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illuminating Law: The Construction of Herman Dooyeweerd's Philosophy—1918-1928 (Book Review)

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Illuminating Law: The Construction of Herman Dooyeweerd's Philosophy—1918-1928, by Roger D. Henderson (privately published,* 1994). 204 pages, paperback, \$13.95. Reviewed by Timothy Sheridan, senior philosophy major.

The reformational tradition of philosophizing has often faced problems communicating with those not familiar with the distinct and unique approach of one of its main proponents, Herman Dooyeweerd. Roger Henderson's book, *Illuminating Law*, is helpful in overcoming these problems by what he calls "bridging the gap" between different ways of conceiving basic problems (201). Henderson's historical analysis of not only the philosophical influences upon Dooyeweerd but also the main questions and issues with which he struggled from his early years of research is an indispensable help to understanding the foundational building blocks, the basic approach, and unique character of Dooyeweerd's philosophy.

In his early years as a university student, Dooyeweerd was drawn into studying the philosophy of law when he saw the need for philosophical-legal foundations for jurisprudence (24-5). During his years of work as a legal advisor in The Netherlands, Dooyeweerd made intensive studies of different schools of Neo-Kantian philosophy of law. As he became familiar with the works of the Marburg and Baden schools, he started to sense the importance of accounting for the origin of the norms for law and the distinction between legality and other areas of knowledge. He realized that each area of knowledge not only entailed a unique approach but also qualified the objects with which it dealt. He began to sense that the answers to some of these basic epistemological questions lay outside of the domain of scholarly thought.

Once Dooyeweerd was prodded through his study of Neo-Kantians and as he searched his own tradition of Neo-Calvinism for these answers, he apparently made an important discovery around 1922. Henderson describes the essence of this discovery: "The heart of Dooyeweerd's breakthrough was that there was a distinction between each area of knowledge and science which was guaranteed by divine sovereignty and had been ordained through norms and ordinances of that kind" (49). His years working for the Kuyper Institute (*Kuyperstichting*) in The Hague allowed him to systematically work out the philosophical implications of this discovery.

Henderson argues that epistemological questions were at the center of Dooyeweerd's concern during these formative years. In particular, he suggests that Dooyeweerd was driven "to pursue a theory of

knowledge which accounted for the coherence of thought and reality while recognizing the boundaries and diversity of types of knowledge" (89). It is also during this formative development that Dooyeweerd wrestles with the meaning of *Gegenstand* (the object of a particular science), which, unlike the Neo-Kantians, Dooyeweerd argues is *given* to the consciousness, being derived from the given structures in creation (98).

As Dooyeweerd worked out his epistemology, Henderson argues that he developed from an initial position of "critical realism" (akin to the logos notions of Jan Woltjer) to his later transcendental law philosophy (88). Henderson indicates a turning point that occurred in Dooyeweerd's epistemological conception. This turning point came when Dooyeweerd was able to break through the Western tradition's stress on rationality as an autonomous function. He broke through this tradition with his notion of the religious heart direction of every man. This heart direction lies at the center of human existence and is a filter through which our thoughts and ideas flow. Thus, being dependent on a religious response to the Creator, our rationality is thoroughly creaturely (115). This turning point in his epistemology proved important as Dooyeweerd, under the prodding of the Kuyper Institute, began his search for the fundamental principle of Calvinism.

This search led Dooyeweerd to the basic principle that would lie at the heart of his later work and development: "the heteronomous norm idea." Ultimately, argued Dooyeweerd, the law that holds for creation is the limit or boundary that distinguishes the Creator from his creation. This law is not static, however, but is a law that sheds light on our path and makes all of our knowledge possible. Using insights he gained from Kuyper, Dooyeweerd began to articulate his notion of law-spheres and the importance of distinguishing between the sovereign distinct spheres. With the same concern he had earlier for unity and diversity, he also introduced the notion of analogies between the distinct yet coherent spheres of knowledge.

Many of these ideas found their fruition in the introduction of the law-idea (*wetsidee*). Dooyeweerd argued that every tradition and theory must assume an idea about, and also account for, the origin of unity and diversity of reality. Because each area of

knowledge is limited to its own sovereign sphere, they are unable to account for the unity of the different law-spheres. Such a notion of unity could come only from basic convictions, convictions that are religious in nature. Hence, the law-idea is fundamentally a religious idea that accounts for the origin of the law-spheres and their interrelationship (162).

One of the main weaknesses in Henderson's book is his analysis, via three unpublished manuscripts by Dooyeweerd, of Dooyeweerd's study of Neo-Kantian philosophy of law. This section of his book will prove to be incredibly difficult to the reader who is not well versed in Neo-Kantian schools of philosophy of law. This weakness may unfortunately hinder Henderson's own concern for bridging the gap in problems of communication by creating communication problems of his own.

The importance of Henderson's book, it seems to me, lies in his carefully documented historical analysis of the struggles Dooyeweerd went through in finding the answers and articulating the basics of his philosophical ideas. Henderson deals specifically with Dooyeweerd's *early* development (1918-1928). In this development, he does not shy away from tracing the impact and influences of Neo-Kantian terminology and ideas upon Dooyeweerd's own ideas. On the other hand, he has also tied his work together with a golden thread that in many ways lies at the heart of Dooyeweerd's development: the reality of a

divine Law that illuminates a creation ordered by a sovereign Creator. This book is necessary to understand the roots and building blocks of Dooyeweerd's philosophy.

Dooyeweerd also affirms the ultimate dependency of our own legal concepts, goals, and ideas upon basic religious convictions, convictions that *either* locate the origin for normativity in our law-making in a divinely established order *or* within the autonomy of the human consciousness. With this, Dooyeweerd radically breaks with the Neo-Kantian approach to the philosophy of law. With this, Dooyeweerd breaks with the copernican revolution of Immanuel Kant, and thus the whole tradition of thinking that relies on the autonomy of human rationality.

Beyond this insight into Dooyeweerd's early philosophical journey, this book is also significant to all who find themselves struggling amidst a whirlwind of relativist and nihilist voices in the public square. Within this context, Dooyeweerd affirms a biblical message of hope in a sovereign Creator-God who lovingly upholds his creation with his ordinances, with a Law that brings light to our path—in our everyday struggles and also in our theorizing and scholarly endeavors.

* The book is available from the Dordt College Bookstore, Sioux Center Iowa 51250, or from the bookstore Hearts and Minds, 234 E. Main, Dallastown, PA 17313.

By What Authority Do We Teach? Sources for Empowering Christian Educators, Robert W. Pazmiño. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994). 160 pages, paper, \$10.99. Reviewed by John Van Dyk, Professor of Education.

This book, the third in a trilogy on foundations and practices of Christian education, addresses the authority of teachers, in the hope of "fostering a faithful response to God and others in both the thought and the practice of Christian education" (11). Two key questions at once come to mind: (a) What is authority? and (b) what does Pazmiño mean by Christian education?

We need not look very far for Pazmiño's answer to the first question. In the first chapter he defines authority as "the legitimate, recognized, and/or verifiable power that certain persons possess in various areas of life by virtue of their relationship with others" (19). Now this is a complicated matter. We ask: What makes power legitimate? What is the connection between "legitimate" and "recognized" power? And does authority indeed reside in persons, or is it to be attributed to the office, the place or position in which the authoritative persons find themselves?

Pazmiño does not address these questions in detail. While he recognizes the importance of a position of authority (top of 19), he generally sees teaching authority as located in or attached to a person. In chapter 2, for example, Pazmiño affirms that the "exercise of authority assumes the presence of a group of persons who recognize the authority of a person, his or her office, or that person's function in a particular setting" (38). The titles of chapters 3, 4, and 5, too, suggest a focus on a *person's* authority.

The second key question is more easily answered than the first: Christian education clearly means "church education," i.e., education practiced within the "faith community" as it comes to expression in an ecclesiastical context. The dedication of the book, for example, refers to "my students and colleagues in theological education." There are no explicit references or applications to teaching in Christian elementary or secondary day schools, or