

DOOYEWEERD AND CREATIONISM

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Current interest in the Cosmonomic philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd warrants an analysis of this system in terms of special creationism. Dooyeweerd's views are explained and their implications for biology are explored. It is suggested that a consistent development of Dooyeweerd's "non-evolutionary religious root" in science should lead to nothing less than Biblical Creationism.

The position of Herman Dooyeweerd has yet to be presented in its full dimension to the American mind. Abraham Kuyper, the great theologian, founded Amsterdam Free University and left Dooyeweerd as one of his outstanding successors.

Dooyeweerd's great work is his *New Critique of Theoretical Thought*.¹ This imposing book is primer for the so-called *Cosmonomic* school of thought which is now very influential throughout Dutch Reformed circles.

Dooyeweerd's work affords a unique reflection of the entire spectrum of life. He presents the whole corpus of theoretical thought within its natural setting. This results in a highly enlarged awareness of total reality. There is a new Archimedean leverage point from which theoretical thought can be apprehended as one block. And what emerges for Dooyeweerd is a hierarchy of progressive complexities.

Such thought regarding hierarchies is not foreign to the modern mind. For example, the renowned evolutionist George Gaylord Simpson writes of a biological hierarchy of complexities extending level by level from atom through cells and populations to total environment.² Dooyeweerd's hierarchy is still more embracing. It begins with time and space, goes from inorganic to organic, through growing complexities of human intellectual patterns reaching finally to faith and love. For brevity a highly concentrated summary of such spheres as Dooyeweerd has thus far analyzed is presented in Figure 1.

This theoretical spectrum is also distinguished as an inter-modal coherence. By this we understand that every sphere has an anticipatory phase pointing toward the next higher sphere. The clearest example of this is seen in the anticipatory phase of the first or numerical sphere heralding the second or spatial. Those familiar with mathematics will readily discern that the more complex functions have a spatial orientation and are anticipatory of the spatial and next-higher sphere.

But the significance of such coherence is concealed, argues Dooyeweerd, save to those whose minds are irradiated by Holy Scripture. The mind must be subject to Christ at every juncture. If the mind dares attempt to be "autonomous,"

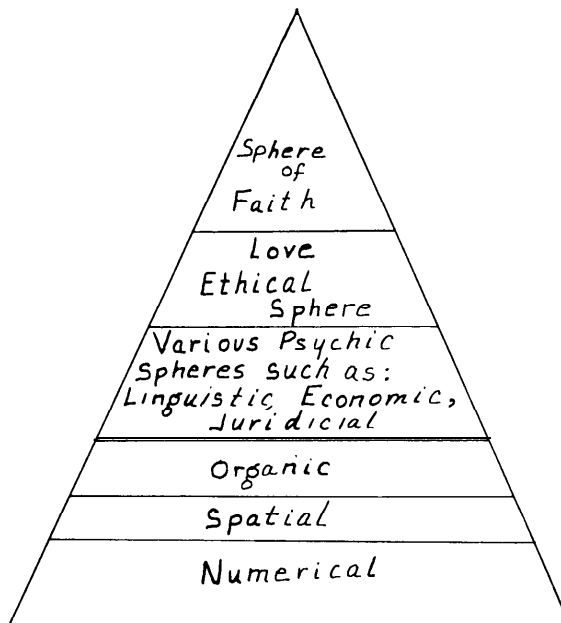


Figure 1. Diagram of the sequential spheres envisioned in Cosmonomic Philosophy.

or become self-centered, this signifies that pride has entered and that condemnation is inevitable. In the *New Critique* Dooyeweerd presents aberrations to the right and left as well as the correct, non-autonomous position.

In the foreword of his opus, Dooyeweerd claims to be presenting a Christian refocusing of the entire corpus of theoretical thought and that this radical, non-evolutionary religious root impregnates every aspect. Regardless of this, things have apparently changed at the Free University—and so soon! This is indicated by the fact that Dr. Jan Lever continues in apparent high regard as Professor of Zoology. For Lever (as quoted by Hebden Taylor³), evolution as a process is completely acceptable. In his book, *Creation and Evolution*, Lever affirms a scheme of origins that provides for considerable evolutionary descent⁴—despite the non-evolutionary assertions of Dooyeweerd's position.

Further confusion exists in that possibly the most vitriolic criticism yet to appear of *The Genesis Flood* by Whitcomb and Morris was prepared by Professor Van de Fliert of Amsterdam Free University.⁵ Although Van de Fliert's polemic style is foreign to Dooyeweerd, it must

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be understood that the Cosmonomic perspective differs from that of the Creation Research Society. The problem of origins is carefully skirted in the *New Critique* although Dooyeweerd issues occasional rumblings against a so-called facile accommodation between the Bible and science.

The late Dr. J. J. Duyvené De Wit was one of just a few in the Cosmonomic movement who maintained good communication with Creationists. De Wit's own view of origins, like that of his mentor, Dooyeweerd, differs somewhat from a fully Creationist stance. In one of his books De Wit mentions a study of Dooyeweerd on "Creation and Evolution" not readily obtainable in English.⁶

But, as De Wit quotes, Dooyeweerd makes it plain that any literal view of time-sequence in Genesis 1—whether it be 24-hour days or geological periods—is out of line with the Cosmonomic perspective.⁷ It is this peculiar avoidance of the interrelationship between plain statements in Scripture and facts of science that separates Cosmonomic thought from Creationism.

Recent publications from Amsterdam (as noted above) indicate that members of the present Cosmonomic mainstream do not concern themselves with the implications of Dooyeweerd's non-evolutionary religious root in the sciences such as biology and geology. In a recent work, however, Hebden Taylor shows those high ideals being realized since he is a follower of Dooyeweerd who is at the same time a strict Biblical Creationist.⁸ This book —*Evolution and the Reformation of Biology*— was recently reviewed by Rousas J. Rushdoony (See *Creation Research Society Quarterly*, 7(3):166 and 167. December, 1970).

Hebden Taylor focuses on a recent discovery in the field of embryology. The genes share the status of "cell code" with what is really a more basic informational system furnished by the egg cortex or cytoplasm. By use of quotations from DeWit it is shown that this thesis (developed by Raven and Waddington) invalidates the evolutionary viewpoint and corroborates that of Dooyeweerd. In other words, Taylor uses the priority and supremacy of cytoplasmic to genetic informational code as vindication of Dooyeweerd over the evolutionary view.

It is hoped that Taylor and other writers of his persuasion will develop a fuller synthesis of

Dooyeweerd's non-evolutionary religious root and a true Biblical Creationism. It is possible that the Cosmonomic philosophy could provide the well-orbed view essential to a consistent Creationism. It is likewise possible that Creationism is what Dooyeweerd should have been seeking all this time in the arena of natural science.

(*Author's Note:* Just before this article went to press, I was pleasantly surprised by a new work which will implement the hopes expressed. It is a 60-page syllabus entitled, "The Unmasking of Evolutionary Thought." The author, Arthur J. Jones, is a graduate student in zoology in Birmingham University. Excerpts from this syllabus have appeared as articles in the magazine, *Christian Graduate*, of the British Intersarsity Fellowship.

There is room here for only a rapid survey but one's impulse is to say of Jones that he is a genius—combining thorough scientific knowledge with sophistication in the field of philosophy. In crisp, business-like English, he has expressed Dooyeweerd's tremendous proposition of a Christ-centered Archimedean viewpoint with respect to the entire spectrum of theoretical thought.

Mr. Jones widens Hebden Taylor's study of the living cell. In plain English he is able to express the basic conceptual framework whereby the creationist can challenge the evolutionist at any point in science. He presents a thoroughly Christian view of origins study, demonstrating that such a "conceptual framework" is more adequate in many ways than the conceptual framework of evolutionism: This fine work is distributed privately by Mr. Jones whose address is: 7 Pakenham Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2NE, England, United Kingdom.)

References

- ¹Dooyeweerd, Herman. 1958. The new critique of theoretical thought. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Philadelphia, Pa. 3 vol. plus index.
- ²Simpson, George Gaylord. 1967. The crisis in biology, *The American Scholar*, Summer Edition: 307.
- ³Taylor, Hebden. 1967. Evolution and the reformation of biology. Craig Press, Nutley, N. J.
- ⁴Lever, Jan. 1958. Creation and evolution. Grand Rapids International Publications; Kregel's, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- ⁵Van de Fliert, J. R. 1969. Fundamentalism and the fundamentals of geology, *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation*, 21(3):69-81.
- ⁶Dr. Dooyeweerd writes me that a limited edition of his "Creation and Evolution" translated into English is in the keeping of a Professor in Australia whose name and address can be secured from the Institute for Christian Studies at 141 Lyndhurst Ave., Toronto, Canada. This work is quite thoroughly discussed in the booklet, *Bavinck the Theologian* by Cornelius Van Til (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1961). It is apparently a commentary on the Lever work of the same name.
- ⁷De Wit, J. J. Duyvené. 1964. A new critique of the transformist principle in evolutionary biology, *Philosophia Reformata*, 29:43-44.
- ⁸Taylor, Hebden, *Op. Cit.*