

Dooyeweerd's First Letter to the Curators

April 27, 1937 [Excerpts]

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Note: Dooyeweerd's first Response to the Curators of the Vrije Universiteit consisted of 4 pages. The following is a translation of two excerpts from it, as they appear in Verburg, pp. 213-14.

Excerpt regarding interpretation of the word 'substance':

Although I willingly do so, I really regard it as difficult to excuse my colleague's identification here of the words substantiality and substance idea with the word separate existence [*eigen bestaan*], and that as a result of this identification he then reproaches me and my colleague Vollenhoven for denying the separate existence of the soul, since we have done away with the "substance idea." If colleague Hepp had now only taken notice of my extensive critical exposition of the substance idea in immanence philosophy, which exposition he could have found in the same Volume III of my work and in Volume II, Part II, he would have then watched himself before having uttered this accusation. For what is in fact the case? The current view of the substance idea in philosophy is not that which Prof. Hepp has put forward, but much rather this, that substance expresses that in the cosmos, the existence of which is grounded in itself, that which is self-sufficient.

Excerpt from the concluding passage:

In following Prof. Hepp's argument in brochure II, the impression becomes ever stronger that he has taken no notice of even the Prolegomena of my work. As is extensively argued in the Prolegomena, the radical break that the Philosophy of the Law-Idea makes with immanence philosophy consists in the fact that the former by the light of Scripture penetrates to the religious root of thought, and that it understands the whole of temporal human existence in its issuance [*uitgang*] from this religious root, its heart in the Scriptural sense. Then it is stated how the fall into sin consists in the falling away of man's heart from his Creator. This is the cause of spiritual death, which may not be confused with either bodily death or with eternal death. The acknowledgement

of spiritual death as the consequence of the fall into sin is so central in the Philosophy of the Law-Idea that if it is negated, one can understand no part of this philosophy. And now my esteemed colleague nevertheless writes on p. 20 of his second brochure “that the deviating opinion deals with the bodily and with the eternal death, but not with the spiritual death.” He cannot possibly defend himself with the remark that this statement concerns only certain adherents of the “deviating opinion.” In the first place, he is speaking completely in general about “the deviating opinion,” and he includes me, too among its adherents. But furthermore, all adherents of the Philosophy of the Law-Idea, my supporter Vollenhoven in the forefront, are united [*homogeen*] on this point. No, already this single statement shows that the whole basis of Prof. Hepp’s critique is not valid. This one central misunderstanding controls the whole design of his critique. The citations given by him have been taken out of context and thereby almost continually misunderstood, since he does not see them in the light of this central Ground-Idea [*grondgedachte*]. This does not only hold with respect to [his critique of] me, but as I have demonstrated v, for all of those whom he opposes, insofar as I have been able to place the citations.