysical *analogia entis*, either to account for how God has a relationship with His creation or how His image-bearers can know that he does. The speculation of God creating from what are antecedently possible worlds is something that does not arise from philosophical reflection that is fully grasped by the biblical sense of creation.

In *IV Replies to Objections A. Logical Objections* the two paragraphs "The position that there could be..." and "Moreover, there is another objection ..." (p. 399) are deleted from this version as is the entire section from "In sum, God's sovereignty ..." (p. 399) to the end of the section (p. 401). In the **B. Religious Objections** there are no major new formulations but some editing throughout the section until the end of the article.

## 1989

13. ["Is There an American National Character"](#) *Public Justice Report* 12:7 April pp. 1, 7.

Is there a generalization that can capture the typically *American* character? Clouser suggests that the outstanding characteristic is *competitiveness*. Americans have developed a national self-understanding of being the world's biggest and best competitors. This explains why the US has transformed sports into a non-lethal substitute for war. The point of this discussion is a simple Christian observation: God says "love your neighbour", the American social ethic is prone to say "beat your neighbour." Whether it is in foreign affairs, aid to third-world countries or to disaster victims, America seems to only do it in order to become Number One. There's need for a fundamental re-think about the way Americans think about themselves.

## 1990

14. ["Love and Coercion"](#) Contribution to Part II of symposium on Glenn Tinder The Political Meaning of Christianity (Louisiana State University Press, 1989) *Public Justice Report* vol. 13, 9 July/August pp. 2-5 at p.4

In the December 1989 edition of The Atlantic, Professor Glenn Tinder wrote ["Can we be good without God?"](#) and in that year he also published The Political Meaning of Christianity. *Public Justice Report* February 1990 suggested that Tinder's exposition of Matthew 5: 38-48 had posited an irreconcilable conflict between love and coercion. A reply from Professor John Stek of Calvin Theological Seminary was published and *PJR* asked Tinder to reply to Stek and the article by James Skillen. There were additional reactions to Tinder, and Clouser's was one of those. The exchange was published in the May-June and July-August editions of *Public Justice Report* and collated as "Love and Coercion: Interactions with Prof. Glenn Tinder" Background Paper #90:3.

Clouser subjects Tinder's arguments to close logical examination, finding Tinder's arguments disturbing. If coercion is always evil and God commands coercion, then God commands evil. And so, the discipline of God's Kingdom is also evil. The reign of God's Son will perpetuate that same evil. The suggestion by Tinder to declaim any place for States in eternity, raises a question about the meaning of the prophets, Isaiah in particular. What is God's reign if He does not occupy a throne?

What of non-violent forms of coercion and Jesus' teaching - "Do not resist one who is evil"? That admonition involves Jesus telling His disciples not to take actions which are properly those of the State. It is not wrong for the State to apprehend or punish a criminal. Tinder confuses the rightness or wrongness of an act with the rightness or wrongness of the motives of the person performing it. Punishment requires love and concern.

Is it right to put law on one hand and grace and truth on the other? This view is without scriptural foundation. In John 1:17 the force of the Greek is: *the law was given through Moses, but Jesus Christ created grace and truth*. The law is a gift of God's grace.

Clouser distinguishes the legal obligation to judge fairly from the moral obligation to what is loving. Doing what is fair and what is loving are two sorts of good, even if they are not identical. Both are strongly enjoined by scripture. Love cannot be fulfilled without doing justice. To neglect either is to fail in both.

## 1991

15. [Review](#) of John Cooper *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate*  
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1989 in *Westminster Theological Journal* Vol. 53, No. 1 Spring pp. 162-163

This review of a book by a Calvin Theological Seminary professor is complimentary - with some critical points. It presents the book as a nuanced approach, sorting through the results of scholastic theological research to find a viable resolution to an ancient philosophical problem. Clouser judges that there is a strong need for this book. The review is written as one academic's encouragement of another. It involves a prodigious task with enormous implications.

There are at least two types of dualism concerning human nature. Cooper agrees with many of the criticisms against the traditional Platonic, Augustinian, Cartesian "functional dualism". The solution is not to abandon every kind of dualism in favour of an "anthropological monism" but rather to conceptualise a "holistic dualism". How is this to be done? On the one hand, what is found to be objectionable in traditional anthropology is deleted while *retaining the sort of duality required by the scriptural teaching of individual survival between death and the resurrection*. Cooper claims that John Cobb, Richard Swinburne, Pope John Paul II and Herman Dooyeweerd represent different versions of "holistic dualism". Nevertheless, Clouser criticises Cooper's appropriation of an interpretation of Aristotle to illustrate "anthropological holism" (see No. 2).

Clouser addresses Cooper's criticism of the view that believers are resurrected immediately after death. This is the question of time-duration in relation to death and the resurrected life. Are the dead with God "outside time"? Clouser suggests that is the view of Barth, Bruce, Harris, Pannenberg, Küng and others. He says that Cooper finishes his book in an inconclusive way by defensively referring to Cobb and Swinburne to justify his assertion that "it is not just intellectual quackery".

16. ["Genesis and Science on the Origin of the Human Race"](#),  
*Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, 43:1,  
March, pp. 2-13

International Conference, Association for Calvinistic Philosophy, Zeist, The Netherlands, Aug. 1986: "Philosophical Anthropology"; and Conference of the Society of Christian Philosophers, Bethel College, Nov. 1987: "On the Origin of the Human Race"

In this contribution for the journal of the American Scientific Affiliation, Clouser discusses the relationship between science and religion and in particular between the book of Genesis and scientific enquiry concerned with the origin of the human race. In the concluding summary he explains his position in this way:

*I find, then, that many traditional understandings of the supposed conflict between Genesis and evolutionary theory have been seriously askew.*

After briefly introducing the essay by raising the problem of how Darwin's *The Origin of Species* has provoked both Jewish and Christian thinkers to

resolve the apparent conflicts between Genesis and science, Clouser moves on to discuss: **What is Religious Belief?** He does so by reference to a belief in who or what it is that holds Divine "office", and thereby distinguishes the status of divinity from the many incompatible beliefs about what reality (or realities) have that status.

The next section is concerned with answering **What is the Central Character of Scripture?** Clouser asserts that the central character of Scripture is that it reveals God's covenant with the human race. This is quite different from the fundamentalist approach to scripture which seeks via the encyclopaedic assumption to regard the Bible as the source for answers to any sort of questions we might have. No, says Clouser, Scripture is a religious book, and it is not a shortcut on scientific work. The discussion reconsiders **The Genesis Account**. Clouser outlines his view of the way Genesis 1 speaks of the days of creation, intentionally structured to reveal a teleological order with the stress upon everything being subject to God's control and purposes. And the account of the creation of humankind from the dust of the earth ("conveying the fact that part of human nature is that humans are made of the same stuff that the rest of the world is made of"), and of God taking Eve from Adam side and bringing her to him ("intended to teach that the woman shared the same human nature with the man" ... "men and women are proper mates for one another"). The biblical account does not focus upon the sorts of questions that a scientist would properly pose. Clouser next discusses the implications of this reading for how we define "human", a basic issue of the investigation of origins.

The various historical attempts to define human as rational animal, user of tools, maker of tools, user of language, the ability to do mathematics, homo sapiens, homo erectus, are briefly reviewed. What defines a human is being in the image of God. Being in the image of God means that one cannot avoid not only being related to what is non-dependent, as a creature subject to the Creator, but cannot avoid the divinity relation whereby one stands either in relation to the true God or a god-substitute. At this point Clouser refers back to his definition of religious belief. Clouser's subsequent discussion raises the non-equivalence of homo sapiens with "human beings". It is only when addressed by the covenantal revelation of God that God's Spirit is breathed into humankind, emphasizing that though Adam is addressed as the religious head in the covenant, both male and female are created in God's image, as Genesis 1 clearly says. "So God created 'adam in his image, in the image of God he created him, male and female He created 'adam."

There follows **Replies to Objections**, the first concerning the problem of the biblical account appearing to suggest that religious consciousness first appeared in a solitary individual or a pair of them. There is no necessary incompatibility between evolution of the species *homo sapiens*, the appearance of religious consciousness, and the biblical record. Adam as the *religious* head of the human race is the first human, first among all others, and this view contradicts an ancient theological view that Adam is the biological progenitor of all humans. In this rendering Adam and Eve are the parents of the human race in its covenant with the Almighty. A concluding comment relates to Jesus as the new head of the race, the One who perfectly kept the covenant on behalf of all the rest of fallen humanity.

There are two replies; one by [David F Siemens](#) and the other by [James E Nelson](#). A re-written version of this article was presented as a conference paper in June 2006 and is found at No. 37 "Genesis Regained: Creation not Creationism".

17. **The Myth of Religious Neutrality: An Essay on the Hidden Role of Religious Belief in Theories** Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press (Revised & Expanded edition, 2005 No.35).

Feb. 1986 Coalition for Christian Outreach: "Are Theories in Math Religiously Neutral?"

March 1992 University of Texas Austin, Philosophy Dept: "Belief in God and the Idea of Proof".

Oct. 1992 - Society for the Scientific Study of Religion Washington, DC: "Author Meets Critics".

Nov. 1992 The American Scientific Affiliation, two plenary addresses: "What Is Religious Belief?" and "A New Model for the Relation of Religious Belief to Theories", Nov. 1992.

Jan. 1993 Gordon College: "Why the Critique of Religious Neutrality is Not Self-Defeating".

June 1993 University of Mexico, DF, Institute for Logic and Ontology: "Why Religious Presuppositions Are Unavoidable in Theories" (four lectures).

March 1996 University of Leeds, The Centre for Science and Religion: "The Relation of Religious Belief to Metaphysics and Science"; Cheltenham University, UK: "Religious Belief and Theories"

Nov. 1998 Brock University St Catherines: "Religious Experience and Comparative Religion".

Oct. 2000 Messiah College, Templeton Seminar on Science and Religion: "The Relation of Biblical Idea of God to Theories".

1. *Introduction*

**I RELIGION**

2. *What is Religion?* 1. *The Problem*; 2. *A Resolution*; 3. *Replies to Objections*; 4. *Some Auxiliary Definitions*.

3. *Types of Religious Belief* 1. *The Basis for Typing Religions*; 2. *The Pagan Type*; 3. *The Pantheist Type*; 4. *The Biblical Type*.

**II THEORIES**

4. *What is a Theory?* 1. *Introduction* 2. *What is a Theory?*; 3. *Abstraction*; 4. *Aspects of Experience*; 5. *Types of Theories*; 6. *Criteria for Judging Theories*.

5. *Theories and religion: The Alternatives* 1. *Religious Irrationalism*; 2. *Religious Rationalism*; 3. *The Radically Biblical Position*; 4. *Religious Scholasticism*; 5. *The Conflict of These Alternatives*.

6. *The Idea of Religious Control* 1. *The Mistake of Fundamentalism*; 2. *Presupposition*.

**III A CASEBOOK**

7. *Theories in Mathematics* 1. *Introduction*; 2. *The Number-World Theory*; 3. *The Theory of JSMill*; 4. *The Theory of Russell*; 5. *The Theory of Dewey*; 6. *What Difference Do Such Theories Make?*; 7. *The Role of Religion in These Theories*.

8. *Theories in Physics* 1. *Some Misunderstandings to Avoid*; 2. *The Theory of Mach*; 3. *The Theory of Einstein*; 4. *The Theory of Heisenberg*; 5. *What Difference Do Such Theories Make?*; 6. *The Role of Religion in These Theories*.

9. *Theories in Psychology* 1. *Introduction*; 2. *The Theories of Watson, Thorndike and Skinner*; 3 *The Theories of Adler and Fromm*; 4. *Human Nature*.

**IV RADICALLY BIBLICAL THEORIES**

10. *The Need for a New Beginning* 1. *Introduction*; 2. *Retrospect*; 3. *The Religious*

*Critique of Reduction; 4. A Theoretical Critique of Reduction; 5 Conclusion.*

*11. A Biblical Theory of Reality 1. The Project of Biblical Theories; 2. Some Guiding Principles; 3. The Framework of Laws Theory; 4. The Natures of Things.*

*12 A Biblical Theory of Society 1. Introduction; 2. Fact versus Norm; 3. Individualism versus Collectivism; 4. Parts and Wholes; 5. Sphere Sovereignty.*

*13 A Biblical Theory of the State 1. Introduction; 2. The Nature of the State: What It Is; 3. The Nature of the State: What It Is Not; 4. Postscript.*

#### AFTERWORD

18. ["Victory in the Gulf?"](#) *Public Justice Report* 14:10  
September p. 6

A brief editorial piece on the end of the Gulf War and the celebrations taking place in the US. *What I find deeply disturbing is the way military victory is being equated with national pride and worth.* Such a sentiment serves to eclipse America's vision of a just society, its Constitutional and Bill of Rights guarantees. Is this shift indicative of a shift from trying to build a just society to being the biggest and the best? Is military supremacy to be America's *raison d'etre*? To equate national pride with military might is to be blind to history and is to already lose sight of the most valuable characteristic a nation could have - the goal of ever greater justice for all citizens.

19. [“Faith Tectonics”](#) *Ellipses* Spring pp. 77-80.

*Ellipses* is a publication of Rutgers University.

This, like other of Clouser's articles, is a reformulation of the basic philosophical thesis he has set forth in [The Myth of Religious Neutrality](#) (1991 No. 17, 2005 No. 35). It is written with an awareness of the needs of younger readers for shorter treatises. It is framed with an appreciation for the way in which the teaching of philosophy had in many places made the teaching of the rules of logical inference an optional part of philosophical training. Previously, such training was viewed as philosophy's essential core. The article is an example of an argument rigorously argued, but it is not onerous.

The majority view of our time that most of life is religiously neutral is completely false. Religion is usually assumed to be that which a person has experienced and it is also the case that it is widely supposed that the similarities between religious traditions can be identified by comparing their most obvious and outstanding features. Clouser notes that the correct definition has in fact been rediscovered over and over again, and it is a discovery that is by no means confined to thinkers of any one religious or ideological tradition. Clouser suggests that instead of looking for a common characteristic among what are incommensurable holders of divinity (Yahweh, Mana, Kami, Tao, Nothingness), the commonality can be found in the idea of what it means to be divine. What status does Divinity actually hold? The answer is that while there are many ideas of exactly what sort of reality (or realities) has divinity, all religions agree that the divine status consists of having unconditional, non-dependent reality. The Divine is what all else depends upon.

Thus the Divine is simply believed to "be there". This does not necessarily mean a "supreme being", nor even that the divine inspires worship. Religious belief as belief in something or other as divine does not have to be conscious or fervent. Clouser carefully avoids the implication that the argument justifies to a dogmatic assertion about the religiosity of a person or people for whom divinity beliefs are not fervent or conscious.

A second way of confirming the position outlined here is found within science and philosophy. No theory can fail to be regulated by some divinity belief functioning as its presupposition. Rather than being inherently opposed to religion, science gives further expression to the religious characteristic that is inherent in the human condition. This would also tend to suggest that the attempt to keep science and religion separate is itself dependent upon an alternative religious position, that cloaks its own non-dependency belief as integral to human life and experience.

In conclusion, Clouser specifies some far-reaching consequences for public education. The pluralistic diversity in public education has religious roots, even as its policies and attitudes puts religious belief off-limits. Clouser's argument follows the logical path of defining a key term, discussing its impact upon the philosophy of science in a general way and suggesting how public education can be creatively interpreted from a philosophy-of-religion standpoint.

20. ["Interest Groups Dominate Congress"](#) *Public Justice Report* Vol 16, No. 5 Sept-Oct pp. 6-7.

What has the nation's long-term common good got to do with the legislative work of the Congress? Well, says Clouser, the nation's common good fades into the background because of the incoherence and lack of direction of the country's leaders. Clouser notes that interest groups dominate policy-making and eclipse public justice in the halls of political power. His solution is to make lobbying illegal. He gives three reasons for this. 1. The first is to consider congress as a court and those involved like the witnesses and jury in a trial. The jurors must apply the law and there is no room for lobbying. Why do we allow the lobbying of legislators? 2. The second concerns the integrity of the election process; why should lobby groups be allowed to subvert the will of voters at election time? Candidates are elected on the basis of a policy platform; why go through the election if they can then make private deals beyond public scrutiny? 3. The banning of lobbyists would not only be just, it would allow Government to appear more just.

Interest groups should have opportunity in Committee to give testimony before the assembled Congress, but that should be open and public, enhancing the transparency of governance. Though seriously put and not an idealist, Clouser concedes that such a proposal seems 'far out' at this point in the history of America's democracy.

21. ["Social Norms and Religious Belief"](#) Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Raleigh, NC, Nov 8-10

March 1996 University of London, Kings College graduate colloquium: "Values, Value-Norms, and Religious Belief".

2002 An edited version was launched on "All of Life Redeemed" site.

The paper is about how social norms relate to religious belief and in a general way addresses sociology and the sociology of religion from Clouser's philosophical standpoint. The point on which Clouser's argument turns is found at the beginning of part IV. **Can Pragmatism Replace Religious Commitment?**

*The typical American philosophical reaction to talk about the connection of religious commitments to values and norms - rights in particular - is to say we don't have to worry about such issues as: what is divine? what is the nature of reality? what is the basic nature of humans? what is the nature of society? We needn't be concerned at all as to which views of such matters are true or false, real or fictional. After all, we can have whatever we want (or need) on purely pragmatic grounds ... .*

This characterises the background resistance to genuine philosophical theorising against which Clouser has developed his own theorising. The article is divided into four.

**I. What is Religious Belief?** Some or other religious belief invariably controls and regulates any and every theory of any and every social norm. But then what counts as a religious belief? Clouser finds that religious belief is a belief in that which is unconditional and nondependent while all else is in a relationship of dependence upon it. The divine is believed to be that which is "just there". But then, that means that one religion - say of the traditional Theist sort - can no longer function as the standard "type" by which religion can be identified.

There are religious beliefs that have no accompanying worship, or ethics, or doctrine of life after death but it is still valid to identify such beliefs as religious in that they pertain to what is divine and the relationship of the divine to all that is not divine. Religious beliefs within science are often masked (by appeals to Reason) but still imply that proper respect for such (presumed nondependent) "realities" is necessary for a thinker's proper standing in relation to the demands of scientific reflection. Such beliefs are (usually) rationally justified in theories but in a religious context are said to be accepted on faith.

**II. Are There (Real) Social Norms?** defends a view that the "oughts of life" are parts of what "is". Unlike the laws that govern maths and physics, norms can be broken because norms allow for disobedience. And a norm has to do with the promotion of some or other value. Humans are free to be uneconomic; they cannot be non-economic. We are free to develop unhealthy lifestyles; we are not free to develop a lifestyle which has no health implications. But just because we can act a-normatively, by ways that might deny that we are bound by norms, does not mean that our actions can ever be non-normative. Sociology is impossible as a purely descriptive exercise that deletes norms and value. Clouser also explains that in rejecting subjectivism he is not retreating into a traditionalistic objectivism. The argument is complex not least because of the compact attempt to link the discussion of "values" with "norms".

**III. How Does Religious Belief Control Theories,** illustrates the control of religious belief over theories by examining the nature and source of authority in society. This is the question of "By what authority?" and relates to the value of justice. Hobbes is Clouser's exemplar in this case. Humans are basically physical with the resultant theory of State primacy - might is right; what the ruler decrees is right - is evidence of Hobbes' presupposed materialism with respect to values and his denial of justicial rights follows from his positivism. What we are left with is a political order in which physical force rules because political order *is* simply a form of physical order, the result of nothing more than a contract driven by fear of the competition of "all against all". Such an interpretation of justice identified it with rationality, on the one hand, and emotion, on the other. Marx's reliance on economic value as the source of authority and Rousseau's on the general will take some facet or faculty of humans and proclaim it to be the proper ruling function of social life. A theory of justice presupposes some view of society and human nature; all views of society presuppose a general view of the nature of reality.

**IV. Can Pragmatism Replace Religious Commitment?** Clouser's argument is directed at the reigning philosophical pragmatism. What is pragmatism? Well in theory-of-knowledge (epistemology) terms it is the claim that: A sentence S is true IFF (i.e. if and only if) S works better for me. That is, it helps me live my life. Pragmatism is merely a way to end the difficult impasse that arises because of conflicting theories about the nature of reality. But having a desirable effect is no ground for beliefs. The law of non-contradiction still holds for what people naturally believe; that it "works" in our lives doesn't depend on our ability to articulate it. If something is not true it is false. Clouser notes the limited use of pragmatism as a strategy when there is nothing better to go on, but even here, as a stop-gap measure, we use it to deal with a difficulty **when we don't really know the truth**. But it is of no value as a substitute for truth, even if taken to be so. As a philosophical strategy, as a guide for daily-life, pragmatism just does not work.

## 1995

22. ["The Uniqueness of Dooyeweerd's Program for Philosophy and Science: Whence the Difference?"](#) in Sander Griffioen and Bert Balk eds [Christian Philosophy at the Close of the 20th Century](#) Kampen: Kok pp. 113-125.

Clouser explains the distinctiveness of Dooyeweerd's philosophical innovation. He does so not just by identifying the central facets of Dooyeweerd's contribution, but by an explanation of what is demanded of philosophy if it is going to make good its claims to be scripturally-directed. Dooyeweerd not only discussed an "inner reformation" of philosophy, but rejected the **strategy** by which every previous ontology had been constructed. Clouser explains that this meant an in-principle rejection of "reduction theory" in both its stronger and weaker forms. It is the weaker form of this strategy that has won many Christian adherents who saw no problem with theories that understand vast tracts of what is given in human experience as the product of one or two aspects of creation, so long as these aspects were said, in turn, to depend on God. In Dooyeweerd's philosophical work there is a concerted effort to reject the notion of substance and to develop concepts that were at root non-reductionist. The roots of this view are found in Calvin and Kuyper. Dooyeweerd followed Kuyper believing that all of creation exists in utter dependence upon the Creator. This is taught by the Scriptures. On that ground, Clouser's interpretation of the uniqueness of Dooyeweerd's philosophy stands or falls.

**The Hermeneutical Issue and the Nature of God** explores the question as to whether it is valid to suggest that the Scriptures teach that there is either God or what God has created. The discussion explores the question as to whether the definition of the divine as the non-dependent is in fact consonant with biblical teaching. He touches on the AAA (Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas) view of God's nature in which God is defined as the being with all and only perfections. These perfections are thus assumed to be part of God's nature and are uncreated and not within God's own control. Conversely, Dooyeweerd's appealed to God's sovereignty over all creation by which "God's perfections", His Divine attributes, are also creatures, God's creation, the cloak by which He draws near to the creature He specially made in His image. This is explored further in **The Cappadocian and Calvinist View of the Nature of God**. It is the view of the Cappadocians and Calvin which is basic to Dooyeweerd's philosophy. Thereafter, **A Comparison of the Two Views of God's Nature** is presented, in the form of a series of philosophical questions that challenge the validity of Clouser's argument. Ascribing to Yahweh the perfections of Plato's thought forms, makes of God a single abstract perfection, completely incompatible with the teaching of Scripture. The Almighty freely binds himself to His covenantal promises. God created wisdom (Prov 8) and it suggests that God is not identical with any of His perfections. Clouser raises some objections to the Cappadocian/Calvinist view of God's nature. The Christian view is that "God has taken humanity into himself", through God's accommodation of Himself to humans. Could God change? God's promise is to remain faithful. Doesn't this view imply that 2+2 might equal 7 if God wanted it that way or that there could be 4 sided triangles? To say that the laws of creatures and creation don't apply to God is not to say that God violates them. Many speculative questions assume that God is subject to the laws which He has created. Clouser considers the questions as to whether a non-reductionist program for theories could derive from the

theory that God created the world in accordance with eternal ideas in his mind.

In **Conclusion**, the Cappadocian/ Calvinist view of God's nature is expounded. Reduction is ruled out; there is no reason for ascribing hyperbole to scripture where it says that God is the creator of all things such that all our knowledge and all truth depend on Him. Because all properties and laws have been brought into existence *ex nihilo* by God, reductionism cannot be a valid strategy. It is a theory that suggests that an aspect of creation is basic to all other aspects. Suggesting that one or two aspects can be regarded as basic if we then say they depend on God, simply makes the content of these theories religiously neutral which they are not.

When God's nature is viewed as all and only perfections, reduction is required and hence the scriptural teaching needs to be construed as other than its *prima facie* meaning. In that way knowledge of the "natural realm" could be assumed to be the same for everyone. Revelation then supplements, rather than corrects, the deliverances of "natural reason". That is how Clouser ends his article. The argument has explained the difference Dooyeweerd's philosophy makes for a non-reductionistic approach to the natural sciences.

23. ["On the General Relation of Religion, Metaphysics, and Science"](#) Chapter 3 of J. M. Van der Meer ed [Facets of Faith and Science](#) Vol II, Lanham: University Press of America pp. 57-80.

This chapter is an expansion of the material in No. 6 "Four Options in the Philosophy of Religion" which is an excerpt from No. 5. It develops Clouser's attempt to give an overview of all the specific ways in which religion, metaphysics and science do, or could, relate. This updates the discussion of No. 6 and this is seen in the section **The Three Most Popular Answers**. The first is the **rationalist** position. This view assumes that rational principles are neutral with regard to every subject matter and are common to all people. The second view is the **scholastic** standpoint, which arise after Christianity introduced a rival to reason: faith. Jewish, Christian and Muslim thinkers came to the view that though all humans have reasons, only the faithful have the gift of faith. The specific **scholastic** approach views reason as access to nature and faith as access to supernature. Any theory that is not incompatible with religious doctrine is acceptable. Faith guides theories in an external way, and scholasticism asserts (in theory which then also sounds like an affirmation of faith) that their must be harmony between the two forms of knowledge. This view is unstable and has produced many ongoing and unresolvable debates.

A third view Clouser terms **Religious Irrationalism** or **Insulationism**, is related to Galileo's view of the bible which "tells us how to go to heaven not how the heavens go", and was philosophically developed by Kant (Schleiermacher and Kierkegaard) on the assumption that religious belief pertains to an area of knowledge which is completely different from that occupied by science and philosophy.

Clouser believes all three views to be inadequate, and does so by comparison with a fourth view that was held by John Calvin and subsequently by Abraham Kuyper and Herman Dooyeweerd. Theory-making relates to religious belief by depending upon its regulation of its formulation of concepts. And since belief in God impinges on every sort of subject matter, knowledge of God is crucial to true knowledge also in theory-making.

There are two steps to the argument that theories cannot avoid the control of religious belief. The first step concerns the inevitable assumption about how the various domains of science relate to one another. The second step should not be confused with the first step; it involves the elaboration and defense of any metaphysical theory by appeal to its belief in that which is metaphysically nondependent.

**More About Religious Belief** explains Clouser's definition of religious belief as a belief in something as divine, and that the essential feature of divinity is that of being *utterly nondependent*: something is believed to be divine provided it is accorded the status of metaphysical nondependence; a belief is religious if and only if it holds something or other to be divine, or is a belief about how to stand in proper relation to the divine.

Objections to this definition and its subsequent impact upon theories are considered and the section concludes with an explanation of why atheists who do not believe in God or gods, nevertheless cannot avoid religious belief of

some sort. Atheism, says Clouser, is something akin to vegetarianism, in the following sense: claiming to be a vegetarian tells you what a person does not eat, but does not tell you what they do. Likewise, atheism tells us that the person does not believe in any God or gods but it no more precludes religious belief than vegetarianism implies total abstinence from all foods.

#### **How Does the Religious Belief Within Metaphysics Affect Science?**

describes the process of metaphysical theorising. It is not just the external harmonisation process, as in scholasticism, nor is it merely logical consistency between individual propositions of faith and theories judged for their piecemeal impact. The key to disclosing the relation between religious belief and (metaphysical) theory is found in the doctrine that nothing whatever has non-dependent existence but God. The discussion then proceeds to look at the various reductionist possibilities (strategies?) and why they fail. These are outlined in footnote 23 (1) Strong reduction: (a) meaning replacement; (b) factual identity; (2) Weak Reduction (a) Causal Dependency; (b) Epiphenomenalism. [see also No. 2007 40]. Reductionist metaphysics locates the locus of dependence in a non-dependence ascribed to some aspect (kinds of properties and laws) derived from the creation.

Clouser is not saying that theories in science are always **consciously** derived from, or controlled by, a metaphysical theory, nor is he suggesting anything less than the biblical claim that belief in God impinges on **all** truth. It is the core belief of any metaphysical theory - an account of how the various kinds of properties and laws are maintained in their coherence with each other - which will indicate whether the theory presupposes a reductionist or non-reductionist metaphysics. Clouser explores the basic differences between Einstein's (physicalism), Mach's (sensualism) and Heisenberg's Pythagorean appeal to physical energy formed by eternal mathematical laws. The Christian appeal to atoms is not ruled out; what is ruled out is a reductionist explanation of the law-order that pertains between the aspect under consideration and the other aspects of reality.

In conclusion the article examines **Two Objections**. The first would suggest that a theory that holds that creatures are essentially physical might assume that physical reality is also created by God. Historically, Clouser suggests, such a view has its roots in a pagan view of reality. He then goes on to argue that a metaphysics which ascribes priority to one or two of the aspects of creation - even with the proviso that such aspects depend on God - will result in a theory in which belief in God makes no difference at all. It is simply a "fifth wheel" since the content of the theory is identical for the believer and the non-believer. Making God an "asylum for ignorance" brings God into the theory as merely a suggested resolution of a problem that the theory itself cannot explain anyway. Having and believing the knowledge of the true God makes a difference upon all truth and knowledge, not just outside the scientific arena.

In commenting upon the current debate between Plantinga and McMullen, Clouser proposes a *tertium quid*. Yes, says Clouser, belief in God does make a difference, and McMullen is not wrong with his suggestion that the difference is not about making God a constitutive part of scientific explanations. A non-reductionist metaphysics, brilliantly elaborated by Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977), is then articulated in brief outline in answer to the second objection Clouser anticipates: how is it possible for any special science or investigation to regard all the kinds of properties and laws found within creation as equally real? Does not society depend upon thinking beings and do not thinking beings depend upon physical things? Dooyeweerd's metaphysical account of the

orderliness of creation gives a basis for a non-reductionist scientific appraisal of all aspects of creation. The purposes of giving a scientific enumeration of the diverse aspects of reality is not to allow reduction to go ahead unhindered but rather to show how all the things, actions, structures and events of creaturely life can indeed be subject to a truly and genuinely non-reductionistic scientific investigation.

24. ["A Sketch of Dooyeweerd's Philosophy of Science"](#)  
Chapter 4 of J. M. Van der Meer ed. Facets of Faith and Science Vol II Lanham: University Press of America, pp. 81-98.

This is a continuation of the material presented in No. 23, Chapter 3 of the same book. Clouser explains that where Dooyeweerd refers to "aspects" (or modal aspects) of the divinely given law-order for creation, he will use the term "kinds of properties and laws." It is by reference to these aspects that the fields of the special sciences are delineated.

**A Non-reductionist Metaphysics: Continued** discusses how all special sciences, though focusing upon one aspect, are yet focusing upon one aspect of a totality - all things function in all aspects. This view contradicts the vast majority of metaphysical theories that purport to show that pretheoretical experience is misleading since the basic nature of reality is determined by one or two aspects. So, reductionism comes into a metaphysical theory's picture by enthroning selected aspects as non-dependent basic realities from which all other aspects derives their reality.

Dooyeweerd's theoretical programme involves the systematic elimination of all reductionism. But that raises a question about the assumption that all things function equally in all aspects of reality. Does it make sense to say that rocks have biological properties? The discussion looks at how rocks, plants and animals function actively and passively subject to the law-order that governs all of reality.

**Qualifying Functions and the Natures of Things**, Dooyeweerd's general theory of (the) aspectual order of the modal law spheres is supported, says Clouser, by the way ideas and concepts in the higher aspects presuppose those in the lower ones. The order thus outlined, provides a means by which "things" can be classified and the different ways of aspectual active functioning can serve as a non-reductionist account of the natures of things. Theory-making cannot avoid appealing to a description of how reality is given to us and in that respect the multi-aspectual reality of creation must also be experienced from the pretheoretical viewpoint. The discussion of *type laws* brings with it the identification of *qualifying functions* which as the highest active functions serve to qualify the ordering which governs the internal organization of a thing. All aspects exist in mutual correlation and this undermines the classic concept of substance, in which one or two abstracted aspects are assumed to be the nondependent cause of all the others.

**Analogical Concepts** continues Clouser's exposition of Dooyeweerd's systematics. The discussion is about how the theoretical *isolation* of aspects from one another is impossible since they are unbreakably bound together in ways that guarantee their ongoing meaning. Their "nuclear meanings" are indefinable - we must know about them from our experience in order to be able to have some **idea** of what we are talking about. They are distinguished by contrasting them to one another, and as a result any one aspect cannot be

conceived apart from the rest. Dooyeweerd's philosophy is built upon an emphasis of all aspects being equally real and mutually irreducible, unbreakably intertwined, holding true for all concrete things, events and relations which we encounter in (pre-theoretical) experience. From this basis, a frame of reference is developed to explore the complex interweaving of all modal aspects (laws and properties) with each other - e.g. with the way spatial "reappears" analogically in all the other aspects is discussed. A non-reductionist metaphysics can explore the kinds of mis-conceptualisation and wrongly posited ideas that emerge under the impact of reductionist metaphysics. Dooyeweerd's exposition of anticipations and retrocipations is then stated briefly.

**Antinomies and the Critique of Theoretical Thought** explores Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique, in terms of how theory-making is possible, what concepts are and how they are formed. The transcendental critique is expounded, as Clouser has done previously (No. 8) will do in later papers (Nos. 25, 27, 34, 43, 44), as a thought experiment designed to explore theoretical thought's own structure and possibility.

**Enkaptic Relations** expounds how things can combine to form a larger whole by the subsuming of other wholes that do not then become parts. On the reductionist strategy there seems to have been a "before Renaissance" view - where the whole seems to have determined the parts - and a "post Renaissance" view - where the parts determine the whole. Clouser has already explained the occurrence of modern "-isms" in philosophy and proceeds to discuss the ancient view of Aristotle.

Finally, **Ground Motives** explores Dooyeweerd's view of religious ground motives as basic culturally ensconced notions of divinity, driving cultural development. The ancient Greeks had two divine (non-dependency) principles: Form and Matter. Modern times has given us Nature and Freedom although, says Clouser, thinkers tend to take one or other of these principles and work exclusively from it. The Christian ground-motive - Creation, fall, redemption and fellowship with God through His Spirit - is centred on the difference between creator and creature and should drive cultural development and theories.

## 1997

25. ["A Critique of Historicism"](#) Critica: revista Hispanoamericana de Filosofía Vol. VVIX. No. 85. Mexico abril pp. 41-63

March 2004 University of the Free State (Bloemfontein, S. Africa), Symposium on Post-Modern Thought: "A Critique of Historicism and Post-Modern Thought".

June 2000 International Symposium on the work of Lesslie Newbigin (with Newbigin), Leeds: "Historicism, Pragmatism, and Christian Truth"

Republished in D F M Strauss and E M Botting (eds) **Contemporary Reflections on the Philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd** Ancaster: Dooyeweerd Centre 2000. This is actually the revised version of the article that is available from All of Life Redeemed site.

There is a tendency among Anglo-American philosophers to import so-called "continental" perspectives into their presentation of philosophical argument. In the background to this piece is Clouser's own "continental philosopher", Herman Dooyeweerd (see in particular ftns 1, 7, 8 (for the 1997 version) and 2, 8 for the 2000 version). The pragmatist Rorty, who has appropriated the pragmatic tradition since Dewey, seeks to forge a link with the theory of historicism (in its many and varied forms). This article illustrates the value of the critical method Clouser developed in *Myth* ("Criteria for Judging Theories" 1991 No. 17, pp. 68-73 and 2005 No. 35, pp. 82-87 see this article ftn 6 [both versions]). He explains that his critical method involves the application of three criteria to evaluate theories.

- The first, examines whether a theory is compatible with the claims it sets forward. A theory is "self referentially incoherent" if it makes a claim that is incompatible with itself. The strong sense of **self-referential incoherence** is evident when a statement claims for itself an exception to the rule it asserts ("Nothing can be said of the Tao"). The weak sense doesn't involve its own falsehood, but can never be demonstrated ("Every belief is the product of one's unconscious needs").
- The second examines whether a theory is consistent (or compatible) with the beliefs that must be held in order that the theory be true. When there is inconsistency the theory is "self-assumptively incoherent". Theories which deny that the world we experience has a plurality of kinds of properties must assume that it has in order to make such a claim. The claim itself is physical (scratches on parchment or vibrations on a throat), sensory (it is seen or heard), has a linguistic meaning and is believed to be true rather than false. Denying it has such properties is, in effect, to launch an exocet in the direction of one's own argument, to engage in self-destruction. Theories which deny that the world we experience is constituted with a plurality of properties and laws are invariably self-assumptively incoherent because materialist philosophy, as an example, has not been able to prove that argument *per se* or language *per se*, which is needed to set forth the materialist hypothesis, are purely physical.
- The third examines whether a theory and its content is consistent with its "means of production", and if it is not it is

"self-performatively incoherent". In other words a theory cannot be true if it is incompatible with the conditions that are necessary for theory's own production. ("There is no thing as language"; "I do not exist").

Clouser subjects the theories of historicism and pragmatism ("perspectival theories" according to Myth) to analysis. The essay begins by discussing two senses in which the term "history" is used. One is as synonym for the totality of things or "the universe". The other concerns what historians study, that is, the significant events and conditions, causes and effects of cultural development. Clouser explores how historicism emerged as the theory claiming that history is the sole interpretative standpoint from which history - in the all-encompassing sense of the term - is to be understood. It assumes that the human power-to-control creates all concepts of the natural and social worlds, the sciences, the arts and religious beliefs. Theories and epistemological hypotheses are mere artefacts devised to interpret all experience and knowledge and thus maintain human freedom.

Clouser critically examines historicism as an epistemological theory. This is the main focus of this article, rather than Historicism as a world-view hypothesis about reality per se (ontology/ cosmology). Human cultural activity is assumed to produce its objects - in the way that Kant's categories provided the framework of pure reason within which science can be practised without reducing human freedom to control by nature, or by subjecting personality to scientific dominance. There is a tension in historicism between its trivial application that all knowledge arises in a cultural context and the radical implications of its epistemological view that knowledge is merely a cultural artefact.

How is the historicist viewpoint to be distinguished from all non-historical viewpoints. There are rivals for interpreting experience and knowledge and two major strategies have developed for justifying an epistemology, a choice presented (historically it would seem!) to those defending a historicist epistemology. The first is to say that there are no rivals and that all alternatives were merely deficient forms of the epistemology that has recently come to light in its fullest extent - this is the strategy captured by Dilthey's claim that "the historical world-view has broken the last chain not yet broken by philosophy and natural science." In other words, it establishes itself by dogmatic fiat that all approaches that could rival it have done so without breaking the chain of causality and allowing human emancipation. Or else, they are perspectives that are dependent upon history itself.

Clouser asks: How can anything have a history if everything is history? The initial form of epistemological argument for historicism does not appear plausible. The second form will have to argue that the other kinds of knowledge do exist and depend entirely on the historical kind of knowledge while there is no dependence of historical knowledge upon them. Here Clouser re-applies his thought experiment. What is meant by the independence of historical thought? Independent of what? Clouser suggests that all references to non-historical characteristics be stripped from the concept of historical process - when that is done there is nothing left, nothing at all. The historical process and historical knowledge is simply unthinkable apart from other kinds of knowledge. The historicist is found to be the guardian of a theory that, on the one hand, believes in the "continuity of the creative force" and, on the other hand, that all beliefs are culturally conditioned. To hold these together, the theory must subject the latter to the former and, in order to justify its claim, historicism must appeal to non-historical kinds of knowledge that, it says, do

not correspond to the reality which historical consciousness finally brings to light. On Clouser's three criteria it is incoherent and fails as an epistemology.

Clouser's comprehensive review of the incoherence of the theory of historicism prepares the ground for his examination of Richard Rorty's accommodation of historicist insights in order to maintain a pragmatist overcoming of what has been wrong with philosophy and science from their inception. Rorty's "non-correspondence theory truth" relies instead upon usefulness. Humans have to cope and the pragmatist fearlessly faces this fact in his philosophy. He adds to this what he calls the "ubiquity of language" and following Gadamer, Sellers and Peirce says we experience and know only what language makes possible. Clouser sees Rorty appending a new addition to his pragmatism taking the form of a hypothetical syllogism about language.

- If all we ever experience and know is determined by language  
and
- if language itself is our own creation
- then all we ever experience and know is our own creation.

At this point Clouser pulls the argument apart and shows that Rorty's "ubiquity of language" that "language goes all the way down" is false. The survey of the contours of Rorty's pragmatic incorporation of historicist insights concludes with the suggestion that not only has Rorty failed to rescue historicism from its own incoherencies, but he has compounded the difficulties of historicism's central claims.

## 26. ["Remembering Hiroshima and Nagasaki"](#) *Capital Commentary* August 18

This piece, written on the occasion of the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that brought an end to World War Two, is also an exposition of "Just War" principles. Just war is one fought in self-defense. The New Testament says explicitly that Government has the authority and such authority to use force not only includes punishment of evil doers but also protection from foreign invasion. But the Just War principles specify that the killing of unarmed combatants in war is murder not war. This is a principle that was still upheld until September 1, 1939 when Poland was invaded at the command of Hitler and since then all parties have adopted the same tactic that involved attacks on unarmed combatants *without so much as a blink of hesitation*. And so the protection of one side's unarmed civilian population - the other army's primary target - has become the task of a nation's armed forces,

Clouser moves on to discuss the development and use of atomic weaponry in the context of the view that "... abandoning the rule that exempted civilians from deliberate attack represented a grave injustice from which the world needs to recover." The attempt could instead have been made to persuade Japan's scientists and military leaders by demonstration of the incredible destructive power of the atomic bombs. Clouser concludes with a prayer that the Just War tradition be rediscovered, that Christians will work for the destruction and repudiation of atomic weapons and for the just use of non-atomic weapons. Will the development of so-called "smart weapons" coincide with a world-wide revival of the rule that armies at war only engage military targets?

27. **Knowing with the Heart: Religious Experience and Belief in God.** Downers Grove, IVP.

March 2002 University of Vera Cruz: "The Epistemology of Belief in God" (7 lectures).  
Revised edition see No. 39 below.

This is Clouser's creative attempt at a philosophical "dialogue" in which the inquiring and somewhat disbelieving student cross-examines the teacher of philosophy. The aim is to identify the kinds of assumptions that lie behind this exposition about religious experience and belief in God. The student is prone to disbelief but willing to engage in genuine philosophical and scientific debate. The book takes its name from the famous comments of Pascal (1623-1662): "The heart has its reasons the mind will never know."

**Introduction:** Clouser casts doubt over the nostrum that religious faith is blind, a mere leap in the dark. Religious belief can, under the right circumstances, be a self-evident belief which enjoys the same kind of justification which our most certain beliefs have.

**1. What is Religious Experience?** Religious belief is one that is acquired and justified by experience. It is a belief in anything as divine where "divine" means the self-existent origin of everything else, or a belief about how to stand in proper relation to the divine. Religious experience is any experience that generates, or confirms a religious belief. This chapter is a dialogue which discusses the key issue raised in his other publications, the character of divinity - whatever is unconditionally, non-dependently real. Materialism as a religious belief is discussed (pp. 24-26), as well as the part played by religious beliefs in theories.

**2. Types of Religious Belief and Experience** The major types of religious belief are distinguished: 1. biblically-directed religious belief to the Creator - theistic; 2. pagan in which the divine is part of the world - form/matter; 3. pantheist in which the divine is the only reality. The classification of religious experience is also covered (William James).

**3. Self-Evident Knowledge** This is in the form of an essay which provides the basis for subsequent discussion in Chapter 4. Discussion takes off on the nature of proof and logical inference. This is followed by discussion of the experience of self-evidency (pp. 71-74) and some theories about self-evidency (pp. 74-87).

**4. Belief in God & the Axiom of Equals** Clouser's exposition is in the line of a long tradition of thinkers who have considered attempts to prove God's reality to be a fundamentally misguided project because it differs so widely from the biblical teaching about how we come to know God. It is discussed in terms that are similar to the intuitive self-evidency of mathematical axioms "Things equal to the same thing are equal to each other". There is also the question of feelings that accompany one's belief in God.

**5. Objections to Belief in God** The student's objections are stated in forceful terms and an answer given. It's not a matter of belief on the say-so of others. Genesis and the scientific question of physical and other "natural" origins are covered. Adam and eve, the fall into sin, what science says and how scientific results cannot be in contravention of the scriptural teaching with its religious focus. God's aseity.

6. **Some Loose Ends** Objections that argue that belief in God conflicts with other self-evident beliefs all seem to fail. Questions cover the reliability of evidence and reports, why some drift from belief. Clouser's "thought experiment" shows why the idea that some particular kind of properties and laws is independent doesn't make any sense at all. We can't conceive of any X apart from non-X properties. Avoiding the divinizing of any aspect of this world is a good way to begin to avoid tyrannizing people.

28. ["Is God Eternal?"](#) in A G Sienra ed The Rationality of Theism Amsterdam/Atlanta: Rodopi Publishers, pp. 273-299

April 1985 The American Academy of Religion & March 1986 The Society of Christian Philosophers: "Is God Eternal?"

In Clouser's own terms this is an inadequate and brief sketch of the problems he discerns within prevailing theological views that argue that God's attributes exist necessarily. He argues against such "necessity" by taking the view of the Cappadocian Fathers and the leading reformational thinkers that God has created the attributes by which he relates to His creation. It is a piece that responds to a 1975 article of Nicholas Wolterstorff, "God Everlasting", and argues that Wolterstorff's argument rests on a suppressed premise about "property homogeneity" and on two assumptions that may be denied without incoherence by those who argue within the "God eternal tradition".

The two assumptions are:

- any properties that are part of God's nature must be essential to Him;
- the only way to deny a property to be true of something entails that the something possesses the complement of that property.

These two assumptions seem to be the basis for the view Clouser opposes, and he does so by following the lead of the Cappadocians, Luther, Calvin and Karl Barth who believed God to have temporal properties and relations which are really a part of God's revealed nature but are not essential to His existence. The material covered in this piece is covered in other places where Clouser discusses the Cappadocians and God's *aseity*. In **Is There Biblical Warrant for God's Eternality?** he first canvasses some biblical texts: Genesis 8:22, Psalm 119:89-91, Jeremiah 33:25 and Romans 8 which all refer to laws as God's creatures; I Corinthians 15:24-28 and Colossians 1:15-17 make clear that everything other than God Himself is creation, and "all" covers everything in God's creation "whether visible or invisible" when this phrase is used in II Corinthians 4:18 and Ephesians 1:21-23.

A supplementary section **More Scripture Texts About Time** covers Romans 16:25, Ephesians 1:4, Revelation 10:6, which all give *prima facie* warrant to the view that God transcends time which, as creature, depends upon Him as a feature of His creation. Then Wolterstorff's three arguments are considered, which have already been summarised above. Clouser quotes Luther and Barth.

There follows a discussion of **Compatibilism**. The question that is addressed here is: **Did God create his own revealed nature?** Clouser answers this with seven statements:

*God truly has the attributes He has revealed, but He does not have to have them.*

*To ask how God takes on attributes is the same as asking how He creates; Luther and Calvin warned against trying to investigate God's divinity.*

*Scripture speaks of God and God's relation to us in every-day language.*

*God remains free with respect to the properties He wishes to bear toward us, but also with respect to His manner of possessing them.*

*Prior to creating, God wasn't creator.*

*"... the Divine took our humanity into Himself" (Athanasian creed).*

*God's wisdom is described in Proverbs 8:22-31 in a way that is consonant with the view being put forward here.*

**In Replies to Objections, Clouser explores likely criticisms:**

*If God is essentially nontemporal, He can't take on temporal properties - the Cappadocian view is that God's uncreated being is "entirely free of properties. Does the logical law of excluded middle apply to God? <if p is not true of God then not-p is true of God>. Clouser turns this around and asks whether God created and transcends the laws of logic, which he answers in the affirmative.*

*The view asserts there are two natures of God, and amounts to suggesting there are two different Gods - if a piece of wood can take on the colour blue inessentially, why can't God take on personality, trinity, and the whole person of Jesus inessentially without generating contradictions?*

*It makes no sense to say God created the laws of logic and other necessary truths. This means that if God is not subject to the laws of logic then God can violate these laws. Once again, Clouser appeals to the Cappadocian assertion that the being of God is entirely free of qualities to find the genuine *tertium quid* between the false options that arise from this view.*

Why, asks Clouser, should we think it is impossible for there to be a reality which is inconceivable by us - that what our net can't catch isn't fish. The value of the Cappadocian and Reformational view is that it leaves us free to think about God in so far as he has made Himself known to us, and it implies that God has freely made Himself known. The promise of the Gospel is that God indeed has revealed Himself as One who keeps His promises.

## 29. ["Taking Aim at Gun Control"](#) *Capital Commentary* July 5

Government has a public safety role to play in its task of upholding public justice? It inspects roads, bridges, aeroplanes, food and medicines. What about firearms? This is a discussion of a sensitive point for the American national psyché. The US Constitution may not ban gun ownership altogether, but just as an alcoholic will not be given a driving license, so also a criminal or insane person will not be given a gun license. Background checks for gun owners are simply not enough. There is a need for proper instruction and testing in the safe use, handling and storage of firearms. The regulation of firearm ownership is not just aimed at the gun owner but at the accidental use due to ignorance that can cause tragedies. The article advocates a reform of firearm education, and says there is a task for the government in ensuring the testing of applicants for gun ownership. The education need not be the task of Government bodies - the National Rifle Association could be the body that gives instruction in gun use, maintenance and safety.

30. [“Is the Death Penalty Still Viable?”](#) *Capital Commentary*  
October 25.

The final sentence captures Clouser's view here: *Capital punishment should stand precisely because of the high value of each and every human life, including the life of each victim.* This comes at the conclusion of a discussion about the world-wide trend to abandon capital punishment. The basis for capital punishment is not deterrence but that the victim was created in the image of God.

Execution becomes just another crime where the recognition of the victim as someone made God's image is lost. Without maintaining the high value of each image-bearer, all kinds of strange and spurious arguments are going to be developed to maintain and/or mitigate the use of capital punishment. Where there is a view that it should be used in extreme cases we find that a calculus is being used that effectively says that the crime of taking the murderer's life (by the State) will be outweighed if the crime is great enough. But this is not consonant with the biblical view in which there are no degrees of being in God's image. There is still the valid legal issue of making sure that the justice system does not execute the wrong person..

## 2001

31. "Two Watersheds of Biblical Interpretation" in J Kok ed. **Marginal Resistance: Essays dedicated to John Vander Stelt** Sioux Center: Dordt College Press pp. 273-293.

A version "Three Watersheds of Biblical Interpretation" can be found at <http://www.allofliferedeemed.co.uk/Clouser/RC-3WoBl.pdf>.

The three watersheds are: Pantheism vs Transcendence; Religious Focus vs Encyclopedic Assumption; Scholastic Partition vs Universal Regulation. The discussion of the third watershed appears under the second in the book version of the article.

Rather than attempt a comprehensive hermeneutical theory, Clouser presents what he calls some fundamental "watersheds" for an interpretation of the scripture. **Pantheism vs Transcendence** and **Religious Focus vs Encyclopedic Assumption**.

1. The first Watershed - **Pantheism vs Transcendence** - is about how to interpret the scriptures in terms of the idea of divinity. The discussion could be extended to the scriptures of religions other than Christianity and how they give expression to their own notions of divinity. But for this exercise Clouser limits himself to the Bible. It is a discussion of the implications of the pantheist views of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), Paul Tillich (1886-1965) and Joseph Campbell (1904-1987) and how they relate to the task of interpreting the Bible. But before he does that he outlines the Hindu view of the divine (Brahman-Atman) and explains why a Christian will find this view strange and false. What then does this mean for how Christians receive their scriptures? Clouser closely examines Paul Tillich's philosophical view - revelation is first and last the ultimate concern which grasps the human mind and thereafter creates a community in which that concern expresses itself in symbols. Tillich has a pantheistic view of Scripture and asserts that to view any myth as literal truth is to rule out the truth of every other myth and hence embrace intolerance. Clouser states that such a hermeneutic simply leaves every doctrine of the Christian faith undermined and transformed and outlines his alternative view derived from Calvin, Luther and Barth. The pantheist hermeneutic is rejected and Clouser notes that hermeneutics, like all other projects, is regulated by what each person experiences as divine. Tillich gives a very good account of what happens when Biblical teaching is interpreted pantheistically but, says Clouser, there is merely dogmatic assertion that the pantheist approach to interpretation is correct.

2. The second Watershed - **Religious Focus vs Encyclopedic Assumption** - brings to light Clouser's view that the historical-grammatical view that has prevailed in biblical hermeneutics, the attempt to identify the author's intention in any particular biblical text, should be followed. If that is so, in what does Scripture's authority consist? He puts the issue that major Christian theologians - the Cappadocian Fathers, Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin - all accepted the "religious-focus" side of the watershed, even if the watershed did not really come into view before the rise of modern science, by which time, ironically, most of the major thinkers undertaking the new science were firmly committed to the encyclopedic view. Once again he refers to the scriptural teaching that the true knowledge about God has a decisive impact upon all knowledge and outlines 1. his view of "The universal impact of religious belief" (pp. 285-296) - belief in the true God or an idol (the divine) has a decisive impact upon all knowledge - and 2. "The regulative role of the doctrine of

creation" (pp. 286-289) - Dooyeweerd's approach provides an answer to the question: If scripture doesn't reveal all knowledge and truth, how can belief in God impact it all?. The principle is:

*... nothing in creation may be conceived as self-existent or as explaining everything else about creation. This is because the things being conceived, their properties, and the laws that govern them, all depend directly on God who alone is self-existent and is their ultimate explanation.*

3. "Some applications of the regulative religious focus hermeneutic" (pp. 289-292) explains how a Christian biblical hermeneutics will connect specific biblical teaching with ethical issues. The focus is always our relation to God - even the love of neighbour is grounded in our neighbour's shared image-bearing of the Almighty. Clouser gives an example of the prohibition of human sacrifice.

*... the prophetic condemnation was not primarily a declaration of the ethical immorality of human sacrifice, but of the religious sinfulness of humans which renders them not good enough to be sacrificed!... the focus of the biblical text is on the relation of the practice to our covenant relation to God, rather than on its ethical standing (p. 290).*

The prophets point to the inability of God's people to atone for their own sins. They nevertheless live under the prophetic word of Abraham to Isaac: "God Himself will provide the lamb for sacrifice, my son."

Slavery is another example of how the religious focus of scripture can throw light on the texts that deal with the issue (see Philemon).

The alleged sufficiency of scripture in "matters of faith and morals" needs to be looked at again in the light of the impact of the encyclopedic assumption that is often brought into play when Christians try to resolve ethical issues. And at that point we have the question of male and female and what the Bible teaches concerning "male headship". In Clouser's view this is not so much a social or political doctrine but one about a religious responsibility that God has conferred on the husband and father in a marriage/family.

A **Concluding postscript** explains Clouser's concern for the average church-goer who shifts between religious focus and encyclopedic assumption, perhaps unconsciously. A change is needed in the traditional way in which Christians of protestant background claim the scriptures to be comprehensively authoritative. Understanding the gospel does not depend upon theories and scholarly investigations. But that doesn't mean that the study of the scriptures is an easy affair. All should be encouraged to read but need to be warned about the difficulties.

32. ["Is Theism Compatible with Evolution?"](#) in Rob Pennock ed., Intelligent Design Creationism and Its Critics: Philosophical, Theological, and Scientific Perspectives Cambridge: MIT Press, pp. 513-536

The essay opens with an introductory discussion of where the debate currently stands. Most theists in science have taken the view that there is no real conflict between Genesis and the theory that all life forms, including humans, evolved gradually. Clouser takes some of the blame for the public dismissal of the theist view because those who, like himself, have not explained how a proper understanding of Genesis can compliment an evolutionary account of human origins. His aim here is to do what he and other

theists who have claimed such a compatibility have not done - to give a detailed account of just how the compatibility might be explained.

There is an examination of I. **Genesis and the Alleged Points of Incompatibility** expounding his view of:

- **A. Background Assumptions** - the scriptures have a religious focus: God's covenantal dealings that make and restore this relationship with His image bearers.
- **B. The Days of Creation** - Genesis 1 is taken as a work with a teleological aim of giving an account of God's purposes which have been and will be maintained. Clouser points to the obvious correspondence of days 1, 2 and 3 with days 4, 5 and 6. This literary structure of Genesis 1 is purposely formed to give a teleological account of God's ordering of what he had created.
- **C. The Formation of Humans** - the question about when the first humans appeared is also about when religious consciousness made its entrance on the face of the planet. God made humans of the "dust of the earth", the same stuff from which all else is made. This connotes mortality - to stand in right relation with God is to be everlastingly dependent upon Him as Creator and now as Redeemer. Eve is of the same "stuff", and both are made in a relationship completely dependent upon the One who brought them together. When the Lord God makes Himself known to them, this is the final and culminating step in their becoming human. Being created in God's image means being made for fellowship with God - their religiosity is their humanity. God's covenant makes them fully human. Scientific questions may not be given priority, but Clouser says there is no reason for theists to reject the evidence for the ancient age of the universe or of the gradual diversification of all living things.

He then discusses II. **The Nature of Religious Belief**. These few pages are a restatement of the case he has made many times before, culminating in the formal syllogism:

*A Belief, B, is a religious belief IFF:*

1. *It is a belief in something or other as divine, or*
2. *a belief in how to stand in proper relation to the divine, where*
3. *"divine" means having utterly independent reality.*

A third section III **Religious Belief, Metaphysics, and Science** discusses the way in which science reflects its metaphysical underpinnings with assumptions about the way in which things relate to each other, and further assumptions about how the kinds of laws and properties that hold for all things cohere with each other in a framework that cannot avoid some or other reference to what is non-dependent, either in the One True God or a divinity that takes its ascribed status from the creation order.

**IV What About Evidence For Intelligent Design?** Any metaphysical theory is bound to contain such a belief and any theory of science is also bound to contain or presuppose some metaphysics. This is the basis from which he advises theistic scientists to explicate:

*[how] ... belief in God relates to the theories of the sciences, rather than trying to infer support for belief in God from features of the universe.*

## 2003

### 33. ["Is There a Christian view of Everything from Soup to Nuts?"](#) *Pro Rege*, June, pp. 1-10

This is a revision of the first in a series of three in Clouser's contribution to the Dordt College 2002 Fall Faculty Lecture Series, October 2002. The other two were titled "How to teach technical courses in a distinctly Christian way" and "How a Christian perspective matters in class".

The series was repeated in May 2003, Kings College, Edmonton; and Aug 2003 Covenant College, Georgia under the title "Why Theism Requires a Non-Reductionist Ontology", a series of three lectures for the faculty of each college.

This article, the publication of the revised version of his initial lecture in the above mentioned series, takes a fresh approach to the question as to whether there is a distinctively Christian view of *everything*. It would seem that his fresh approach is to re-assert the importance of logical coherence, and in that sense the article represents a move *away from* what has been the conventional post-war reformational emphasis upon the development of a *systematic* approach that coheres with an underlying Christian world-view.

The first part of the article considers the biblical teaching that all knowledge whatsoever - every truth and all the different kinds of knowledge - is impacted by knowing God through Christ. Clouser spends time working through the conventional Christian efforts to soften the application of this biblical principle by those who believe that accepting the universal impact of knowing God would mean rejecting the argument that  $1+1=2$  is true for everyone regardless of one's divinity belief. He provides an extensive attempt to show that the many incompatible interpretations of  $1+1=2$  require us to reckon with the divinity beliefs held by making these interpretations.

There follows an historical exposition of the two major attempts that have been made to explain this scriptural teaching, followed by Clouser's attempt to show that the many incompatible interpretations of  $1 + 1 = 2$  require divinity beliefs by those making these interpretations.

The first of the two attempts is the "Thomas rule"; Clouser suggests it is not so much an attempt to apply the scriptural claim that knowing God impacts all truth, but is an alternative approach to the issue. The rule is this:

*Whatever one is studying, whatever theory one proposes, or whatever interpretation one develops, it is wrong as soon as it contradicts anything revealed by God.*

But though the rule sounds right, it ignores most theories and leaves them neutral with respect to belief in God. Most theories simply do not make statements that contradict revealed truth. By application of that rule, 99% of all theories are rendered religiously neutral.

The second proposal is the demand for a "thicker" scriptural involvement in the various scientific disciplines, and it is an attitude which grew with the rise of modern science, beginning in the 17th century. A search was made to supplement the "Thomas rule" and Christian scientists set about searching the scripture to find key truths for all fields of study. This is the way in which fundamentalism approaches science. Clouser explores the problems of this approach (with special reference to Henry Morris) and then introduces a third approach that starts by considering what a religious belief *is*.

From there he explains in outline how theory-making relates to religious

belief. The subsequent discussion explains how a materialist will go about developing theories on the basis of its materialistic hypotheses - and refers to his much-used example of the salt-shaker which becomes the point of conversation between the author and the materialist at the dinner table. At a deeper level, Clouser opines, discussion of the beauty of the salt-shaker shows how the common-sense agreement about the nature of the shaker breaks down. Either the materialist will say that beauty has nothing to do with it in its purely physical sense, or if there are non-physical properties, like beauty, then they have come about purely by physical processes.

The discussion proceeds to show how such an approach to theory-making requires radically non-reductionistic theories. The Christian approach to every sort of theory, every sort of knowledge and every concept of everything, will mean the adoption of a systematically non-reductionist approach. He briefly surveys divergent reductionist theories in mathematics (Leibniz, J S Mill, Russell, Dewey).

So, asks Clouser, why isn't the belief that everything depends on God just another case of reductionism? The answer he gives is that when someone picks some particular facet of the world around us and explains everything else as dependent on it, the result is to make that facet far more real, and thus far more important, than the rest of reality. Interpreting the universe as creation, in terms of its dependence upon the Creator, and in line with what the Creator has revealed is not reductionism. The aim in such theorising is to reckon with dependency without reduction. It isn't an easy program and requires careful re-working of all major theories in all fields, since the proposed explainers are either divine or reducible to another part of creation which is taken as divine.

34. ["Reason and Belief in God"](#), *Philosophia Reformata* Vol. 68 No. 2, pp. 36-68

This is Clouser's critical analysis of Eduardo Echeverria "Fides et Ration" (*Philosophia Reformata* 2000. Vol.65 pp. 72-104). The article is prompted by the suggestion that the differences between the philosophies of the Traditional Scholastic Christian and the Calvinist tradition - represented by Calvin and Dooyeweerd - are somehow basic to the split within the world-wide church. Clouser identifies the 1054 claim of the Bishop of Rome to be Head Bishop, and the subsequent Infallible claim of 1870 to be chief reasons for the split.

Clouser refuses to merge this ongoing disagreement with the philosophical differences that pertain between Thomas Aquinas and John Paul II, on the one side, and Calvin and Dooyeweerd, on the other. Moreover, there is much more than just philosophical Thomism within the Roman Catholic church. In his essay, Clouser limits himself to an examination of the impact of the fall on human reasoning abilities as well as addressing some of Echeverria's misunderstandings of Dooyeweerd's position and philosophy - the heart, the alleged "hard perspectivalism", and the nature of religious language, God's nature and the task of metaphysics.

1. Reason Wounded v Reason Fallen, examines Calvin and Dooyeweerd on faith and reason (pp. 39-40). Echeverria misses crucial differences of meaning and effectively ignores Dooyeweerd's critique of reason by trying to compare it with John Paul II's critique of irrationalism. Clouser says that Echeverria fails to acknowledge Dooyeweerd's agreement with the correspondence view of truth and metaphysical realism. Pascal is completely left out of the picture by

Echeverria who implies that those who do not accept their view of reason must thereby be irrationalistic. *Fides et Ratio* suggests that belief in God is as reasonable as accepting the authority of parents, teachers and the church. There are problems with this since the truth that is given us to believe is the truth about God from God. The problem with this is that the New Testament speaks of conversion as the illumination of a person's heart by the Holy Spirit, allowing the person to see the truth of the gospel. It never suggests that a person should believe the gospel on the say-so of the New Testament writers.

2. Dooyeweerd on Faith and Knowledge observes that Echeverria ignores Dooyeweerd's view of the heart. In 3. Dooyeweerd's Perspectivalism, Echeverria is criticised for ignoring Dooyeweerd's view that knowing God impacts every kind of knowledge. Echeverria suggests Dooyeweerd's "hard perspectivalism" assumes the impossibility of philosophical communication between rival standpoints, Clouser reverts to his much used salt-shaker to reflect upon the communication and any underlying lack of agreement between a Christian and a materialist philosopher at the dinner table.

4. Dooyeweerd on Metaphysics, Religious Language and God, Clouser identifies 4 different views of metaphysics in Echeverria's argument which he hasn't noticed. Only one of these would be ruled out by Dooyeweerd. That is the view that a theory of reality inclusive of God's reality is possible. Clouser discusses how it is that we can indeed say what is true of God even if His being transcends our concepts. The Cappadocian/ Reformational view of God's aseity is contrasted with the view of Augustine, Anselm and Aquinas.

Clouser clarifies that metaphysics in such a frame of reference is not ruled out. What is ruled out is metaphysics as the equivalent of a theory of reality. Rather metaphysics is defined as a theory of *created* reality. (pp. 66-68). This is a theory that is internally controlled and guided by belief in God (p. 68).

35. **The Myth of Religious Neutrality: An Essay on the Hidden Role of Religious Belief in Theories** Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press

Revised & expanded edition of No. 17 above. The revised and expanded edition is now being translated into Spanish and Korean, and a German translation awaits publication. This revised edition, 14 years after the initial publication, contains changes, the most significant of which are found in chapters 2, 4, 10, 11, 12 and 13 with numerous other alterations throughout the book. He begins by point out that someone once pointed out that the discovery of Dooyeweerd's work in the 20th century philosophical climate was

*...analogous to finding a huge oak tree in the middle of a desert. Although he couldn't help being impressed by the oak, he said, he was left with the even stronger feeling of puzzlement as to what on earth it was doing there.*

*In this book I try to plant an oasis around the oak so as to diminish the wonder that it's there, and thus allow the readers attention to be focused where it belongs: on the most original philosophical theory since Kant.*

1. Introduction

**I RELIGION**

2. **What is Religion?** 1. The Problem; 2. A Resolution; 3. **Some Clarifications** 4. **Replies to Objections**; 5 **Some Auxiliary Definitions**; 6. **Are All Non-Dependence Beliefs Religious?**

3. **Types of Religious Belief** 1 The Basis for Typing Religions 2 The Pagan Type 3 The Pantheist Type 4. The Biblical Type 5. **Why Think Anything Is Divine At All?**

**II THEORIES**

4. **What is a Theory?** 1. Introduction 2. What is a Theory? 3. Abstraction 4. Aspects of Experience 5. Types of Theories 6. Criteria for Judging Theories.

5. **Theories and religion: The Alternatives** 1. Religious Irrationalism 2. Religious Rationalism 3. The Radically Biblical Position 4. Religious Scholasticism 5. The Conflict of These Alternatives.

6. **The Idea of Religious Control** 1. The Mistake of Fundamentalism 2. Presupposition.

**III A CASEBOOK**

7. **Theories in Mathematics** 1. Introduction 2. The Number-World Theory 3. The Theory of J S Mill 4. The Theory of Russell 5. The Theory of Dewey 6. What Difference Do Such Theories Make? 7. The Role of Religion in These Theories.

8. **Theories in Physics** 1. Some Misunderstandings to Avoid 2. The Theory of Mach 3. The Theory of Einstein 4. The Theory of Heisenberg 5. What Difference Do Such Theories Make? 6. The Role of Religion in These Theories.

9. **Theories in Psychology** 1. Introduction 2. The Theories of Watson, Thorndike and Skinner 3. The Theories of Adler and Fromm 4. Human Nature.

10. **The Need for a New Beginning** 1. Introduction 2. **Why Are Theories Unavoidable Regulated By Some Divinity Belief?** 3. **A Philosophical Critique of Reduction as a Strategy for Theories** 4 **The Religious Critique of Reduction as a Strategy for Theories** 5 **The Cappadocian and Reformational Theological Traditions** 6. **Replies to Objections** 7. **Conclusion.**<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> This is not so much a re-write of Chapter 10 pp. 116-195 of the earlier edition (1991 No. 17) but a substantial reorganization of this part of his discussion.

#### **IV NON-REDUCTIONIST THEORIES**

**11. A Non-Reductionist Theory of Reality** 1. *The Project of Non-Reductionist Theories* 2. *Some Guiding principles* 3. *The Framework of Laws Theory* 4. *The Natures of Things.*

**12. A Biblical Theory of Society** 1. *Introduction* 2. *Fact versus Norm* 3. *Individualism versus Collectivism* 4. *Parts and Wholes* 5. *Sphere Sovereignty.*

**13. A Biblical Theory of the State** 1. *Introduction* 2. *The Nature of the State: What It Is* 3. *The Nature of the State: What It Is Not* 4. *Postscript*

#### **AFTERWORD**

## 2006

36. [“Prospects for Theistic Science”](#) in *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, Spring pp. 2-15 and [Replies](#) pp. 23-27.

Oct 2002 Trbana University (Piestany, Slovakia), International Conference on Science and Religion: “Prospects for a Theistic Science”.

The entire volume including replies by Le Morvan pp. 16-17, Halvorson pp. 18-19 and Ratzsch pp. 20-22 is at: <http://www.asa3.org/ASA/PSCF/2006/PSCF3-06dyn.html> and also Clouser’s Rejoinders.

### I. Introduction

**II. Some remarks on Definitions:** 1. Narrowing the Scope of the Term “Religious”; 2. Essential Definitions.

**III. Misunderstandings of Religious Belief:** 1. Religious Belief is Belief in a Supreme Being; 2. Religious Belief Inspires or Supports Worship; 3. Religious Belief is Belief in Our Highest Value.

**IV. A Definition of Religious Belief:** 1. Locating What Religious Beliefs Have in Common; 2. Some Confirming Consequences

**V. Replies to Objections:** 1. The Definition is Too Broad; 2. A Belief is Religious Only if Taken on Faith

VI. Religious Belief, Metaphysics and Science

### VII. Three Sample Theories From Science

### VIII. The General S/R Relation

**IX. A Theistic Perspective for Metaphysics and Science:** 1. The Perspective Approximated; 2. The Universal Impact of Religious Belief; 3. An Anti-Reductionist Argument

Replies to the Comments of Le Morvan et al appeared in 58:1 March 2006 : Le Morvan questions whether the definition of religious belief is itself religiously neutral. Clouser explains why it cannot be and suggests reasons for why this is still the right way for people with different beliefs to begin to discuss their respective scientific contributions. He replies:

*The short answer is no. But its non-neutrality does nothing to undercut its force; it is not thereby rendered self-canceling or significant only for theists (p. 23).*

By way of explanation, Clouser distinguishes the “drastic difference” a divinity belief makes upon the concept of the nature of an entity postulated by a theory - when compared with the concepts we make (e.g. salt-shakers) of things we experience where divinity beliefs are not so divisive.

Halvorson wonders if Clouser’s exposition of reductionism is itself reductionistic, to which Clouser points out that there are indeed some non-objectionable kinds of reduction that have a proper place in science. Objectional reduction is where some aspect of creation is ascribed divine status. God is Creator of all laws for creation.

Ratzsch asks whether Clouser’s antireductionism is the entire story - no, replies Clouser, divinity beliefs regulate an ontology which in turn regulates scientific theories. His article had begun by discussing the varieties of theistic contribution to the science-religion debate and had observed

*... in all the views of the S/R relation a crucial element is missing ... That missing element is nothing less than a clear definition of the nature of religious belief. There are, by contrast, many attempts to account for the nature of scientific*

theorizing.

Two letters are discussed in December 2006 from Mr Nelson ("everything has at least some properties of each basic kind [of properties]") and Moorad Alexanian's physicalist ontology and reliance upon a "set theoretic analysis of the whole of reality.

37. [“Genesis Regained: Creation not Creationism”](#) in *Tydskrif vir Christelike Wetenskap* 42ste Jrg, pp. 29-64

June 2006 Templeton Conference on Science and Religion (University of Pennsylvania): “Genesis Regained: Creation not Creationism”

- **Introduction:** the doctrine of creation as taught in Scripture is not creationism. God created everything, visible and invisible including laws. The aim is to have a proper understanding of the text in terms of its evident literary characteristics.
- **Part I: The Text of Genesis: Chapter 1** - the early chapters of Genesis are part of a much larger covenantal document. It should be read teleologically rather than chronologically. In **The Text of Genesis: Chapter 2**, the focus is upon the one who is the recipient of God's covenant; the one who despite the fall is yet the ancestor of those who continue to receive God's love and mercy and receive His covenant promises. It was God's speaking and making Himself known to Adam that constituted Adam's uniqueness in relation to all other creatures; the focus upon humans is that they are religious beings. The same applies to Eve. Genesis does not rule out theories which assume a long evolutionary development before the appearance of human life on the planet.
- **Part II: The Nature of Religious Belief** - a rewritten version of No. 32 pp. 6-8) **Divinity Beliefs, Metaphysics, and Science** (which revised No. 32 pp. 8-9).

Clouser sums up in this way:

*... since all theories are regulated by some divinity belief or other, theists are not engaged in special pleading when they wish their interpretation of the sciences to be regulated by belief in God.*

38. [“Nukes and National Prestige”](#) *Capital Commentary*  
December 22

This brings together arguments put forward in two previous "political statements" in No. 13, "Is there an American national character?", on the growing American tendency to "beat your neighbour" and No. 18, "Victory in the gulf?", asking if America is claiming national honour from military victories rather than seeking justice. This is an appeal to an alternative norm for America's national direction from what is currently emerging in its public domain. In this case the discussion begins with President Bush's signing into law of an authorisation to share civilian nuclear technology with India. India had never signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

The discussion, however, is historical. From 1500 to 1900 the European

powers, with the exception of Russia, agreed amongst themselves not to try to expand their borders but to compete for colonies outside the immediate European theatre. After 1900 things changed. Germany, a latecomer in the colonial competition, was regularly muscled out by Britain and France and the Kaiser considered that Germany was subject to a conspiratorial secret deal between the British and the French - so then after Versailles, by further humiliating Germany, the Big Four gave Hitler fuel to stoke up the smouldering national suspicion about a global conspiracy. Returning to the issue of nuclear technology, Clouser notes that these days owning nukes rather than colonies is the hallmark of international prestige. This explains the desires of India, North Korea and Pakistan to have such weapons of their own. American foreign policy is exposed for failing to press for the mutual destruction of nuclear weaponry when the Soviet Union collapsed. And Eisenhower brought North Korea to the peace table by threatening to use atomic power - that threat coincided with North Korea's isolation and should be kept in mind in interpreting North Korea's stand.

In philosophical terms, Clouser faults the US policy for perpetuating their attitude that a nation counts if, and only if, it has nukes, when it should have been working for their elimination.

## 2007

39. **Knowing with the Heart: Religious Experience and Belief in God.** Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers

Revised edition of No. 25 above. There is a new introductory paragraph to Chapter 3.

40. ["A Blueprint for a Non-Reductionist Theory of Reality"](#)  
Mitteleuropa Foundation, Balzano: September 2007.

IAPCHE *Contact* December 2007 - insert. See also Nos. 43, 45 and 46 below.

**Introduction.** The scientific non-viability of a metaphysical view in which everything in the cosmos is said to have only X kind of properties and to be governed by only X kind of laws is explored. The various forms of the reductionist strategy are outlined in a footnote 3 (Ref No. 23 ftn 23 and elsewhere). But "*there can be no justification for the belief that any particular kind of entities can be independent of all other kinds.*"

**The Role of Religious Belief in Theories.** Clouser expounds his view of the religious issue that divides reductionist from non-reductionist views of reality.

**Reductionism as Seduction:** A. An Anti-Reductionist Argument - readers are enjoined to attempt to conceive of anything as "purely physical". It can't be done; B. Aspects of Experience - Clouser discusses the way in which a consideration of the aspects of experience might assist us in avoiding the seductions of reduction.

**The Law Framework Theory** - An exposition of major aspects of Dooyeweerd's non-reductionist philosophy: A. *Aspectual Laws* - freeing our view of reality from a conflict between objectivism and subjectivism by giving science a way to account for the differences between objectivity and subjectivity, in terms of active and passive functions subject to aspectual laws; B. *The Natures of Things* - assists us in the comparison and contrast between concrete things, events and relationships; C. *Capsulate Wholes* - redefining an age-old problem by which things were conceptualised in terms of an inadequate understanding of whole-part relations derived from Aristotle, whose theory Clouser would supplement by including enkaptic relations. It is from Dooyeweerd's concept of "enkapsis" that Clouser develops his view of an "encapsulating" whole; D. *Type Laws*: by which *every individual thing or event in the cosmos is to be understood as an individual structural assemblage of properties, parts, or sub-wholes, determined by a type-law and qualified by the aspectual laws that regulate its internal organisations*; E. *Artifacts* - an account of the human cultural-formation of "things"; F. *Social Irreducibility: Sphere Sovereignty* - it is possible to subject human life to an ordered analysis of its various dimensions, as well as the unfolding of normative dimensions in institutions, organisations and relations; G. *Divinity Redux* - Is it possible to have a view of reality in which nothing is divine?

**Conclusion** - The article sounds the battle-cry for calling the bluff of metaphysical reduction. When it is seen to be based upon a privileging of some aspects of the cosmos it's "pure science" pretensions are exposed by deifications that can be seen for what they are, empty words which are accompanied by no idea of what is being referred to.

41. [“A Third View of Rights and Law”](#), Kuyper Lecture, Center for Public Justice, Harvard Law School, Oct.

This lecture has for its subtitle: "a critique of assumptions behind the Declaration and the Constitution." Clouser examines the two founding documents of the American republic and finds that they are completely at odds over the nature of human rights and the basis for law making. The Declaration affirms that the authority for making statutes, and the obligations to obey them, stem from the existence of natural rights over which humans have no control. With the Constitution, however, it is the majority will that is assumed to control the government's power of coercion and the authority for making laws is the will of the people from which the obligation to obey derives.

The Declaration views humans already in possession of their rights - the task of law is to figure out how they can be protected. The Constitution assumes that there are no valid rights until they are embodied in black letter law. But both make their views the whole story and so finding a way to harmonise the insights of both documents into coherent and just lawful governance becomes America's perpetual political task.

Clouser has identified an ambiguity at the heart of America's self-definition. American politics is evidence of a prevailing confidence that "things will work out" (sooner or later) without any appreciation for how a universal norm of justice applies to political life. Clouser introduces Abraham Kuyper's doctrine of "sphere sovereignty" and his brief exposition contrasts the Declaration's individualism with the Constitution's collectivism. How does Kuyper's sphere sovereignty theory break the Hobbes-Locke gridlock? Firstly, by reckoning with a multiplicity of facets to human existence which brings about the different communities and organisations that give expression to diverse responsibilities. Secondly, within families, schools, businesses, associations, the state there are different kinds of authority which have arisen and no one of them is the source of all the others. Kuyper offers a view of society which is articulated in a much better way than Jefferson's abstract "wall of separation" between church and state. In all the diverse forms of our social life none can be the supreme authority for all the others. Each is "sovereign in its own sphere" for the specific task it is there to perform.

Kuyper gives America a way to explain *why* Government may "make no law concerning" not only religion but also the many social things that simply fall outside the Government's proper authority. The Government does have a task to give effect to laws that respect the distinctive integrity of the various institutions in society. These spheres are not different groups - they are diverse and different spheres of service in which all may be involved. It is thus a view of government derived from the Puritans who saw that *any earthly authority claiming to be the source of all others was thereby usurping a status that belongs to God alone.*

Sphere sovereignty is not only a negative principle, concerned with the limits of societal authority, but it is a view which respects the value of all social spheres. It provides a way to avoid the pragmatist and positivist views of law. Neither is sphere sovereignty a theocratic view of society; it is a view that non-Theists may accept on any ground they wish, and to accept it to whatever extent they may find useful *for that is guaranteed them by the principle itself.* It is a view found in the New Testament, its ultimate basis is belief in God. But it is not part of any effort to favour Christians nor is it a plank of some campaign to force Christian views on non-Christians.

### 42. ["Is Belief in God made Obsolete by Science?"](#)

This is a brief polemical piece that takes up the "thought experiment" developed in previous articles (e.g. Nos. 8, 22, 23, 24, 25). Clouser uses it to expose the "literally meaningless" idea of materialist philosophy that asserts that the universe is either "purely physical" or whatever other non-physical properties exist are produced by physical things and laws. The essay exposes the fallacy involved in the question: "Is belief in God made obsolete by science?" The question simply assumes belief in God is a primitive or pre-scientific answer to any question about the nature of the cosmos that has simply had to give way once science has come into its own. But science is the making and testing of hypotheses about the cosmos while religions seek to identify the self-existent reality on which all else depends. This "other question" is genuinely pre-scientific. For Clouser, this "other question" is about "the self-existent reality" and is not pre-scientific in that historical sense but in the sense that scientific reflection is itself dependent upon this reality which undergirds and upholds all things. When a scientific theory includes or presupposes that some part (or all) of the cosmos is self-existent, then at that point it is no longer science but religion. Clouser exposes the common cheap shot that whereas religion is based on blind faith, whereas science is all about open-eyed evidence. And yet despite the centuries of evidence to the contrary, major Christian thinkers, to cite only those, have repeatedly contradicted this view in no uncertain terms. In conclusion, the discussion turns to an examination of modern materialism - the belief that some exclusively physical realities are self-existent. The dogma that the assumptions of materialism are essential to science is a dogma that is very widely held - but it is a claim that is literally nonsense.

### 43. ["A Blueprint for a Non-Reductionist Theory of Reality"](#)

Paper for Featured Session "Exploring Non-Reduction and Levels of Reality" in the Conference 2008, Subject, Self and Soul: Transdisciplinary Approaches to Personhood sponsored by the Metanexus Institute, 13<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> July, Madrid, Spain. Subsequently published in [\*Transdisciplinarity in Science and Religion\*](#) (Curtea Veche Publishing House, Bucharest) IV.

The abstract reads: *Basic to all forms of metaphysical reduction is the claim that one or another kind of reality found in the cosmos is either all there is or is the producer-of-all-else. His paper examines the nature of religious beliefs, and then the relation between them and reduction claims. It finds that reduction claims either contain or presuppose the belief that whatever all reduces to is divine, and are therefore examples of religious faith rather than theories.*

*An argument is then given to show that: 1) no such reduction claim is justifiable, and that 2) all such reduction claims are utterly devoid of explanatory power.*

Previous versions of this paper can be found at No. 40 above and subsequent versions can be found at Nos. 45 and 46.

44. "Transcendental Critique Revisited and Revised"  
*Philosophia Reformata* Volume 74 No. 1 pp.

Clouser explains that the article is written in appreciation for the work of Dooyeweerd. He wants to explain why Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique failed and to suggest a way of recovering its basic intention. There is a consensus among reformational scholars who agree that Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique has not succeeded. The "second way" has faltered and Clouser is reporting on his investigations of Dooyeweerd's writings as to why he thinks that is so. It is written with an appreciation for Dooyeweerd's attempts to develop a scripturally-based philosophy that considers theorising is a matter of the total person, of the heart. Kant had sought to expose the universal and necessary conditions for experience, and yet did not extend that project to include the critical examination of the universal and necessary conditions for theorising itself. Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique is a description of the activity of abstraction in theory making.

Clouser divides his discussion into three parts: what is abstracted; the subject who performs the abstraction; the relation between them. He sums up Dooyeweerd's account of abstracting from a concrete object in three statements: 1. abstraction is unavoidable; 2. abstraction introduces a new and artificial relationship into our experience of any subject-matter abstracted; 3. the isolation of a property in thought can never show it to have independent existence. The example is given of materialism and how it works as a theory. The problem is that it must first abstracted the physical aspect in order to declare it to have independent existence.

Clouser differentiates between distinguishing and abstracting. The first notices a difference, the second isolates what has been distinguished from the concrete thing that exhibits it.

Throughout the article Clouser develops his critique of Dooyeweerd by refining and developing arguments and examples that he has used previously (the thought experiment that he suggests indicates that it is just not possible to think of something as "purely" physical, or "purely" psychological. It is not even possible to think such "pure" abstractions. In this sense, it is abundantly clear that Clouser has drawn on Dooyeweerd's critique to criticise Dooyeweerd's formulation while correcting and sharpening its argument (specifically reformulating the second question Dooyeweerd formulated in his transcendental critique<sup>16</sup>) and is of intense relevance to theory-making and science and scholarly reflection in general.

The article concludes with an affirmation of the closest possible relationship between philosophical reflection on everyday life and critical analysis of the way we are thinking about the world. Every concept, says Clouser, whether it is a theoretical concept or one from our pre-theoretical experience, adheres to one of three identified approaches: 1) reality is comprised of entities of one kind which means they stand in only kind of relation to one another; 2) reality is comprised of one or two kind(s) of entities which are the metaphysical cause of all entities of whatever kind, and the general relation between them is the metaphysical cause of all else; 3) there are many kinds of properties and relations and none is the metaphysical cause of any other. Dooyeweerd and

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16 see footnote 5 above.

Clouser hold to position 3) a position required by belief in God. 1) and 2) are instances of paganism and cannot be redeemed by the scholastic ploy.

## Forthcoming (as of June 2009)

45. "A New Philosophical Guide for the Sciences: Ontology Without Reduction" [\*The Global Spiral\*](#) (Journal of the Metanexus Institute) Vol. 10 June (3) or July /August (4)
46. "A Brief Sketch of the Philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd" [\*Axiomathes\*](#) (Journal of the Mitteleuropa Foundation). No 3 September or No. 4 December
47. "Can we know God is Real?" [\*Pro Rege\*](#)

This was a Convocation Address at Dordt College, 15<sup>th</sup> January 2009.

## Other Miscellaneous

48. [Me? A Major in Philosophy](#)
49. [A Post-Christmas Reflection](#)

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