

1 INTRODUCTION

Herman Dooyeweerd (7 October 1894, Amsterdam – 12 February 1977, Amsterdam) and his brother-in-law Dirk Vollenhoven (1 November 1892, Amsterdam – 6 June 1978, Amsterdam) were forerunners in the development of a neo-Calvinistic philosophy known as Reformational Philosophy. This paper will discuss the process of Dooyeweerdian thought, commonly referencing his work *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*.¹

The initial cause of Dooyeweerd's philosophical endeavor was the humanistic assumption of the nature of things: to truly understand and see the structure of reality; whereas some describe it as their worldview or ('Weltanschauung'), it comes from a deeper process of presupposition and has been referred to throughout ancient thought as a 'ground motive'.² This 'ground motive' is often seen in modern Western philosophy to be a Determinism vs. Freedom conflict: either things are decided, or they are not. This line of reasoning establishes a clear distinction between deterministic and non-deterministic viewpoints, asserting a completely antithetical basis. Dooyeweerd questioned whether theoretical thought, as it has traditionally been understood and used, is enough for comprehending the complexity of reality as it manifests itself in our daily lives. He had cognizance that within everyday events both deterministic and non-deterministic occurrences seem to exist, which led him to research the philosophical underpinnings of ancient Greek and Hebrew thought.

- **Greek thinking** is inescapably dualistic, he found; even if individual Greek philosophers might not have been, the most basic assumptions they made led inevitably to dualisms and to driving a wedge into reality. One of these assumptions was that Existence is the primary property of anything we experience, which in turn rests on the assumption that reality as we experience it is self-dependent and even the gods are merely part of it.
- **Hebrew thinking**, on the other hand, saw reality as we experience it as created by God, who is outside of it yet interacting with it. This meant that the primary property of all we experience is Meaning, not Existence. And this, argued Dooyeweerd, helps keep everything integrated together, without dualisms.³

2 GROUND-MOTIVES

Dooyeweerd believed to grasp the question of Existence or Meaning, (and the connection thereof) we must first assess the basis on which we approach said existence or meaning. Dooyeweerd went into more detail on this presuppositional perspective of theoretical understanding, which he refers to as the 'four ground-motives'.⁴ These ground motives, as Dooyeweerd puts it, are the-

¹ H. Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, vol. 1, *The Necessary Presuppositions of Philosophy*, trans. William S. Young and David H. Freeman, (The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1969) 2nd ed.

² Andrew Basden, 'Summary of Dooyeweerd's Cosmonomic Philosophy', *The Dooyeweerd Pages*, <http://dooy.info/summary.html> [accessed 16 December 2022].

³ 'Summary of Dooyeweerd's Cosmonomic Philosophy' *The Dooyeweerd Pages*, see *Dooyeweerd's Starting Point*.

⁴ Andrew Basden, 'Dooyeweerd's Four Ground Motives', *The Dooyeweerd Pages*, <https://www.dooy.info/gm.html> [accessed 17 December 2022].

"Spiritual driving force that acts as the absolutely central mainspring of human society,"⁵ which would be characterized as a recurring basis of categorical ideas that motivate forward-thinking processes. See here in this diagram:

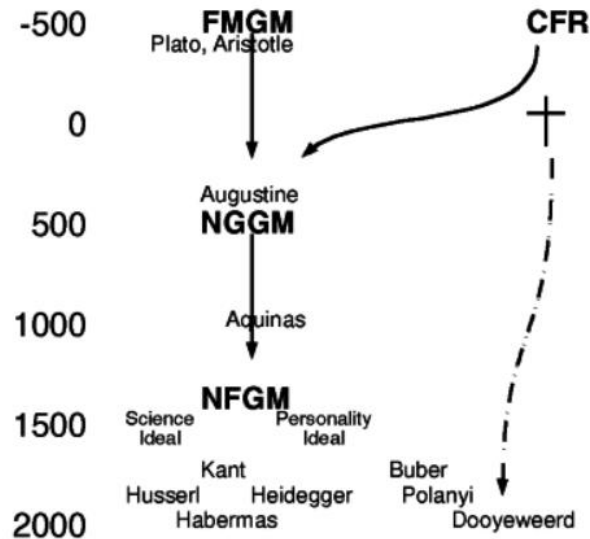


Fig 1. Development of Western Thought.⁶

- The notion of the early Greek fathers, Plato and Aristotle, is represented by the **Form-Matter Ground-Motive (FMGM)**. Despite the possibility that their beliefs on these Forms and Matter varied, Dooyeweerd concentrates on the relative presupposition that results from assigning these forms and matter to the explanatory foundation of all we know and research, and the dualism that subsequently arrives. Additionally, according to Dooyeweerd, *FMGM* inhibits us from comprehending how things might change while remaining the same.⁷
- The idea of a God who owns and sustains the cosmos and everything therein is the foundation of the **Creation-Fall-Redemption Ground-Motive (CFR)**, which is credited to Jewish and Christian theology via its respective scripture. Dooyeweerd uses this ground-motive as which he operates, elaborating throughout his writings on how it eliminates the inherent dualism that arises within *FMGM*-based ground-motives, or what he refers to as *immanence-philosophy*.⁸
- We find Christian philosophers in the 500s AD who subscribed to the **Nature-Grace Ground-Motive (NGGM)**, which would be summarized as an amalgamation of *FMGM* and *CFR* ground-motives. Although popular among significant Christian leaders such as Augustine, Dooyeweerd assesses the *Sacred Secular Divide* which is present. Though this ground-motive presupposes religion, both the secular and the sacred dispute on whose claims are more important, or more genuine; this provides a contradictory dualistic viewpoint.

⁵ H. Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western culture; Pagan, Secular and Christian options*, (Wedge Publishing Company, 1979).

⁶ See Figure 1., under 'The Religious Root of Theoretical Thought: Ground-Motives', <https://www.allofliferedeemed.co.uk/basdenoverdooy.htm> [accessed 16 December 2022].

⁷ H. Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, vol. 3, Jordan Station, (Paideia Press, 1953-1958).

⁸ Andrew Basden, 'Immanence Philosophy / Standpoint', The Dooyeweerd Pages, <http://www.dooy.info/imm.html> [accessed 17 December 2022].

- Finally, the **Nature-Freedom Ground-Motive (NFGM)**, which replaced grace with Freedom: fueled by man's ego. Dooyeweerd believed this to be inevitable when examining the *NGGM* ground-motive, moving further away from *CFR* principles. Within this ground-motive, we are to view reality either in terms of freedom, or in terms of the control of deterministic processes, but never in tandem. Dooyeweerd comments that this dualistic perspective has once again stopped us from seeing the fundamental structure of reality.

3 IMMANENCE-PHILOSOPHY

As Dooyeweerd looked further into the *CFR*, he concluded that it is the only ground-motive in human history to not have a deeper presupposition. *CFR* avoids the dualistic approach that the other three ground-motives he offers do, which first presented Dooyeweerd with his primary problem. He alludes to *immanence-philosophy*, which is the intrinsic dualism that occurs inside the *FMGM*-based ground-motives, as mentioned in the explanation of *CFR*. Relating to this, Dooyeweerd writes:

"The age-old development of immanence-philosophy displays the most divergent nuances. It varies from metaphysical rationalism to modern logical positivism and the irrationalist philosophy of life. It is disclosed also in the form of modern existentialism. The latter has broken with the Cartesian (rationalistic) 'cogito' as Archimedean point and has replaced it by existential thought, conceived of in an immanent subjectivistic historical sense."⁹

Dooyeweerd presupposed the *CFR* ground-motive considering this. Table 1 provides some examples of the different philosophical consequences of assuming *CFR* in comparison to those of immanence-philosophy.

CFR	Immanence Philosophy
The whole cosmos has dignity	Half is Good, the other half Evil or inferior
Nothing in cosmos is absolute (including Reason)	One aspect is absolute, self-dependent
Diversity coheres; Coherence is diverse.	Focus either on diversity or coherence
Self and world cohere with each other	Kantian gulf between Self and world
The foundation of all in cosmos is cosmic meaning-and-law	Foundation is either Being (process) or Autonomous ego
World reveals itself	Can never know 'Ding an sich'
We can let everyday experience speak to us	Everyday experience is reduced to a theory
Theory has religious root	Theoretical thought is absolute
Hope and Destiny'	Towards death' (Heidegger)

Table 1. Presuppositional comparisons of *CFR*.¹⁰

⁹ H. Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, vol. 1, Jordan Station, (Paideia Press, 1953-1958), p. 13.

¹⁰ See Table 1., under 'Table 1. Philosophical implications of *CFR*',
<https://www.allofliferedeemed.co.uk/basdenoverdooy.htm> [accessed 18 December 2022].

4 RELIGIOUS ROOT

Dooyeweerd developed a 'religious root'¹¹ from the *CFR* ground-motive, substantially in opposition to those who believe God is irrelevant to theoretical reasoning. God is not to be philosophized; rather, Dooyeweerd viewed any other theoretical concept that did not rely on God as the first cause to be improper. Dooyeweerd instead attempted to comprehend the philosophical implications of what it means for the cosmos to be Created rather than something that "just is." However, while elaborating on the 'religious root', he made sure to clarify by saying:

"To the question, what is understood here by religion? I reply: the innate impulse of human selfhood to direct itself toward the *true* or toward a *pretended* absolute Origin of all temporal diversity of meaning ..." ¹²

Dooyeweerd views this religion as the foundation of everything, and he discusses four different sorts of 'religious roots' in his writing.

- The faith aspect of what we do and are (see the theory of aspects) helps account not only for traditional religious experience but also for the tenacity with which we commit to, and defend positions.
- Life-and-world-views (*Weltanschauungen*) and perspectives to which a group of people are committed are often centered on an aspect; this helps us understand and analyze tenaciously-held perspectives in IS as well as elsewhere.
- Presuppositions that are religious in nature, such as ground-motives and the immanence presupposition, which underlie the way we assume reality to be, can explain why some of the debates in IS have taken the shape they have.
- The orientation of the human self towards the true Absolute, or a pretend one, can help us understand religious dysfunction, in terms of absolutization, and its possible remedy.¹³

Within the first volume of Dooyeweerd's *A New Critique*,¹⁴ we can get a grasp of this 'religious root'. He states, "that which makes the whole mankind spiritually one in root in the creation, fall and redemption."¹⁵ Some lines later he writes, "In Jesus Christ, the entire new humanity is one in the root, as members of one body."¹⁶ Dooyeweerd insists that this presuppositional approach is taken when facing any aspect of life.

¹¹ Andrew Basden, 'On Religious Root and Faith (Pistic) Function', *The Dooyeweerd Pages*, <https://dooy.info/ideas/religious.root.html> [accessed 19 December 2022].

¹² H. Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, vol. 2, *The General Theory of the Modal Spheres*, trans. H. the Youngest and David H. Freeman, (The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1969) 2nd ed.

¹³ Andrew Basden, 'A Brief Overview of Herman Dooyeweerd's Philosophy', *All of Life Redeemed*, 5.2 (2007), <https://www.allofliferedeemed.co.uk/basdenoverdooy.htm> [accessed 19 December 2022].

¹⁴ H. Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, vol. 1.

¹⁵ M. *Philosophia Reformata*, vol. 19, no. 2/3, 1954, pp. 138–39. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24705783>, [accessed 19 December 2022].

¹⁶ M. *Philosophia Reformata*, vol. 19, no. 2/3, 1954, pp. 138–39.

5 ENTITY-SIDE (SUBJECT) AND LAW-SIDE

Dooyeweerd feels it is crucial to evaluate reality now that he has solid theoretical knowledge thanks to his developed *CFR* ground-motive. His question would be, "What is it that enables the cosmos to Be and Occur with the dignity of being separate from the Creator?"¹⁷ That question brings Dooyeweerd to his 'Two Sides of Reality'.¹⁸

- The **entity-side (subject)** comprises all that exists or occurs in the cosmos, as concrete reality e.g., you, me, the polar ice cap, a rose, a government, a symphony, a computer program, the Second World War, the decision I made this morning over what to eat, my act of writing now.
- The **law-side** comprises the framework within which all can exist or happen. It concerns modalities in which entities operate, e.g., physical, social, biotic, ethical, technical, aesthetic. It also, according to Dooyeweerd and others, includes type laws that refer to such modalities.¹⁹

This is significant because it enables us to see the underlying normativity in circumstances where conventional theoretical thought may attempt to do so as an afterthought and to reconcile Is with Ought.

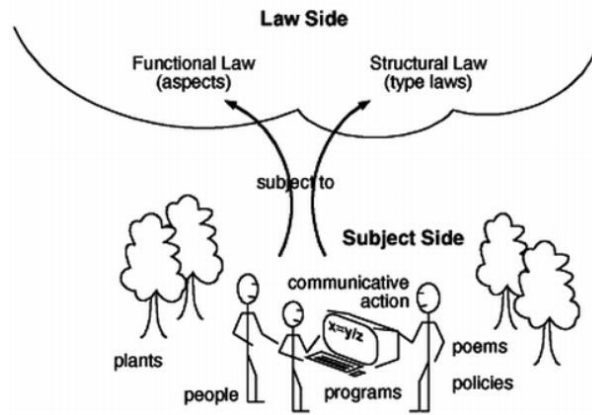


Fig 2. Law and subject (entity) sides.²⁰

Law presupposes subjects (things that are subject to it). Thus, temporal reality has two sides: the subject side and the law side, as seen in Fig. 2.

¹⁷ Andrew Basden, 'A Brief Overview of Herman Dooyeweerd's Philosophy', *All of Life Redeemed*, 5.4 (2007), see first paragraph, <https://www.allofliferedeemed.co.uk/basdenoverdooy.htm> [accessed 19 December 2022].

¹⁸ Andrew Basden, 'Two Sides of Reality: Law-Side and Entity-Side' *The Dooyeweerd Pages*, <http://dooy.info/2sides.html> [accessed 20 December 2022].

¹⁹ 'Two Sides of Reality: Law-Side and Entity-Side', *The Dooyeweerd Pages*, see the first paragraph.

²⁰ See Figure 2., under 'Law and Subject', <https://www.allofliferedeemed.co.uk/basdenoverdooy.htm> [accessed 20 December 2022].

6 SUITE OF MODAL ASPECTS

While employing his theoretical thought process via the *CFR* ground-motive in reference to reality, Dooyeweerd felt it vital to develop a categorical explanation of our experiences, these experiences demonstrate a number of 'modalities' which he refers to as 'aspects' of organization or laws. Subsequently, Dooyeweerd develops his most famous work, the 'Suite of Modal Aspects'.²¹

Aspects	Kernel Meaning
Quantitative	Amount
Spatial	Continuous Space
Kinematic	Movement
Physical	Mass, Energy, Forces, Material
Biotic	Organism, Life Function
Sensitive	Sense, Feeling, Response
Analytical	Distinction, Concepts, Logic, Pieces of Data
Formative	Goals, Technology, Structure, Processing, History, Construction, Techniques
Lingual	Symbolic Signification
Social	Social Relationships and institutions, roles
Economic	Management of Scarce Resources
Aesthetic	Enjoyment, Harmony, Humor
Juridical	Punishment, Reward, Due
Ethical	Self-Giving love, Generosity
Pistic	Belief, Commitment, Vision, Certainty

Table 2. Dooyeweerd's Aspects.²²

These modalities come about from human interaction with reality which includes both perceptions and conceptions.²³ A model for studying interactions in people's lives is provided by Dooyeweerd's suite of modalities. This model consisting of intrinsic meaning can be used to analyze issues in all spheres of human experience, including social, legal, and ethical ones. Thanks to this model, we may comprehend views and have a substantial foundation to create linked understandings.

Elaborating on his aspects, Dooyeweerd writes:

"An indissoluble inner coherence binds the numerical to the spatial aspect, the latter to the aspect of mathematical movement, the aspect of movement to that of physical energy, which itself is the necessary basis of the aspect of organic life. The aspect of organic life has an inner connection with that of psychical feeling, the latter refers in its logical anticipation (the feeling of logical correctness or incorrectness) to the analytical-logical aspect. This in turn is connected with the historical, the linguistic, the aspect of social intercourse, the economic, the aesthetic, the jurial, the moral aspects and that of faith."²⁴

²¹ H. Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, vol. 2, *The General Theory of the Modal Spheres*, trans. H. the Youngest and David H. Freeman, (The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1969) 2nd ed.

²² Sina Joneidy & Andrew Basden, 'Exploring Dooyeweerd's Aspects for Understanding Perceived Usefulness of Information Systems', *Rozenberg Quarterly*, (2011), <https://rozenbergquarterly.com/iide-proceedings-2011-exploring-dooyeweerd-s-aspects-for-understanding-perceived-usefulness-of-information-systems/> [accessed 20 December 2022].

²³ D. Eriksson, 'Multi-Modal Investigation of a Business Process and Information System Redesign: A Post-Implementation Case Study', *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, vol. 18 no. 2, pp. 181-196.

²⁴ H. Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, vol. 1, Jordan Station, (Paideia Press, 1953-1958), p. 1.

7 SUMMARY

Some might claim that during his career “Dooyeweerd does not provide answers. He does not even primarily provide questions,”²⁵ though Dooyeweerd's contributions to philosophy may not give answers or questions, what he does supply is a tangible non-dualistic approach that provides us with a foundation for understanding, relation, and meaning. His appraisal of the four ground-motives and knowledge of the presuppositions through *transcendental critique* makes us wonder if our base of knowing has a deeper commitment. Dooyeweerd's *Law-Side and Entity-Side* offers us an intelligible way to assess reality in relation to relevant aspects of human experiences. Others have adopted Dooyeweerd's methodology and insights via his *Suite of Modal Aspects* and applied them to a wide range of academic disciplines, including math, chemistry, physics, biology, psychology, logic, history, linguistics, sociology, economics, aesthetics, politics, ethics, theology, as well as to a wide range of other activities, like soccer, landscaping, information systems, education, sustainability, farming, and others.²⁶ Dooyeweerd's understanding of ‘meaning’ over ‘existence’ perpetuates value throughout our lives.

If just one thing was accomplished through Dooyeweerd's Cosmonomic Philosophy, it was to Dooyeweerd: “meaning is something we are, not an attribute we have..”²⁷



Fig. 3 Herman Dooyeweerd.²⁸

²⁵ Andrew Basden, ‘A Brief Overview of Herman Dooyeweerd's Philosophy’, *All of Life Redeemed*, 11. (2007), <https://www.allofliferedeemed.co.uk/basdenoverdooy.htm> [accessed 21 December 2022].

²⁶ Steve Bishop & Gregory Baus, ‘You Should Know Dooyeweerd’, *The Laymen's Lounge*, <https://thelaymenlounge.com/you-should-know-dooyeweerd/> [accessed 21 December 2022].

²⁷ Andrew Basden, ‘A Brief Overview of Herman Dooyeweerd's Philosophy’, *All of Life Redeemed*, 7.5 (2007), <https://www.allofliferedeemed.co.uk/basdenoverdooy.htm> [accessed 21 December 2022].

²⁸ Unknown, *Herman Dooyeweerd*, (Installation at Audio Visueel Centrum van de Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dooyeweerd.jpg> circa 1930, [accessed 22 December 2022].

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See Figure 2., under 'Law and Subject', <https://www.allofliferedeemed.co.uk/basdenoverdooy.htm> [accessed 20 December 2022]

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DOOYEWEERD'S COSMONOMIC PHILOSOPHY

Unknown, *Herman Dooyeweerd*, (Installation at Audio Visueel Centrum van de Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam),
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dooyeweerd.jpg>, circa 1930, [accessed 22 December 2022]