

The Last Interview of Dooyeweerd (1975)

From *Acht Civilisten in Burger*¹

Translated for study purposes only by Dr. J. Glenn Friesen

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The interview was conducted by the lawyer Pieter Boeles in 1975, but it was not published until 1977, after Dooyeweerd's death. It is clear that Dooyeweerd read the transcript carefully, since he objected to the inclusion of part of the interview. See my footnote 6 to the text.

This interview is important for understanding Dooyeweerd, not only with respect to his view of law, but with respect to his social and political views. Dooyeweerd also gives information about the development of his philosophy, his many lecture tours, and his relation to institutions abroad such as the Institute for Christian Studies. Some readers will also be surprised by the view of Scripture and theology expressed in this interview, and by his objections to certain ideas of Abraham Kuyper and Groen van Prinsterer.

I am grateful to Theo Plantinga for his comments and editorial advice.

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It sounds rather strange, but it is really so: the direction in which I have worked out my philosophy and my encyclopedia of legal science² has no forerunners. I can still

¹ J.M. van Dunné, P. Boeles and A.J. Heerma van Voss (eds): *Acht civilisten in burger* (Zwolle: W.E.J. Tjeenk Willink, 1977).

² JGF: The Dutch term 'wetenschap' or science, is used in the broad sense of theoretical thought, and is not restricted to the physical sciences. I have variously translated the word as 'science,' 'theory,' and 'scholarship.'

reconstruct how I obtained its basic idea. I lived in The Hague, and in summer when the weather was good, I would often take a walk in the evening among the dunes. During one such a walk in the dunes, I obtained the inspiration that the various ways that we experience, which are related to various aspects of reality, are modal in character and that there must exist a structure of the modal aspects in which their mutual coherence is reflected. The discovery of what I have called ‘the modal aspects of our horizon of experience’ was my starting point—also for my view of the encyclopedia of legal science.

I then began testing the idea, and it indeed appeared to lead to surprising discoveries. For the sciences are full of what I call ‘analogical basic concepts,’ which take on a different meaning in each science and yet can only be understood in a mutual coherence of meaning. You can carry through this idea in the concept of number, the concept of space, the concept of force and so on.

Legal science also has a concept of force: the force of law. It has its own concept of power: the jurisdiction of law [*rechtsmacht*]. It has its own concept of space: the area in which a given legal order is in effect. That kind of space cannot possibly be reduced to an arithmetical or a physical sense of space. For example, what is the place where a legal fact occurs? I am thinking, for example, of a crime: the poisoning of a lady who lives in London, by means of a poisoned cake that was sent to her from Amsterdam. Where was the tort committed? Anyway, you know all the difficulties that are related to this issue. But that is not a question that would have any sense in physics, or in biology or psychology; it is a typical legal question, which must be solved because its answer determines which law must be applied.

It fascinated me to analyze these issues, for my basic idea was fruitful. It did not appear to be merely a chance passing thought, but the thought could in fact be demonstrated in the various aspects.

And if you have not seen this, you then always run the danger that of applying incorrect concepts; you may think that you are on safe ground, when in fact you are not. That is also the case with the concept of the will—its psychological sense is completely unusable in the legal sciences, and yet it cannot be omitted there, but must be understood in a juridical sense.

“The law” does not exist at all. What exists is constitutional law, private civil law, business law, ecclesiastical law, international law, and so on; there are clearly many branches. But it is not clear what people intend by ‘the’ law. What most people mean by this term is

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a system of forced rules of conduct—leaving aside whether or not they now regard these rules as norms. But then you really get nowhere with the concept of law; after you have put it in a pretty formula, it immediately leaves you in the lurch. In the study of law you soon realize that such a concept of law gives you no genuine line of action. Therefore as soon as I began to develop in a philosophical direction, my first concern was to try to understand the concept of law in such a way that would really serve as a line of action for the whole study.

The plan to become a lawyer was not at all previously fixed in my youth.

I was born here in Amsterdam, in the Van Eeghenlaan. When I had finished the *gymnasium* [academic secondary school], I didn’t know at all what I should study; actually I most wanted to study Dutch literature, not knowing at all what was involved. But then from all sides I received the advice that if I was not certain what to do, then I should study law, because with law you can do anything—that is the well-known clincher to recommend the study of law. And because I didn’t know anything better to do, I then followed this advice. In that way I entered my law studies, and I must say that I have never been sorry about it. For I have obtained a truly great love for this profession.

At home, the situation was like this: my father, whom I can only remember with great love and respect, was from the beginning a grateful student of Kuyper. But my mother came from a different direction of thought. She also belonged to the Hervormde church,³ but she was strongly influenced by the German preacher Kohlbrugge, to whom Karl

³ JGF: There was a secession from the Hervormd church in 1834. Two separate streams resulted from secession, one related to Kuyper and the other to Bavinck; these two streams joined together in 1892 to form the Gereformeerde Church.

Barth has so strongly drawn attention. In Kohlbrugge there was rather a strong mystical inclination, which my mother had also accepted. But later my mother agreed wholly with my father. There was therefore no difference of opinion concerning this point, although when I spoke with my mother, I still observed that there were often ideas that lived in her which certainly did originate in the Kuyperian stream.

When as a young student I arrived at the Free University, I thought that at this university I would surely learn the working out of the Kuyperian view of life, which Kuyper had called 'Calvinistic.' It had had a great influence on me. But I was disappointed in this expectation. The Free University had by that time not grown into a full university at all. There were only three faculties, and in the faculty of law there were only three professors: Fabius, Anema and P.A. Diepenhorst. These three had to manage the whole business of instruction in legal science. I have always been amazed at how they managed to do that—of course not in

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an ideal manner, but with great personal devotion and with a significant degree of pedagogical skill.

There were many differences among these three professors. Diepenhorst was a man—oh well, not of a genial temperament, but he was tremendously industrious. He had read an enormous amount, and he had a rather rhetorically bombastic style that made an impression, and that made it easy to remember certain of his ideas. He taught economics and later also criminal law, but Willem Zevenbergen later took his place in teaching criminal law. Anema had received as his assignment the teaching of private civil law, commercial law and also civil procedure. Later, after Fabius retired, he obtained constitutional law, for that is something he always wanted. He had by then made a name for himself with his excellent book on evidence, but he did not really take much pleasure in teaching private civil law. We certainly observed this in his lectures; when for example a new book appeared by Eugen Ehrlich concerning the sociology of law—he was enthusiastic about that—he would then give a number of lectures about it and he would not lecture on civil law.

Fabius—he was the most dignified professor whom I have ever known. He once resided in the house of Groen van Prinsterer on the Korte Vijverberg in The Hague, where later the Royal Cabinet was situated. He always spoke in a distinguished way and in the most impressive language; that only made a person sleepy—at least me—as you continuously heard the drone of such a distinguished voice!

I also played some mischievous tricks on Fabius. One time we were standing in the corridor of the [university] premises on the Keizersgracht; at that time the Free University could still be accommodated there, since there were as yet no laboratories. We stood there talking and a man came inside, a fishmonger, who asked whether we wanted some fish. At once I had a scandalous idea. I said, “No, at this moment we can’t use it. But you will receive two *kwartjes* [quarter guilders] from each of us standing here if you knock on the door again in fifteen minutes. Then just go inside and you will see an old man who is standing on a chair and speaking. Go up to him and offer to sell your fish to him.”

The lecture began, and we were all a little nervous as we sat and waited. Fabius had begun in his well-known manner: “Democracy, gentleman, represents the dissolution of life! Just as Groen said...” And then would come again a number of citations from Groen van Prinsterer; he was always his authority. And then there was a knock at the door, and the living democracy came inside. I saw Fabius’s face—it became beet red. I thought that he would have a stroke. For Fabius this was a totally unknown situation, but the fishmonger was not concerned. He ran up just in front of the chair:

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“And if you now would like to have a delicious piece of fish and give a treat to your wife...” And then Fabius suddenly exclaimed, “Man, go away.” The fishmonger, having discharged his *Schuldigkeit* [obligation], went away with a surprised face. But of course the mood for the lecture was totally ruined!

Okay, so that was Fabius. Fabius liked me a lot; I really don’t know why. He thought that I was a good student of his. That was something I certainly was not, for he was an archconservative, and he had social views that did not correspond to mine in any respect. I have also honestly said that I have received no inspiration from Fabius. His continual

appeals to Groen and so on, they did nothing for me. On the contrary, they had the reverse effect. Therefore I cannot say that Fabius was my teacher in the strict sense, although he was my dissertation supervisor, since he taught constitutional law.

The one who really had an influence on me was Anema. I don't know whether you knew Anema. He was a very artistically gifted person. He was a Frisian, with a strong Frisian accent. He could lash out in an exceptionally rough way. Fabius and Anema...they were like water and fire. Fabius did not find in Anema the decorum that a professor was supposed to possess. You know, Anema was also a democrat, and all that H. Fabius could see in democracy was "dissolution of life." But what Anema achieved was this. He knew that Fabius always glorified Groen, and then Anema began to play a completely different tune. He said, "Ah, Groen, he was of course a man of importance, but he was not a true historian, nor was he a true jurist or philosopher." And I thought, "What then is really left?" And when Anema spoke about [Julius] Stahl–Groen had a great respect for Stahl, who was the father of the anti-revolutionary party in Germany–then he said, "That Bavarian Jewish boy." Thus he pulled a lot of things to pieces for us. Yes, at that time of life, you gladly adopt such mischievous expressions; we all found it splendid. Really it was more in the negative sense that Anema in this way had an influence on me. He served as the antidote–I would almost say, putting it a bit more strongly–against Fabius's glorification of Groen. From him we learned to see the anti-revolutionary leaders in all their humanity and all their shortcomings. It was a sort of shock tactic that he applied; it worked for him.

But yes, so tremendously much has changed at the Free University. The enormous growth which we have had since the second world war...the number of students, you know, it has become mass education. In the beginning, the attraction was that you could still really have discussions with your professors; at the moment that is completely out of the question. The number of professors has increased so enormously; most of them I do not know at all.

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I lived eight years in The Hague. This was after I, as a young lawyer, had received a varied education in administrative law. First I worked as a temporary adjunct inspector

of direct taxation in Harlingen; after that I worked as adjunct editorial clerk for the municipality of Leiden. In The Hague I was first employed by what was then the department of labour, as the under-secretary (*sous-chef*) of the division for community health; Aalberse was then the minister.

There I had to do some legislative drafting; I also drafted a bill for the withdrawal of water from the ground. That was something borne with sorrow [*smartekind*; see I Chron. 4:9]. I received a compliment from the secretary general when he saw the draft legislation with the memo of information. But my successor received the same assignment; he also had to work on it again. And the crazy thing was, the memo finally came to rest in the archives, for there was nothing that could be gained politically from that project of law. It contained too many difficult points; I felt that myself, for it would first of all require an expansion of the government's powers, and that did not fit well with the political situation at the time.

I remained at that department for about four years. In 1926 I was appointed to teach at the Free University. Thus in 1922 I left the department, and from '22 to '26 I worked at the Kuyper Foundation in The Hague. After the death of Dr. Abraham Kuyper, Colijn and Idenburg established the Foundation for the primary purpose of a deeper study of the anti-revolutionary principles in politics, for which they themselves did not consider themselves sufficiently competent. They believed that they had found in me the person who was equal to this task. This was a very good time for me. Mr. Noteboom, later the mayor of Voorburg, was there; he sat there lost and alone in his room, and on both sides of him were high piles of newspapers. I asked him, "What are you doing with them?" "Yes," he said, "I don't know, I had to subscribe to them and I read important articles in them."

I began by setting up a filing system, which was absolutely necessary. We had subscribed to many periodicals and daily newspapers. Articles that were worth reading had to be clipped out and mounted; they ended up in a file that related to a specific subject. When we received questions from political supporters, we could then send them a file as an enclosure with the response. To my great regret, this filing system, to which I had devoted so much care, was packed up during the German invasion and shipped to

Berlin. It had nothing to do with them, and the Kuyper Foundation lost something very valuable. But later the filing system was again reconstructed.

My dissertation had by then already been published; in 1917 I obtained my doctorate on the thesis *De Ministerraad in het Nederlandse Staatsrecht* [The ministerial cabinet in Dutch constitutional law].

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Other publications of mine had at that time scarcely seen the light of day; I had published an article in het *Algemeen Tijdschrift* about ‘*Calvinisme contra neo-Kantianisme*’ [Calvinism contra neo-Kantianism]. It was not well received. Yes, because just at that time the Genootschap voor Critische Filosofie [Society for Critical Philosophy] had been set up; it is currently known as the Genootschap voor Wetenschappelijke Filosofie [Society for Scientific Philosophy]. Already in the first volume of the ‘*Annalen der Critische Filosofie*’ [Annals of Critical Philosophy], it presented itself in a terribly pretentious way—it repeated three times that critical philosophy was the only scientific philosophy. Okay, I then opposed this in a kind of a bantering way. I showed how in fact on various points there is no correspondence between science and the critical attitude. And yes of course this opened the floodgates [to criticism], and then they were angry. Perhaps I should not have done it, but I was still young, and then you are eager for a fight. Oh well.

As soon as I came to the Kuyper Foundation, I proposed a plan of work to Mr. Colijn and Mr. Idenburg, and my acceptance of the function that they assigned to me was conditional on their acceptance of this plan of work. I designed it so that from the beginning there would be both a practical department to distribute daily advice in response to incoming questions—thus a kind of advisory bureau—as well as a research department that would enter more deeply into questions of law and state. I made time for that in my afternoons and evenings. I was able to order all the books and periodicals that I required, and I could study peacefully.

I was so comfortable there that when one Sunday Colijn came to me and said that, alas, I would have to succeed the prematurely deceased Willem Zevenbergen at the Free University, I was not at all interested. I said, “I would far rather remain here!” Yes, but

that was not possible and I would have to do it and—well, I have done it. I have also never been sorry about this decision, but I did not know that in advance. For I supposed—as would later prove to be incorrect—that the special teaching chair in anti-revolutionary constitutional law, which was being proposed for me by the Kuyper Foundation, would not be well received by Anema.

It was unfortunate that when I went over to the Free University, that was the end of the research department at the Kuyper Foundation. At the Kuyper Foundation, I had wanted to attract students who would want to follow in the direction I had shown and who would want to obtain their doctorate. And there was one student who obtained his doctorate in this manner: De Hartog, who later became professor of ecclesiastical law at Kampen. But Noteboom, who had to succeed me, could not manage the research department. Thus, when he was named as the director, the Kuyper Foundation became merely an

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advisory bureau—just what I had hoped to prevent.

I could accept my professorship at the Free University because I had obtained a scholarly foundation in the reformational direction. I had developed it in the four years that I was able to freely devote to studies in The Hague. I had already worked out the broad lines of my philosophy, which would soon become known as the *Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee* [Philosophy of the Law-Idea]. My teaching assignment was: Introduction to the science of law, the History of traditional Dutch law [*oud-vaderlands recht*] and Jurisprudence. It was a combination that I certainly found attractive. But I said that I would like to replace the ‘Introduction’ with an ‘Encyclopedia of Legal Science,’ because this had for me a special meaning. My philosophy gave a starting point to responsibly work out my basic idea of the encyclopedia.

And this was the starting point. The task of the encyclopedia should include—and this is something that in general most students today also desire—ensuring that the students receive a view of the place that legal science occupies in what was previously called ‘the whole of the sciences.’ The word ‘whole’ must then be taken *cum grano salis* [with a

grain of salt, or with caution], for we do not precisely know how to limit its material content, since it is continually expanding. But one could certainly maintain that word ‘whole,’ as long as it was understood in this sense, that all parts of legal science have a final viewpoint that guarantees their unity, in spite of all specialization. And what is that viewpoint? As far as our science is concerned, it is to be sought in the fundamental *sense of justice* [*rechtsbegrip*], as it was then called. But if you now ask what such a sense of justice means, then all kinds of misunderstandings appear.

This final manner of seeing, which provides all parts of legal science with a *modal* unity of viewpoint, never relates to a concrete something. Thus you can never find it by merely taking a concrete legal system—for example the Dutch system—and then beginning to abstract, and saying, if you only carry this abstraction far enough, then you will come at last to the final basic ideas. That was the prevailing method in jurisprudence, which you can find in Meijers, both in his dissertation and in his later work concerning the universal ideas of civil law. But Scholten, too continually speaks about jurisprudence as if it concerns the discovery of the final basic ideas of legal science. Scholten is still very current. His *Algemeen deel* is a special book.

Scholten is a very remarkable figure, and also a complicated one; more complicated than Meijers. He was strongly influenced by the neo-Kantian understanding of law, especially the Baden school: Rickert, Windelband,

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and Lask. And the philosophy of values [*waardenfilosofie*] was an essential part of that. But he did not remain faithful to it, for he used the general method of jurisprudence to seek the final basic ideas and also the sense of justice itself in its ultimate sense: abstracting until one comes to concepts that one can find in all branches of legal science, and which then must be purified from their particularity. And Scholten calls these the logical basic forms of law. Yes, that is the point where I radically differ from him. For whenever you assume ‘logical basic forms’ of the juridical mode of experience, you are

then really seeking the criterion of the juridical viewpoint within logic. Now it is said that the criterion is in *legal* logic, but then you find yourself turning around in circles.

As I said, I completely differ with Scholten on this issue, although I really stand much closer to him than to Meijers. Because Meijers expressly excludes from science any view that seeks the point of departure for legal science in faith. He is very sure about this, and yes, his view is a completely uncritical standpoint, because of course he also proceeds just as much from a standpoint of belief. Each point of departure, in which a thinker seeks the ‘firm ground’ of his thought, is a point of departure based on belief.

In my view, Meijers’ point of departure based on belief is this: that man, autonomous in his rational capacities, determines the course of his science, and that he is therefore not bound to presuppositions that transcend reason. Meijers also gives an argument for this. He says, “Look, now, if you proceed from a point of departure based on faith, then you already have to give it up as soon as you allow discussion about it.” For in discussions you must use rational arguments—therefore you have then really subordinated your belief to rational reasoning. But that is rather a naïve way of reasoning, one that does not arrive at the true problematic nature of scientific theory.

It is really a proof that Meijers was in fact a dogmatic thinker; dogmatic in the usual sense of the word. As a rule, one does not forsake a dogma, for that is something that has received an axiomatic significance. And for Meijers, that dogma was the autonomy of science, as it is usually called—the idea that science is not dependent on presuppositions that transcend science. Although naturally Meijers himself immediately acknowledged that there are in fact non-scientific presuppositions that may exercise a great influence on one’s thought. But he says—incorrectly—that this is no longer a “pure scientific thought.”

This was undoubtedly the view at the time. Thus when I for the first time made a fundamental attack on it, this was still viewed as a departure from science: “With such a person one can no longer discuss in a scientific way.” At that time I laughed

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about it, but it was really nothing to laugh about, because I experienced the consequences. I was simply ignored.

It took a very long time before this isolation could finally be overcome. In between there was also a change in the whole mentality; the old dogma lost its magical influence. Especially when I subjected it to a critique—and used for this purpose Kant's term, a 'truly transcendental critique,' which penetrates to the final presuppositions that first make scientific thought possible—they could then no longer ignore my work, for it was simply a theoretical method. But good, that has lasted a long time and in the intermezzo I had to get used to the fact that I really came to be isolated. Happily, that time is now long gone, for it is not a pleasurable situation. For if you work hard, and you realize that your work is ignored, that is the worst that that can happen to you in your scholarly work.

I was of course still very young, and then one is also reckless. On the one side your combativeness is then strongly stimulated; but yes, it is not always sensible to put one's self forward quite so militantly. But I have never been sorry about the fact that I had to go through that first phase of lack of appreciation, and I obtained allies relatively quickly.

I have tried to do truly critical research regarding the nature of science, and to show from out of its own nature that it cannot possibly lead to the dogma of the autonomy of science. A necessary condition for science is that it must have a fixed point of departure that is not itself of a scientific character, but which transcends it—and just because it transcends it, that fixed point of departure is able to give the necessary central direction to one's thought.

Every practitioner of science requires a central direction in his scientific thinking that transcends the intrinsic relativity of science, especially if he thinks systematically. This direction does not come from logic, nor from a so-called *reine Wissenschaft* [pure science]; rather, it has a deeper ground. To bring this to light has been the task of the transcendental critique of theoretical thought, with which I have begun. I have worked this out in my work *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*.

As I see it, it is therefore the case that every existing view of law has a religious ground motive. That's how radically I have set it out. It does not have to be the Christian ground motive. There is for example a humanistic ground motive, and a scholastic-

christian ground motive that can be partly Christian and partly non-Christian; there is also a scholasticism rooted in Islam. A religious ground motive

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—because man in the centre of his being is a religious being, who seeks for a fixed ground of his existence. There is really no one who does not search for this. But it can sometimes happen in a very strange manner; a person may seek his fixed ground in, shall we say, having a good position, a comfortable life, and so on.

The New Testament expresses this very crudely: that there are men who make gods of their stomach, and this is intended literally. Man then seeks his fixed ground by beginning with himself. According to the biblical story of Genesis, that was man's original sin—he listened to the temptation “you shall be like God,” that is to say, he was tempted by the prospect of being independent in his existence from God, man and the world in which he was placed. God has shown man a fixed central direction for his life, and has said that it represents true life. But as soon as you no longer do this, and when you therefore go seeking your fixed ground somewhere else, then it says, “In that day you shall surely die.” That is to say that man will then be thrown back onto something that is really a lie, which can provide no true support, and which ends in nothingness. I have always taken the standpoint that one should begin any discussion with those who think differently by playing completely fairly. I have also taken that standpoint with students who could not accept the Christian foundations of the Free University. I have said to them, “If you come to the Free University to study with me, you must carefully consider that I am not neutral. I have a fixed conviction from which I proceed, and I will also let you see the influence that this conviction has on my scientific train of thought.”

That was of course the most important point: that I attacked the autonomy of science. I knew at that time that I could only reach my goal if I could demonstrate the inner point of connection between scientific thought and—in my case—Christian faith. If I could not demonstrate this, then those who were of the opinion that science and faith needed to be sharply separated would have every right to say, “Now yes, in this manner you can perhaps exercise critique from out of your standpoint of faith on those of us who practice pure science, but that has for us no more proof than if a novelist should find that one of

your scientific works is in conflict with his aesthetic views. You also would not care about that.”

In giving lectures, there was one thing that I made sure to do: I did not assume that my students knew *anything*. You must explain everything, and if you introduce a new idea you must give a clear definition, and continually repeat and illustrate it with concrete examples. The use of new terminology is completely acceptable, provided that you define it in such a way

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that it is fit for theoretical use. After the students had followed my lectures in the Encyclopedia [of the science of law] for a few months, then they began to enter into it, and obtained pleasure from it. I still have piles of letters lying around from previous students, from both the Netherlands and from other countries, who still confirm that to me.

When I began as a professor, I made an arrangement with my wife. I told her, “You need to follow my lectures in Encyclopedia for six months. They must not know that you are my wife, and you will pick up what the students say about these lectures, because I can learn a lot from that.” My wife did this, and I profited a lot from this. When one morning I thought I had done really well, then my wife would tell me, “That was totally off; you had no contact at all with the students.” Another time, when I thought that I had bungled the whole thing, she said, “No, today there was really great interest; you were far more comprehensible than the other times.”

In the beginning, I also thought that what I say about the modal aspects of our world of experience would be only for a small elite; the others would not be interested—or it would not be accessible to them. Fortunately, I have had to give up that opinion. It is not true; for if you deal well with these matters and explain them clearly, the students can follow them step-by-step and they can come to the point that they themselves can work with them.

The most difficult part of the philosophy of the law-idea that lies at the basis of my encyclopedia of legal science is—and I still notice this—that for those who come in contact

with it for the first time, it appears almost impossible to acquire a ‘modal attitude’—that is to say a certain way of experiencing that is directed not to the concrete *what*, but exclusively to the *how*, the manner in which we experience. They immediately want to relate this to concrete things; they say, “Okay, but isn’t physics still concerned with concrete phenomena rather than with abstractions?” But they forget that physics begins with the abstracting of everything that falls outside the field of physics. For example, in physics, you do not become preoccupied with the aesthetic quality of nature and so on, but that is also something that cannot be denied. And in physics you are also not engaged with psychological processes—unless you begin to fashion psychology along the lines of physics, but then it is no longer psychology.

I then decided that it was necessary to deepen my knowledge of philosophy, and not in bits and bites and making a few nice assertions, but going about it in a thorough manner. I then realized that I could not do any more in this regard without making myself familiar with the basic problems of the various sciences. If you haven’t got the foggiest notion of them, you cannot have any discussion about them. For example, how can you discuss the philosophical foundations of physics if you don’t know

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that the whole idea ‘law of nature’ has undergone such a change? It’s the same with mathematics. Kant presupposed that Euclidean geometry was the only possible kind; Kranenburg also had this view to the very end. He simply could not imagine that something else was possible, but in the meantime he failed to notice the enormous change and enlargement that had taken place in geometry. Of course that has also been the case in various other fields.

I then simply began again as a student in the various areas; otherwise I would never have been able to write an Encyclopedia of Legal Science, which was to show the place of the juridical aspect among the other aspects, and the coherence of the aspects with one another. In my lectures, I became aware that the students in the humanities hadn’t the slightest idea of molecules and atoms, of the theory of relativity and of all those things that one must know at this moment—at least as to their basics—for otherwise you cannot really discuss with them. And so in my lectures on the philosophy of law, I often took

the time to inform my students of the elementary ideas of modern physics and chemistry. I often walked around with the thought, “What now are you really doing? You are a lawyer, and you were occupied with the philosophy of law, and now you are entering into all those fields?” But I had to do it. What, for example, do students in the humanities know about differential and integral calculus? I had to give the students a certain insight into this in order for them to understand the role that calculus has played in classic physics. My library therefore is full of books from the other sciences.

Religiously, I am myself in the reformational line—the line that is truly based on the biblical basic idea that all of life stands under God’s sovereignty—and with respect to Christian belief, the line that is based on the idea that the whole of man’s life in this world stands under the Lordship of Christ, or under what is called the Kingship of Christ.

Dr. Abraham Kuyper is the one who has exercised a great and continuing influence on me. But then I must immediately add: not as a theologian. As a theologian he simply followed the traditional scholastic manner of thinking, and not the reformational one. The reformational manner of thinking can be found in his more popular writings and especially in the famous *Stone Lectures* that he held at Princeton University, concerning Calvinism as a life- and worldview.

In those lectures, Kuyper proclaimed a very remarkable proposition. He said, “When we hear the word ‘Calvinism,’ we are inclined to view this as an antiquated theological system. I shall show you another Calvinism, which in my opinion is Calvinism in the spirit of its spiritual father—one that contains

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an all-inclusive life- and worldview.” And then he worked this out in a masterful and fascinating manner, for although his style was rhetorical, it was exceptionally aesthetic and forceful. His *Stone Lectures* have been translated into many languages, and he has really become renowned for them.

As a student, the whole scholastic train of thought went so much against the grain for me that I thought, “When I later get the chance to seriously concern myself with this field, then I know one thing for sure—that I will be against the scholastic school of thought.”

Scholasticism always proceeds from a dualistic standpoint: there are two domains in human life. The one domain is nature, where the *naturalis ratio*, man’s natural reason, holds sway; faith is not required in this domain, and one must there only use rational arguments in order to convince. To this domain belong all ‘profane’ sciences—that is itself such a typically scholastic expression. Only theology was left outside; it belonged to the other domain, that of grace. Theology was held to be the *regina scientiarum* [queen of the sciences] and could not exist without Christian faith. They related this idea only to Christian faith, and they did not see that the idea of western theology as the *regina scientiarum* had a pagan origin, for it came from ancient Greece. This train of thought was literally taken over from the metaphysics of Aristotle—who was certainly not a Christian. Aristotle says, “Theology concerns the final questions, and it gives an absolutely trustworthy answer to them. A ‘metaphysical’ answer, which cannot be contradicted by the other sciences.”

This idea was transmitted to Christian scholasticism in a slightly christianized sense. You can find it, of course, strongly worked out in Thomas Aquinas. A typical scholastic statement is: *Gratia naturam non tollit sed perfecit*—grace does not destroy nature, but fulfills it.”⁴ Thus by the supernatural extra of Christian faith, natural science is also raised up to a supernatural level of perfection. A typical scholastic thought; but a thought that is completely excluded by a true reformation of scientific thought on the basis of the biblical revelation. Such a reformation was not known by the scholastics.

In my opinion, one of the great gains made by Dr. Kuyper is that he was the first one in his time to set the principle of sovereignty in its own sphere over against the state absolutism that was then dominant. He says, “This must be a university that is free—free from both the church and the state.” For when during the middle ages the church ascribed to itself the highest authority in intrinsically scientific and philosophical issues,

⁴ JGF: See Aquinas: *Summa Theologiae*, I, I, 8 para. 2.

it was encroaching on the freedom which should be accorded to science according to its inner nature within its own sphere. The state, too has repeatedly

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tried to rule science in one way or another; of course we have seen this especially in totalitarian regimes, where the state wanted to prescribe the laws for science. Think for example of the Stalinist Soviet regime, which wanted to impose on Russian biologists the teaching of Lamarck concerning the inherited nature of acquired characteristics, which was not supported in any way by what is given in experience. But such attempts are doomed to failure.

Leaving aside the question whether the term ‘sovereignty in its own sphere’ is acceptable, Kuyper has nevertheless used that term in order to clearly contrast his views over against state absolutism. But sovereignty in its own sphere was not an arbitrary thought on his part; rather it was deeply founded in the belief in creation. God created all things according to their own nature. Man cannot change the nature of things; the nature of things resists our arbitrary efforts. And so Kuyper says, “The state has a fixed nature, but also the church, the household, the family community, and so on.” And in each case, this nature is of such a kind that within these fixed spheres, the internal sovereignty is not held not by the state, but rather it is held in its own sphere.

Now as is so often the case with him, Kuyper did not work out this idea. Kuyper did not undertake any research into the mutual relations of these aspects that have sovereignty in their own sphere, in their often-complicated mutual structural interlacements. Because he did not do this, the teaching got stuck. Especially because he did not recognize the fundamental difference between sovereignty in its own sphere and the autonomy of parts of the state as a whole, such as municipalities, provinces and business organizations of a public law character. His followers always used the expression, but they could not work with it because it had been understood far too simplistically. But the basic idea was extremely fruitful and I have taken it over.

It has become one of the foundations of my whole philosophy. For example, I have also applied it to the modal aspects of reality. The aesthetic aspect, the moral aspect, the juridical aspect, the economic, and so on—they all have sovereignty in their own sphere.

That is to say that they do not allow themselves to be ruled by laws that are foreign to their nature.

But sovereignty in its own sphere presupposes at the same time the interlacement of the various spheres of life, and especially in our day, this mutual interlacement has obtained an enormously complicated character. For example, the community of marriage, which has an entirely proper internal sphere that cannot be touched by the state, is of course interwoven with the state in many ways, if only in its form of existence of civil marriage, which was introduced by Napoleon. And just as it originally was also interwoven with the church. And you see this interwovenness running through so many other communities.

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Take, for example, the family of a factory worker; there you will clearly notice how the family relations are interwoven with the business relations. The whole rhythm of life of such a family is then determined by the fact that the father of the family is employed on night shift, or that he must do shift work. And that is very different from the rhythm of life of a farming family, where various members of the family are still active in the business of farming. You can find this everywhere—in a doctor’s family, a preacher’s family—everywhere you see how the societal spheres are woven together with each other.

This is really just like when you look at the wrong side of a piece of embroidery; you become confused by the tangled threads that run through each other, but when you have the embroidery properly in front of you, you see the pattern that continues to reveal itself even in the interweaving of the various structures.

But obtaining this [view of the pattern] does not entail a wiping out of the boundaries. Hey, when you start to do that, then it becomes “at night all cats are black.” Then you also no longer really see any pattern in life, then the whole idea of sovereignty in its own sphere becomes a castle in the air, whose design is detached from factual reality.

That was also a favourite theme of Kuyper. He once gave a speech, “*Verflauwing der grenzen*” [The fading of the boundaries]. He saw a tendency to erode the boundaries

everywhere in modern life. Because people could no longer see the patterns, because they had lost sight of the proper nature of the various spheres of life, or because they had relativized them in a historicistic sense. In this way for example, marriage has lost its fundamental role in the consciousness of many people. Marriage, well yes, what is it now really—it is nothing more than an agreement between two people of a different sex; they remain with each other as long as they find that it is going well, and if it does not go well, then they leave each other. But marriage, according to its inner nature, is really a community of love of a very intimate nature, which can by no means be reduced to the sexual life, but yet does not exist without such sexual life. There is a close inner structural coherence between these two.

At the present time, the woman who thinks in a leveling way wants to do everything that a man does. She no longer wants to acknowledge that a woman has her own irreplaceable and fine task in life; she has to become completely equal to the man. In clothes, also in sports, playing soccer, and so on. There are soccer associations for women...

When sociology properly understands its task, then it must first initiate research as to the inner nature and the inner goal of the various

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societal spheres, and the often extremely complicated manner in which these various spheres are intertwined with each other. Then sociology becomes especially interesting and it can work in a very healing manner. I had really expected that of sociology. I have always held sociology in high regard. But sociology, as it has developed itself in a positivistic sense, has had exactly the wrong effect. In all kinds of ways, it has really ended up by leveling the boundaries between the various spheres of life.

I lament this blurring of boundaries first of all from a religious point of view, because according to the convictions of my faith, these boundaries are not set by man. But what is entrusted to man is the process of giving form to societal relations. For with respect to the form that is given, there is of course an enormous difference in, shall we say, the place of the family in the middle ages, and that which it occupies at the moment. But that

does not affect its inner nature; it concerns the form, which is dependent on historical development.

Russia was a remarkable example of the destructive consequences of the failure to recognize the internal structural principles of what was referred to as institutional societal relations. After the 1917 revolution, the leveling views regarding the institution of marriage came to expression in licentiousness. The law was referred to in a rather denigrating way; it was said to be a means to maintain the class struggle. And with respect to marriage, it was said, “Ah, what they have made of it, such an elevated status, that is not at all true! If a man and a woman find that they can no longer be with each other, then they simply leave each other.”

They tried to follow this through in this view of marriage, and it caught on to a terrible extent in the newly arisen factory towns, for it was the creed of the party and the party was all-powerful. Therefore the young factory workers married and after a while they said, “Now, we don’t suit each other, we will just again separate from each other.” That took on such alarming forms that the revolutionary government sought to take means to stem it. Then they began a propaganda campaign that marriage was holy—in atheistic Russia! That spoke to the people—who were for the most part still deeply religious.

They consulted their book of criminal law for a paragraph regarding the exploitation of the weak position of a person. And then they said, “If a man separates from his wife in this way, we will then bring that under this paragraph of exploitation. Such a man will then be criminally prosecuted.” Yes, this really went against their teaching, but the logic of the facts asserted itself. They felt, if we allow marriage to be undermined in this way, then Russia is affected, for marriage is one of the cornerstones of society. That has always made a deep impression on me, because the

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devaluation of marriage has also increased outside of Russia.

But if I look at Russia, how it is there, and if I also take into account that Russia has not truly reached a really communistic stage, then I must say that I am terribly thankful that I live in a land where we are still free to breathe and where we do not have such a

suffocating totalitarian regime. That is also my objection against neo-Marxist sociologists, that they take this so lightly in their critique of society. Of course they should also not approve of everything that occurs there. But in the meantime, they have already made a choice: the capitalistic system must disappear and give place to that other system—communism. And that should then necessarily bring with it, as you know, the ideology of the withering away of the state. The state should not be abolished, but the domination of other persons should make way for the ruling of business-like management; the relation between the public authority and its subjects is intended to clear the field for purely economic relations.

That is an economic expectation of the future, detached from the historic development of western society. We must of course have a critical stance with respect to our present societal form, that is very clear, but the question is what you want to substitute for it. I never find it fair when only a negative critique is exercised on the existing system and nothing is proposed in its place except an expectation for the future, a sort of ideology which makes no one any wiser. And I find it most dangerous to experiment by using it.

Night was my most productive time. When I worked at night, I drank the strongest possible coffee; unfortunately I smoked a lot, for I had the feeling that I needed to smoke in order to work. Without a doubt it stimulates a person. Earlier [in life] I kept this up until very late, for I had the feeling that I was never finished. Now I can no longer do that, and I am just thankful that I can still work for several hours during the day.

Of my second larger work, which was also supposed to become a trilogy, *Reformation and Scholasticism in Philosophy*, only the first volume was published, *The Greek Prelude*.⁵

In that work I have given a critical view of the development of Greek philosophy from out of the Greek ground motive of form and matter, and I have shown how that ground-motive lay at the foundation of traditional scholasticism. I did that during the war, by

⁵JGF: Herman Dooyeweerd: *Reformation and Scholasticism in Philosophy: The Greek Prelude*, tr. Ray Togtman (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2004).

candlelight and now and then by using a gas lantern, but it usually broke out into flames. I therefore had to quickly extinguish it.

Originally my program was this: I would first work out the *Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee* so that it could be published; then would come *Reformation and Scholasticism in Philosophy*,

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a trilogy that would be directed against the scholastic school of philosophy, and then above all the *Encyclopedia of Legal Science*, which was especially near to my heart. Now, concerning these last two points I have failed⁶; I was not able to accomplish them completely. Of the second trilogy, the second volume is by far the most encompassing. It has been ready in manuscript form for several years already, thus it could really be published in that form. But I have not done that; all at once I had no more interest in it. That occurred because after the war the traditional scholastic school of philosophy totally lost its foothold. The theological faculty of the Free University was completely reborn, so to say; it proceeded in a totally different direction.

⁶ JGF: Following the interview, Dooyeweerd edited out some statements that appear to be from this point of the interview:

Nu, op die laatste twee punten heb ik gefaald, dat heb ik niet kunnen volbrengen. Maar dat komt omdat ik het niet in de hand had. De richting die je werk neemt kun je niet van te voren programmeren. Je kunt het wel doen, maar dan komt opeens over je: ik heb te hoog gemikt, ik heb geen rekening gehouden met bijzondere omstandigheden

[Now, concerning the last two points, I have failed; I could not accomplish it. But that is because I was not in control of what happened. The direction that one's work takes cannot be determined in advance. You can try to do that, but then suddenly you realize: I have aimed too high, I did not take account of special circumstances.]

This information is in a letter dated September 1976 to Dooyeweerd from P. Boeles of the law firm Goudsmit & Branbergen (in the Dooyeweerd Archives, *Lade I*, 1). The reference is to page 14 of the original transcript. Dooyeweerd wanted to delete this from the interview. Mr. Boeles tried to persuade him to keep it. He thought that it showed Dooyeweerd's humanity, and that even a great man could fail.

The *Encyclopedia*, too has never been published. Students did edit a published edition in two volumes, but they never asked me my permission for that. It was scandalous, for I had myself edited lecture notes in which no single error remained. And the edition edited by the students was full of the grossest errors and typos. It was more than horrible, and they even dared to send it to me. They thought that I would be happy about it!

Meanwhile, the reasonably well-edited mimeographed copies, although they were clearly marked “Not for Retail Sale,” were sent out by the publishers on a rather large scale to interested persons even outside of the university circle of my students, even to foreign countries. In this way the president of the High Court of South Africa, who had studied it with enthusiasm, was able to write an introduction to it, intended for the law students at the South African universities.

My successor at the Free University, Van Eikema Hommes, has for several years published a work concerning the *Elementary basic ideas of legal science*, in which my encyclopedic method to track down these basic ideas has been extensively worked out.

I have noticed that sometimes there are whole parts of my more practical work that have faded from my memory. For example, the time that I was involved in rehabilitation work. I was among those who set up the Protestant Christian Rehabilitation Association; for this we were able to rouse the interest of that part of the Protestant population that did not care for a neutral society.

At that time I was also involved in the Central College for the Prison System, Care for Psychopaths and Rehabilitation. Enschedé was also involved in it and along with others so was Muller, the well-known police magistrate who was the Editor in Chief of the *Tijdschrift voor berechting en reclassering* [Periodical for Adjudication and Rehabilitation]. He was upset at me for having set up the Protestant Christian Rehabilitation Association. I said, “Yes, but you are looking at this incorrectly. This is

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not a sectarian movement. The reverse is true: you have a few Protestant Christian members, but you have not been able to obtain any foothold for the great majority of the

Protestant Christian part of the population. We will likely be able to do that, therefore you lose nothing thereby.”

Some change in Muller’s attitude did come about. During the occupation, Pompe, Muller and I formed a group of three; we discussed what should occur after the liberation and were together able work out a program. I found that very enjoyable. Then Muller noticed that I joined in this work *con amore* [with love]. But Muller spoke again at the commemoration of the 25 year anniversary of the Protestant Christian Rehabilitation Association, and then there appeared again the snake in the grass, for [he said] that by setting up this association I had nevertheless brought a disintegrating influence into the rehabilitation work.

At the present time the rehabilitation associations have arrived at such a degree of cooperation that they even have a common publication—it is called *Krij*. But of course I am a bit out of touch. I have had to give up several of these things. I took care to start cutting back as soon as my retirement commenced. I am now 81, and at that age you can no longer do what you could earlier. I have always continued to do the more practical work as long as possible, for otherwise you lose your connection with life. If you just sit studying and toiling away at books, then you do not receive the necessary freshness of view that you need so badly. When it comes right to it, you have to leave science to science, and then you go and do what you must do in practice. And you must be able to afford to do this; if you can’t then you are a twisted person.

Yes, I have certainly managed to obtain some influence in a number of countries. For example, in Japan there was published a Japanese edition of my *In the Twilight of Western Thought*, in which several of my American lectures have been bundled together. They sent me a copy. I could not check it in any way, they could have made me say anything [in the translation]. But according to the letter that accompanied it, it had been translated by one of the professors of Kwansai University, who was completely at home in the Philosophy of the Law-Idea. That was something I just had to take on faith. And there was also a Korean translation published of a French lecture that I gave in Montpellier concerning the secularization of the sciences. I was also not able to check it.

In Toronto an Institute was set up that is called *Institute for Advanced Christian Studies* [now the Institute for Christian Studies]. A scholarly staff was associated with it, and the intention was that this would be the germination cell for the establishment of a Christian university. The teachers also obtained students. I visited them when the Institute was still in an old house;

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at that time there was still not much to do. But the second time that I visited they had an enormous building of which they had been able to lease out the upper stories. And on the ground floor below was where the lectures were given and the administrative departments were housed. The number of students grew each year, so there was a lot of interest in it.

But I noticed that again a campaign was launched against it from the theological side. Probably the young teachers associated with the Institute, with the title ‘Assistant-Professor,’ had expressed themselves in a rather defiant manner. You must never do that, especially not against theologians.

At the moment this campaign is still in full swing, and it is not a fair fight. I have been dragged into it unwillingly: everything published by people who claim to be my disciples, but who are completely unknown to me, is charged to my account as if “I am behind it.” And they have discovered in this way all kinds of things in me that are totally wrong. And this is still going on; in a recent article in *Outlook*—that is one of these publications—they have made a summary of all the writings that have appeared that are opposed to the Philosophy of the Law-Idea. They did not mention a single one that was in favour of it, and that number is far greater.

In this way popular feeling is aroused, and popular feeling continues to be aroused in the United States; I also find that to be deplorable. I will not go into it. I do not enter into polemics with young theologians who do not appear to have understood anything of the essential problematics of contemporary reformational philosophy, for I have learned something from Erasmus’s *In Praise of Folly* [*De lof der Zotheid*]. Of course you know it too, it is a fantastic little book! It says that you should really not carry on any polemics with theologians, and for this Erasmus uses a very suggestive image. There was in Greek

mythology a lake somewhere, which gave off a terrible smell when you began to stir around in it. Now, he refers to nothing other than the name of that lake, and he says, “It is not desirable to stir up this lake.”

I had a visit from someone from America who asserted that he had a mandate from an ecclesiastical classis. He was to request an interview with me in order to come to know what my views really were, and what the views were of the disciples who appealed to me—“probably in error,” he then said.

He asked me what I thought about the distinction between the Bible and the Word of God. Now, I speak freely, and I said, “That is just self-evident. You can’t really say that everything in the Bible is inspired. When the Apostle Paul writes to his assistant Timothy that he has forgotten his traveling cloak somewhere and asks him to bring it with him when he comes, are we to regard that text as ‘inspired’ just because it

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stands in the Bible? That would be foolish, wouldn’t it?” But my interrogator was of a completely different opinion. According to him the Bible was “inspired by God word for word” and he therefore found my distinction between the Bible and God’s Word to be an insult to God’s Word. With that of course there was no point in any further dialogue.

No, I have not reacted to this. There is a whole literature of opposition that has arisen, mostly by young theologians from the seminary in Philadelphia [Westminster], who accused me of one heresy after another. I cannot bring myself to take it seriously. I didn’t even know what these heresies involved; I had to look them up in a Christian encyclopedia. What was that again...oh, yes. Sabellianism! That was the title of one article that was written against me: *Sabellianism in the Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea*.⁷ And what was that? I have always said that we may not ascribe the modal aspects

⁷ JGF: The reference is to Vern S. Poythress, a student of Cornelius Van Til. In a paper entitled “Biblical Mathematics,” in *Foundations of Christian Scholarship: Essays in the Van Til Perspective*, ed. Gary North (Vallecito: Ross House Books, 1976, online at [http://www.frame-poythress.org/poythress_articles/1976Biblical.htm], Poythress says at fn34:

to God, in the sense that they define God's essence [*wezen*]. But we can do so in the sense that their origin lies in God's act of creation, but that is completely different than applying them to God. As an example, I then gave the numerical aspect, the aspect of quantity. When theologians discuss the three-in-one, they can then not say, "one plus one plus one equals three," without adding to this, "equals one." If they understand this as an additive sum in numerical language, they then are simply speaking nonsense—this can of course not be. It is also not a number in its original quantitative meaning, but it is a numerical *analogy*. It is an analogical moment in the structure of faith.

A young theologian from Philadelphia said that he always had difficulty with that proposition of mine. He could not see this as anything other than Sabellianism. And this Sabellius appears to have been a theologian who denied that there are three different persons in the Divine essence, and who wanted to speak of only three modalities in the self-revelation of God. Now, the Bible nowhere says that there are three persons; that is something that was made from it [*erbij gemaakt*]. We have difficulty in representing this differently; none of us knows precisely what the tri-unity is. I am inclined not to let this weigh so terribly heavy, but for the scholastic theologians this was of course a great heresy!

“The philosophy of the law-idea, or Amsterdam philosophy, while claiming to take a radically Christian stance, also falls victim to an old heresy-Sabellianism. According to Dooyeweerd, the numerical aspect, subject to mathematical laws, occurs only as one of the diverse aspects of the cosmic order of time. *A New Critique*, Vol. I, pp. 3, 24, 29, fn. 31-32. And cosmic time does not include God, the eternal One. *Ibid.*, fn. p. 31. Hence numerical properties cannot be ascribed to God Himself. $1 + 1 + 1 = 3$, as a theoretical statement, cannot speak about God. "The modal concepts of laws and of subject and object are essentially limited to a special aspect. Unlike the cosmomic Idea, these modal concepts do not in themselves point beyond the diversity of meaning toward the transcendent origin and totality." *Ibid.*, p. 97. If these strictures are taken at face value, they lead to a decidedly Sabellian (modalistic) view of the Trinity. Cf. the author's paper, "Sabellianism in the Philosophy of the Law-Idea," *Philosophia Reformata* (to appear).”

I have not located the paper, and perhaps it was never published in *Philosophia Reformata*.

Yes, in the 1930's and 40's I also had conflicts in the Netherlands with the theological faculty of the Free University. It was then strongly scholastic. Some of them found that I had "sawn Kuyper in two." In an article about Kuyper's view of science, I had shown that there are two lines of thought in Kuyper: that the one, following the real reformational line, had brought forward completely new things in the biblical Word revelation, and the other had remained stuck in the dead end of the scholastic line.⁸ That was then seriously held against me. But oh, that was again a long time ago.

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A sister association of the Dutch Association for Calvinistic (better to say 'Reformational') Philosophy has been set up in both Canada and Australia. And there, too the Philosophy of the Law-Idea has obtained an organizational center. I was also often invited for lecture tours, in France and especially in America. In 1950, I was in South Africa. I had been invited there by various universities. But I think it was in 1960 that I went to America for the first time, when I spent a full week at Harvard University. And the second time was in 1965, again for a full week. Then you learn to know an entirely different kind of student, who has had a totally different philosophical training. And above all: I have learned to express myself freely in their own language; that was not at first possible. When I first went to America, I thought, "I must completely write out the lectures that I will give there, and I must also write out the pronunciation in phonetic script." I practiced this at home, and I thought that this would sufficiently prepare me. I was conclusively dissuaded from this in America. That happened in the following way.

Even before the first real lecture tour had begun, I was now and then sometimes asked to speak somewhere, and in this way I received an invitation to speak to a very limited group in Seattle. I asked, "How large will the group be?" "Well," I was told, "at the most twenty people; it could well be less." And it was supposed to then take place at the house of my host.

⁸ JGF: Herman Dooyeweerd: "Kuyper's Wetenschapsleer," *Philosophia Reformata* 4 (1939), 193-232.

I went there in the evening, prepared with one of the lectures that stood neatly on paper with the pronunciation underneath it. I came there and the host came outside. He said, “Professor, I must offer my apologies, for I thought that we would be here in a very limited group; but it has become known that you are here and now it seems that there is so much interest that I must request you to follow me to a church building.”

Now, I was very shocked by this. I asked myself, “What kind of a church is that?” It appeared to be a very modern and large building, with two or three balconies, I don’t remember any more. But I saw young women there, sitting with their babies on their laps. I thought, “What can I say here about the Philosophy of the Law-Idea? I simply can’t do that. I must make up another subject and then I must try to make something of it; it will then completely fall through, but that is not then my fault—they should not have played this kind of trick.

Well, that’s what happened. I then chose the subject: reformation and Roman Catholicism. They had all heard about that,

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and then I had to try to say something about it. I had to improvise in English, something that I had never done before. And to my great surprise, it worked; in fact it got better over time. I saw that the people really listened, too. I think that I spoke there for an hour and a half.

Afterwards, there was a reception, and people came up to me who had heard me on previous occasions, and they said, “Professor, we have heard you two times, but from now on you must speak like you have done this last time, and not like you did the first time, for then you had a lecture written out, and that was obvious to us!” I made a mental note of this, and since then I have spoken freely everywhere.

The first time that the people had heard me was in a series of three lectures for the synod of the Christian Reformed Church. They were gathering together at the same time and I was there out of politeness. Then they asked me to come forward and to speak to the synod. I said, “Yes, but you are forgetting that I have no ecclesiastical function—so in what capacity do you want me to speak to the synod?” Yes, they knew all that, but they

would still value hearing from me. Then you can't avoid it, so I thought, "OK, this has to be done then." And I gave a talk in which I would not have to deal with the field of theological theory.

But I had also agreed to give three lectures before the synod, for which I had made a selection from the previously prepared lectures, and these did concern the relation of philosophy and theology. Afterwards, I walked behind a couple of preachers who had been present at the meeting and I was very curious what they had to say about it. Then the one said to the other, "Now I have heard Spinoza." Now I must say that in such a reformed milieu that is of course not in the least a compliment.

Through the experiment in that church I grew bold enough to speak freely in their own language. Later I carried this out for myself in the same way that I did my lectures: I made sure that I was prepared, that I knew the material completely, and then I was able to speak freely. The students received a mimeographed set of lecture notes that I had myself corrected; the lecture notes were therefore in order, and for them the students did not need to come to the lectures. But in the lectures I did not restrict myself to what was in the lecture notes, for then they would have been correct to say, "We can spend our time better elsewhere." I therefore spoke freely in class. I could then feel at ease, but I become nervous if I had a paper in front of me to which I was bound.

For the rest of the lecture tour I maintained that free manner of speaking, even at Harvard University, although my heart bounced around a bit there. For when I stood there at that great podium, and so many students

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and professors came, the thought came to me, "Good people, if I now lose the thread, I really don't know what I shall do." For I didn't even have a short summary in front of me, on which I could fall back. But then the only thing you can do is to completely repress the thought, and not allow yourself to dwell upon it, for otherwise you are lost.

Response? Oh yes, after each lecture there was an extensive discussion. The first time it was even so extensive that the leader—who was then Professor Wilde—came to me, took me by the arm and said, "And now we must put an end to this, because tomorrow you

have to give another lecture like this.” I was very grateful for that, for I could see no chance to put an end to this discussion so quickly.

In France I have also had remarkable experiences. I spoke at the Sorbonne; I entered a splendid room—perhaps you know the Sorbonne—that beautiful room with beautiful Gobelin tapestries. It was kept completely dark; only at the table where I was speaking was there a lamp that gave a rather bright light. As I looked out in the room, I looked into darkness. So I could then only hope that the same darkness would not envelop my words.

Afterwards someone stood up in one of the balconies, and I couldn't see the man at all. He was, I was told, a professor—probably an old professor, a real querulous person. He began to forcefully raise objections, only half of which I understood, for he spoke terribly quickly. Now this man remained talking for about twenty minutes, and then I said, “Yes, to my regret I have to say that I have not been able to follow everything. But insofar as I have understood you, I can say that I have no objections against you.” I had heard no coherence at all in what he had said! But Paul Ricoeur, who presided over this meeting, had whispered in my ear that I must not enter into debate with this particular opposition.

There was also a day that was entirely devoted to discussion. There was a woman professor who would not let me go. She disagreed *per se* with every word that I said. It was very difficult to finally shake her off from me.

In this way I have obtained various impressions, by which I was able to see more than merely the little Dutch world. And I learned a lot from this.

In America it was the case that the students are used to two schools in relation to philosophy. The one school is that of linguistic analysis, which has come over from Cambridge and Oxford and through disciples has been spread to America—and then there was logical positivism, as it was called. Those were the two schools that had authority. But I could see very clearly that the students had gradually had enough of them. It must in the long run also become terribly

monotonous, as their teachers continued all the time only with the analysis of language and continually asked, “What do you mean?” and “Why?” and so on, never arriving at the real problems. When the students heard that I defended a wholly different view of philosophy, they wanted to come hear me. And here, too the interest was overwhelming. A philosophy that openly acknowledged that it proceeded from presuppositions of faith, that was something that was unheard of for them. Many keen questions were asked, in which I took great pleasure.

In discussions with followers of other schools, I apply the method that I do not judge them according to my point of departure, but in accordance with their own point of departure, even insofar as it is found only in their unconscious. In order to show how that point of departure works itself out in their whole vision [*beschouwing*]. If I should start by doing that on the basis of my own biblical standpoint, then I would have nothing to say to another person. I would not have any contact with him, and he would say, “That is your conviction and not mine.” Therefore I just begin by showing that a standpoint of faith—and in an even deeper sense, a central religious viewpoint, which is really a ground motive—is in the final analysis the driving force of our attitude towards life, of our actions, and so on. And that in the final analysis it also directs our scientific thought.

One time I was invited by the Humanistic Students Association to give a critique of humanism at a congress. I immediately accepted the invitation; I also found it amusing to do this. And I have to tell you: I have never received such a thoughtful hearing as I did there. Afterwards I could not get away; they continued to remain around me, and they wanted to know everything precisely. I spoke on a Saturday; the day before, a Roman Catholic had spoken and the Sunday after me a well-known man of letters, a professor whose name is not relevant here, was supposed to give an answer on the basis of the humanistic standpoint. He presided over the congress.

When I came inside, this professor received me and said, “Now, I would not want to stand in your shoes!” I asked, “Why not?” Then he said, “Well, if you now intend to defend that completely antiquated Calvinistic standpoint, nothing much of any real discussion will come about.” I said, “I won’t do that; I’m also not planning to fight

humanism, but only to describe it in its development. And if I succeed in that, so that my humanistic audience can recognize itself, then I shall be satisfied.” He said, “Yes, you are skilful enough to do that.” I said, “That is then certainly a serious misunderstanding. It is not a matter of being skillful, but it is totally my view of science.” Then I even discussed

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a few points with him. I said, “You speak in such a self-assured way, so I assume that you have thought about it deeply.” Then he blushed and said, “Well, I have not really thought about it that much.” Then I asked him, “Would it then not be better that you also reserve your judgment until you have done that?”

Later I heard how it went that Sunday. He answered the objections that the Roman Catholic speaker had brought up against humanism. And then the students called out in the room, “Yes, but we are not interested in that, for we know that. But we would like you now to answer Professor Dooyeweerd.”

But he didn’t do that, and the students took it especially ill of him. Then they sent me a couple of copies of their student paper, in which a student had taken it upon himself to answer me.

After the lecture I gave that day, the students split up into groups, and each group had a representative. And each representative then related what the findings of his group had been regarding what I had said. The representative of the first group stood up and said, “Yes, we have discussed it in our group, and I must say, Professor Dooyeweerd has stated that he was not going to give any fight against humanism, but only offer us a description. We must admit that it has indeed been a fair description. We have recognized ourselves in it and we must also admit the conclusion of the description, which amounts to saying that humanism at the moment has come into a situation of having lost its roots. We therefore shall have to learn to live without the fixed ground in which we previously believed.”

That was a totally remarkable reaction, and I was very satisfied with it, because it was evident from it that I had in fact achieved a foothold here, and that I had not merely talked around them. The representative of the second group stood up and also said about

the same thing: I had given an accurate description, but just that description had been a deadly critique.

Humanism is not paganism: it has passed through Christianity and has really, if I may say, decapitated the whole Christian teaching. It has been said, “When it comes to love for our neighbour we are completely one.” That is a genuine humanistic standpoint. But as soon as you begin to speak about love towards God, they no longer agree with you. But that great commandment of love as Jesus taught it to us, that is not so much a moral commandment as a religious commandment. It also includes the love towards what we call our “fixed ground ideas.”

One can in fact seek a different origin, for example in logical thought. You find that strongly in the Marburg school

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of neo-Kantianism. It has developed a “logic of origins.” Starting from man’s logical function it wants to trace back to their logical origin all the categories—as they are called—that allow us to make distinctions in our temporal life. A clear absolutization of what I call the logical aspect. For what finally is the logical? It is a modal aspect of our thought activity characterized by a certain manner of distinguishing: the analytic breaking apart of what has been given to us as a whole [*ineen*]. But then an awful confusion has arisen because people set up the logical in an absolute way, separate from the inter-modal relations in which alone it can function.

This is also the way that Kant’s view came about. Kant was also clearly a humanist; he still had a certain belief in the Bible, but certainly not in the biblical sense. For him, man was an absolute *Selbstzweck* [end in itself], and there you find the humanistic standpoint very clearly put into words. As soon as you say such a thing, you deny the dependence of human existence. Man is then placed upon his own foundation; as the Bible puts it he is “like God,” whereas man was only created according to the image of God. And as soon as man believes himself to be something in himself, independent of his divine origin,

there arises the absolutization of the relative. It is by such absolutization of one aspect that I also explain the existence of the various “isms” in the philosophical vision of reality. You know them well. You have an energism that even went so far that its adherents also wanted to reduce the whole of law to a form of energy. And of course there is a biologism, a vitalism, a psychologism, a logicism, a moralism, an aestheticism...anyway, you can follow it in this way—all these views of reality have been defended in the history of ontology.

I was often sharp in my critique of others; perhaps sometimes too sharp. But that was not out of a desire to be sharp, but because the points that we in issue were so very important for me, as in the case of my critique of Kranenburg.

Langemeijer has also fought against Kranenburg, but in the Langemeijer manner: with velvet gloves. I was sharper. But Langemeijer is also an exceptionally good-hearted person; he would be the last person to offend somebody. He is always exceptionally polite and friendly with respect to opponents. I like him very much. I could tell that Eggens liked me in one way or another; he always sought me out during the sittings of the Royal Dutch Academy of the Sciences, and one time he said, “I have read your critiques of Kranenburg and Van Apeldoorn. Splendid! Many more must be criticized in such a way. They do not accept it from me, so you should just go do it.”

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Eggens was very sharp-witted, and without doubt a figure who often antagonized others through his sharpness. He did not intend any harm by this, but yes—he would say it very clearly. And thereby he wanted to elevate his Hegelian manner of thought to the standard of “reasonable thought.”

I became involved in a critical exchange of thought with Kranenburg, and personally I liked him a lot. There was never any animosity from my side against Kranenburg. But I found my critique of him to be necessary. The legal magazine *Themis* sent me a copy of his book *De Grondslagen der Rechtswetenschap* [The Foundations of Legal Science] for review. I had thought that Kranenburg was aware of my viewpoint—at least in its broad

lines. But that appeared to be not at all the case; he had expressed himself about it without having seriously read my work. That is of course always dangerous.

In my view—and Paul Scholten also saw this—his error was that he saw the problematics of justice in too simplistic a manner. He supposed that he had found a formula to define the content of justice and to thereby be able to solve all questions related to it. I believe that this formula ran something like this: “A person receives just as much pleasure and displeasure as the pleasure and displeasure for which he has created the conditions, and he receives these as a reaction from the side of the state.” Paul Scholten immediately attacked him on the right of inheritance, and objected, “In your train of thought the whole right of inheritance has to be abolished.” Precisely—Scholten had struck the nail on its head.

Even that expression “pleasure and displeasure.” I found that already really crazy, because law has nothing to do with that, with such psychological ideas of pleasure and displeasure. Law also has no hold over that; it is a psychological question. Kranenburg had again taken this over from Krabbe and Krabbe in turn had taken it over from Heijmans. Heijmans had begun as a lawyer but he later showed himself to be a philosopher, completely in the psychological neo-Kantian school.

At that time I followed the development of neo-Kantianism with great interest. The one to whom I really owe a lot is Hans Kelsen. I was so enthusiastic over the purifying work that he had brought about; I bought and read everything new that was published by him. Until I finally came to the conviction, “This leads nowhere” [*Dit gaat dood*]. In particular, I initially greeted with joy the razor-sharp criticism of Rudolph Stammler and Hans Kelsen regarding the naturalistic and psychologistic schools in law, and their attempt to purify law from being mixed with non-juridical points of view. But their cardinal error was that they lost sight of the fact that the juridical aspect can only reveal its irreducible modal meaning in its unbreakable

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meaning coherence with all the non-juridical aspects of the horizon of human experience.

This system, the *reine Rechtslehre* [the pure doctrine of law], is a *contradictio in terminus* [a contradiction in terms]. For the juridical aspect only has meaning in the unbreakable coherence with other aspects. If you cut off and deny that relation, then there is nothing left of the juridical. Stammler and Kelsen thought that they had shown the greatest service to the irreducibility of law by developing a *reine Rechtslehre*, where each relation with other sciences had really been broken.

In his critique, Kelsen was always the strongest. He immediately got hold of the weakest points of his opponents, and he also possessed a splendid Jewish sense of humour.

I don't know whether you knew Rudolf Smend; Van der Pot, the professor of constitutional law at Groningen, was fond of his ideas. In his textbook on constitutional law, Smend's idea of the state is mentioned with particular approval. And Smend always spoke about the state as a continual integration—his main work is entitled *Der Staat als Integration* [The State as Integration].

Now Kelsen obtained a copy, and he immediately attacked a certain assertion of Rudolf Smend by which he wanted to illustrate the meaning of the *Integrationslehre* [teaching of integration]. It concerned Frederick the Great; he calls him *Friedrich der Adler*: “*Zwei Augen schliessen sich und seine ganze Nation ist desintegriert!*” [Frederick the Eagle: “Both eyes close and his whole nation has disintegrated!"]. Smend writes, “*Dieses Beispiel ist sehr belebend*” [This example is very invigorating]. And immediately, Kelsen attacks:

Indertat, sehr belebend! Ins Besondere für die viele Tausenden, die in den zahlreichen Kriegen des Friedrich des Adlers zum Tode integriert worden sind.

[Indeed, very invigorating. Especially for the many thousands who in the numerous wars of Frederick the Eagle were integrated to death.]

That is truly masterful. Kelsen was full of this kind of response.

He became very old, more than 90. He even gave a contribution to the *Festschrift* [*feestbundel*] in my honour.⁹ That was an important contribution, for there for the first time he set out the great turning point in his scientific view. It was like this: in his earlier view of the *reine Rechtslehre* he chose in the first place to take a position against what he called the “theory of imperatives”—that law consists of imperatives, of commands. But Kelsen could not see this in any way except as a psychological aberration in the teaching of law. Thus there did not remain much of the theory of imperatives; law was transposed by him into a system of *reine Rechtssätze* [pure legal judgments]. ‘Satz’ here means “logical judgment.” Thus they then become purely logical judgments, but in a hypothetical form: *If A, then B should occur*. And for that “*B should*” one had to fill in the rest, whether it be restitution, whether punishment—that was then the legal consequence. And the legal fact that had as its consequence such a legal consequence, that legal fact was the condition for such a legal consequence. In this way, all of law was transposed into *Rechtssätze*, which are not directed at anybody. That was a necessary consequence of his logicistic view of law. They are judgments that really float around in the air, for he had not retained the strong Kantian separation between *sein* [is] and *sollen* [ought].

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[For Kelsen] the imperative belonged under the *sein* [is], and the *sollen* [ought] was the field of law, of legal norms. But then came the view that—alas, was also accepted by Paul Scholten—to the effect that there are logical basic forms [*grondvormen*] that really give law its character. Yes, in this way Kelsen broke through the boundary between the logical and the juridical aspects, and in the final analysis he allowed law to again be rooted in logic, although it is then called ‘transcendental epistemological logic.’ But Kelsen did not see that; he thought that in his view he had now really completely purified the juridical field of knowledge from all non-juridical elements.

⁹ JGF: Hans Kelsen, "Law and Logic," in *Philosophy and Christianity: Philosophical Essays Dedicated to Professor Dr. Herman Dooyeweerd* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1965), at 231-36.

But in his contribution to my *Festschrift*, he broke with this position; he writes there, that he now must admit that the legal norm must be strongly distinguished from the logical judgment, and he again brings in the theory of imperatives. Law is set in an imperative that has as its meaning a juridical *sollen* [what ought to be]. But the imperative itself is different, it is of a psychological nature. It wants to exercise influence on people—it belongs to the field of the *sein* [what is]. But, says Kelsen, you can no longer separate the two, as I earlier taught: a *sein* lies at the foundation of all positive *sollen*. This is therefore a later development, and he was himself very satisfied with it. But I was not at all satisfied with it.

A number of my students have chosen politics; Biesheuvel and Aantjes for example are students of mine. But I myself have consciously not chosen politics. When I came to the Kuyper Foundation, Colijn and Idenburg said to me, “You can now go in various directions. You can also, if it attracts you, go into politics.”

I then considered this, and made a decision: “That I will never do! For if I do that, then I cannot carry out my program, as I see it laid out for my life. I see no chance to seriously practice scholarship in the direction that I have chosen and at the same time give myself to politics, become a member of Parliament [*kamerlid*], and so on.”

For in my opinion, scholarship also requires the entire person. The thought, okay, you can do it half time, that is of course no longer possible, especially today. It is a function that requires you totally. Thus, you have to decide.

I have also said this to my students. I said, “If you want to go into politics, then you can also be of service there. But you must consider only one thing: there are at the moment enough people in politics who do a good enough job bringing the reformational standpoint to expression. But there are not enough people who can practice science in the Christian reformational sense.”

The advantage of the scholarly

direction is of course that you can peacefully arrive at your convictions—as long as we still live in a free nation. In Russia and China that is no longer possible. But in politics, the parliamentary system necessarily requires making compromises. You can no longer stand on your conviction and carry it out *à tort et à travers* (without right or reason), for you must govern. You must form a cabinet that no longer can come from just one party; thus you must mix water with your wine, with all the consequences that follow with this.

In science you do not have that difficulty—at least as long as you stand up for your point of view, and as long as you do not for the sake of success mix water with wine, and then begin to accept a little intermediate point of view that is really in conflict with your conviction and has nothing to offer.

I find scientific integrity, scientific honesty to be a matter of the highest priority. If you do not take it seriously, then you are no longer doing science. Therefore during the time when there was still no expectation that the prevailing mentality would in some way include my direction of thought, I said, “I cannot do anything except to continue on the way I have chosen. I am honestly reflecting my views and my convictions of life. I have also honestly allowed to be seen the influence that they have had on my scientific thought—which in this way loses nothing of its scientific character. On the contrary!”

The scientific character is deepened when you see what the ground motive really is that determines the direction of your thought. But today these are all thoughts that have a much greater chance of being received with a certain reserved sympathy than was earlier the case. I believe that it is currently already much easier to open a dialogue.

I hope that in the future the Philosophy of the Law-Idea will always remain in motion; it must not be consolidated into a closed system. My disciples must especially not think that this is *der Weisheit letzter Schluss* [the Final Conclusion of Wisdom], for there are always still too many question marks placed by myself. And disciples sometimes have the tendency to do away with those question marks. But I can see before my eyes how the reformational ground motive of this philosophy keeps working and continues to work further.

It maybe sounds a little strange, but it is still the pure truth: the program that I set up was really not so much an invention of my own—I have from the beginning had the conviction

that it was a task that was laid upon me. I had to do it. And that also allowed me not to be afraid of the criticism and the isolation in the early years. Otherwise I would not have been able to bear it.

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