

**CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY AT THE
CLOSE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY**
Assessment and Perspective

EDITED BY

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AND

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EGO, SELF, AND THE BODY. AN ASSESSMENT OF DOOYEWEERD'S PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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1. *Summary and introduction*

This contribution starts with a re-appraisal of some elements of Dooyeweerd's philosophical anthropology. I draw attention to Dooyeweerd's view of the body as an enkapctic structural whole. After a brief exposition of this view I mention two points which seem to me most valuable in relation to the special sciences: Dooyeweerd's conceptualization of the so-called sub-structures of the body and his notion of object-functions.

I then turn to the concept of the ego. I discuss this concept by confronting Dooyeweerd's view of the ego with some well-known criticisms of the concept of the ego in traditional philosophy of consciousness. I mention three problems, and argue that transcendental philosophy, in particular in the versions of Kant and Husserl, can only evade these problems by calling into existence another one, namely, how to combine the general notion of a pure, transcendental consciousness with a view on the ego as personal, self-concerned and committed. Dooyeweerd's transcendental approach offers a solution to the three problems of traditional philosophy of consciousness, but his approach does not adequately address the difficulty of combining the transcendental and the personal. This inadequacy is explained, partly, by the dominance of the metaphor of the I as a center. My suggestion is that by rethinking the I even more thoroughly than Dooyeweerd did from a relational point of view, we can avoid this dilemma and offer a more suitable approach to the understanding of personhood.

In the final part, I broaden my view to some adjacent areas and inspect some of the issues which seem particularly interesting and in need of future investigations.

* The author wishes to express his gratitude to A. Tol for his suggestions to improve the English of this contribution.

2. *Dooyeweerd: the body as enkaptic structural whole*

Dooyeweerd has never published as extensively on anthropology as he did on cosmology, epistemology and social philosophy. The third volume of *Reformatie en Scholastiek in de Wijsbegeerte*, which was announced already in 1949 (Dooyeweerd 1949, 13), never appeared. The unpublished draft of this volume adds little that is fundamentally new, as compared to the better known 32 propositions (1942), the article of 1961 and Dooyeweerd's remarks in the third Volume of *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* (NC III, 87-90, 776-784) and *In the Twilight of Western Thought* (1960a; cf. Ouweneel 1986).

This certainly does not mean that Dooyeweerd was not interested in philosophical anthropology or considered it as unimportant. On the contrary, at the end of the third volume of *A New Critique* he explicitly states that all his investigations were "nothing but a necessary preparation" for this "most important problem of philosophy" (NC III, 781).

Notwithstanding the scarcity of the published material, what Dooyeweerd did write has proven to be stimulating. What seems to be particularly interesting is his idea of the human body as an enkaptic structural whole. This whole consists of a "form-totality" involving four part- or sub-structures, i.e. the physical, the biotic, the psychic, and the act-structure. These sub-structures are hierarchically bound together, viz. the physical is bound up into the biotic, the biotic into the psychic, and the psychic into the act-structure. The term body does not, in this context, refer only to the physical and biotic sub-structures, but to the totality of man's temporal existence. This is one of the ways in which Dooyeweerd expresses his opposition to mind-body dualism.

There are two features of this theory which seem to me particularly interesting. The first of these is the conceptual status of the sub-structures. Dooyeweerd's view is subtle, for he rejects two possible interpretations of the enkaptic structural whole. As an enkaptic structural whole, the human body should be considered neither as an aggregate of independent sub-structures, nor as consisting of parts which are dissolved into a larger whole, like the part-whole relation of *Gestalt*-psychology. That is to say, the part-structures keep their own structure, which can be analyzed along the lines of Dooyeweerd's theory of the structure of individuality. However, they are not independent constituents, but integrated into a "form-totality embracing all the interwoven structures in a real enkaptic unity" (NC III, 695). In the analysis of this integrated totality the whole richness of distinctions returns — a feature which is characteristic of Dooyeweerd's theory of individuality structures.

The second important feature of Dooyeweerd's anthropology concerns the application of the theory of individuality structures to the human body, in particular the application of the notion of object functions. This

notion enables one to conceptualize, for instance, the inner coherence of mental and bodily functioning. The easiest way to make this clear is by borrowing an example from everyday experience, for instance the functioning of a chair. The chair has subject-functions up to (and including) the physical aspect. However, its functioning as a chair is determined by its social object-function. People use chairs to sit on, in order to work or to spend their leisure time. Assuming that these functions can be qualified as social, chairs can be said to possess a social object-function as qualifying function. The important thing to note, here, is that this social function is a property of the chair itself; moreover, that this function is expressed *in* and *by means of* the physical structure of the chair. In other words, the chair's social function is not something external to it. It is not a more or less arbitrary property. It is intrinsically linked to the physical properties of the chair. The organization of the physical material is determined by the social function of the chair.

The same holds with respect to the human body and its organs, for instance, the human brain. The brain is an organ which functions subjectively — i.e. actively — in the physical and in the biotic sub-structure. Its object-functions are determined by the psychic sub-structure and the act-structure. These object-functions belong to the brain, just as the social object-function belongs to the chair. They are functions *of* the brain, which are expressed *in* and *by means of* the brain as a biotically qualified structure. Accordingly, thinking and feeling are not activities which are arbitrarily and externally linked to the brain. On the contrary, the organization of the brain as a biologically functioning organ is intrinsically determined by these activities. Dooyeweerd's theory of the body discards both the anthropomorphizing of the activities of the brain — as if it were the brain itself which feels, thinks, and so on — as well as a view of mental activities, which transforms them into ghost-like, disembodied phenomena, which are only accidentally related to the brain. In this way both biologistic reductionism and mind-body dualism are rejected. One could add that this does not imply that Dooyeweerd's anthropology should be interpreted as a variant of the psychophysical identity theory. The sphere-sovereignty of the qualifying functions of the sub-structures cannot be reconciled with the idea of intra-systemic isomorphism, which is typical of identity theory.

In my opinion, Dooyeweerd's theory of the enkaptic structural whole, in particular when seen from the perspective of his general theory of individuality structures, has a great heuristic and conceptual potential which may enrich philosophical discussions within the special sciences. It can, for instance, fruitfully be applied to problems as different as that of the use and the limitations of the computer analogy in cognitive science, the application of animal models in psychopharmacological

research, the role of DNA in the developing organism and the integration of psychotherapy and faith, — to mention only a few possibilities.

3. *Dooyeweerd: the ego as spiritual center*

I shall now focus on the I or ego, and the relation between the I and the self. Dooyeweerd's philosophy has much to say about the ego (or "selfhood", which is a translation of the Dutch "zelfheid"). Most notable is his idea of the "concentration of functions". Human selfhood, in Dooyeweerd's view, is the concentric directedness of the totality of a person's existence toward the Origin of meaning. The similarity between this definition and the definition of religion is striking.¹ Indeed, Dooyeweerd repeatedly speaks of the ego as a religious concept (or: idea). Human selfhood in its deepest sense is religiously determined. This also explains the dynamic nature of the self. The self brings together the totality of our existence and directs this totality to God. The self is characterized by an urge towards the transcendent.

This implies that the self cannot be located in one of the modal functions or be identified with one of the sub-structures, for instance the act-structure. Neither can the self be seen as a hidden substance — say, the kind of identity David Hume ironically was looking for in his *Treatise on Human Nature* (Book I, Part 4, section vi). The Dooyeweerdian view of the self is neither hierarchical, nor substantialist, nor dualist, although there are some remnants of a hierarchical view on account of Dooyeweerd's view on the body as enkaptic structural whole (Dengerink 1986, 332ff.; 1989; Glas 1989; 1992; Troost 1989).

Dooyeweerd's view of the ego has been seriously criticized from several sides, in particular with respect to the so-called supra-temporality of the heart as "the spiritual root of all the temporal manifestations of our life" (Dooyeweerd 1960, 186). I don't want to re-open this discussion here, because, in my opinion, it has already dominated the discussion on Reformational anthropology too much, and because, at this stage, it could easily lead to philosophical sterility (for a review cf. for example Ouweneel 1986; 1989b; Blosser 1993). I agree with some of the criticisms pertaining to the notion of supra-temporality and the doctrine of time which is related to this notion, in particular with the critique which rejects the association between temporality and diversity on the one hand, and supratemporality and unity on the other hand (Geertsema 1970; 1993; Brüggeman-Kruijff 1981; 1982). However, I do not think, as some critics do, that Dooyeweerd can be accused of dualism, as if in his view the supratemporal ego could in some way be separated from man's temporal bodily existence. Dooyeweerd's terminology is predominantly that of convergence and divergence, concentration and diversity. When body and spirit are viewed apart from the doctrine of time, then one

could say, roughly, that body and spirit are two sides of the same coin, the body representing the side which is turned to the world, with its many different functional possibilities, the spirit representing the inner integration and concentration of functions in their orientation to the Origin of meaning. This also seems to me the position of Henk Hart (1984, 279-280).

What remains to be examined in this re-interpretation is whether the *concentric directedness* should primarily be conceived of as the immediate expression of the central relation to the Origin or should be analyzed in terms of the structural integration of functions and sub-structures, i.e. as expression of the anticipatory direction of the opening-process (cf. Stafleu 1991, who endorses the latter view). In Dooyeweerd each of these approaches represents an aspect of his view of time. His doctrine of time in fact can be interpreted as an attempt to integrate both approaches. However, when this doctrine is abandoned, at least with respect to the parallelism between supratemporality and unity on the one hand, and temporality and diversity on the other, it is by no means evident that the anticipatory direction of the opening-process of sub-structures must lead to (spiritual) unity; and, inversely, that the foundational, or retrociprocal direction must lead to (bodily) diversity.

A complete discussion of this complex problem is beyond the scope of this contribution. I shall concentrate here on the relation between the I and notions such as center, unity, and Origin. I shall examine this relation from a transcendental point of view, i.e., by exploring Dooyeweerdian anthropology as an instance of transcendental philosophy. To make my point clear, I shall first discuss transcendental philosophy in general, namely as one of the branches of philosophy of consciousness in the tradition of Descartes. Let us begin with Cartesian consciousness and then turn to the transcendental approach.

4. Dooyeweerd's transcendental approach

4.1. *The ego in traditional philosophy of consciousness*

There are at least three related problems with respect to the concept of the I in traditional philosophy of consciousness.

The first of these is the well-known problem of infinite regress. When knowledge is seen as the conscious apprehending and ordering of mental contents, each act of knowing can be said to originate from an I, or ego, which in its turn can be self-reflectively apprehended. However, there is no end to this process of self-reflection, because the identification of the I depends on an act of (self-reflective) knowing, which itself depends on a self-reflective ego, and so on. The logical priority of the I in the act of knowing cannot be undone by self-reflection. At the end of this process, the I has evaporated into a vague, non-personal theoretical

entity, in which little is retained of the original, characteristic properties of the ego.

Secondly, and related to the first point, it should be noticed that in the act of self-reflection the I is easily reduced to a quasi-object. However, the I is not a thing, something with regard to which I may have a detached attitude. A quasi-objective view of the I cannot do justice to the fact that people are self-concerned, and that it matters to them who they are. Charles Taylor is right when he says that the self is constituted by a framework of essential and normative questions and that our identity is stamped by our commitments with respect to the good (1989, 27; cf. also 47).

Thirdly, mention should also be made of the dialectic between me and the other, a dialectic in which the other appears as an object opposite to me, to be appropriated, brought under control, and even dominated reflectively. This act in its turn is mirrored by my becoming an object of appropriation through the acts of other persons (cf. Hegel 1807, 121–128 on master and slave; Levinas 1974, 144ff.).

Kantian transcendental philosophy indeed partly escapes from these problems, especially that of infinite regress and of quasi-objectification of the ego. The "I think", as transcendental unity of apperception, is certainly not an object, but the condition for every possible act of knowing (cf. Kant 1787, B 132–140). Kant's transcendental ego should be regarded as a non- or pre-empirical kind of consciousness, independent of and logically prior to any experience. One may wonder, however, whether this ego can be conceived of as personal. It is in fact a highly abstract and general "idea", devoid of personal properties and commitments. The same holds for the philosophy of Husserl. Here, the transcendental ego belongs to — what Husserl calls — the "phenomenological residue", which remains after the *epochè* of the empirical world, including the empirical self (Husserl 1922, I, §§ 57, 80). This pure ego is conceived as the dynamic principle which is responsible for the construction of the phenomenal world.

Later developments in existential phenomenology have made it clear that it is almost impossible to combine a transcendental approach in the line of Kant and Husserl with a view of the ego as personal, committed and self-concerned. Jean-Paul Sartre (1936), for instance, has made a distinction between the ego and transcendental consciousness. He holds that Kantian and Husserlian transcendental consciousness is non-personal and general. The ego, on the other hand, should be seen as a "thing", i.e. as the product of a self-reflective act in which a second-order kind of consciousness focusses on the perceiving or thinking I. Although the activity-as-such of this self-reflective consciousness is self-evident, the I is not. For the I is a construction of the thinking mind.

One could say that in the philosophy of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and others, this idea of a uniting, non-personal transcendental consciousness is replaced by the notion of existence as pre-reflexive living/being-in-the-world. However, in a certain sense the old problem returns here. For, living/being-in-the-world as such is still conceived as impersonal. Merleau-Ponty speaks of a blind adhesion to the world, an original connectedness which precedes the becoming of the subject. Personhood becomes an achievement in these kinds of philosophy, the ambiguous result of a lifelong struggle against the anonymity of being.

4.2. *Dooyeweerd: the ego as religious unity*

Now, returning to the traditional philosophy of consciousness, in particular to its three pitfalls in the conception of the ego, namely infinite regress, quasi-objectification, and the overpowering of the other, how does Reformational philosophy, especially Herman Dooyeweerd's version of it, relate to these pitfalls?

I think the initial answer must be that Dooyeweerd tries to avoid them by adopting a religious-transcendental framework. I already pointed to the concentric dynamic towards the Origin which fulfills such a prominent role in Dooyeweerd's anthropology and, I add, in his second transcendental critique. The adjective *religious* in the expression "religious-transcendental framework", is important here. For, the ego or selfhood is not an abstract transcendental-logical unity, as Dooyeweerd emphasizes time and again, but a *religious* unity which articulates self-knowledge in dependence of knowledge of God (contra 1). Furthermore, the I or self is not a quasi-object, but should be interpreted from the perspective of man as the image of God. Our selfhood is "ex-sistent". It is not closed in itself. It consists of the personal and engaged answer to a prior calling (contra 2). And, finally, our individual selfhood both points to and is rooted in the spiritual community of mankind. The unity of our existence is both individual and supra-individual (contra 3) (NC I, 52-60; cf. Ouweneel 1989a).

This short exposition illustrates that Dooyeweerd has been successful in avoiding the pitfalls of traditional philosophy of consciousness. However, does this also hold for the dissociation of the ego (or personhood) from transcendental consciousness, a dissociation which appeared to be characteristic of the Kantian and Husserlian versions of transcendental philosophy? One may wonder whether this is the case. Certainly, Dooyeweerd's emphasis on the transcendental ego as a religious — instead of logical — unity, a unity in which the fullness of man's temporal existence is concentrated, takes an important step beyond Kant and Husserl. Nevertheless, it seems to me that too many matters come together in Dooyeweerd at this point. What can be questioned in particular, is

whether the concrete and personal nature of man as a religious, responding being can be adequately dealt with within the context of the epistemological problem of theoretical synthesis (cf. Geertsema 1992, 130; 1993). In my opinion, it cannot. And, when one tries to do so, this inevitably leads to a narrowing of one's focus on certain (mainly epistemological) questions, at the expense of other issues which are at least as important within the context of anthropology. Let me illustrate this.

One of the main concerns of transcendental philosophy seems to be to secure the unity of man. Contemporary anthropological thinking, however, is occupied with the fragmentation of personhood and with the tension between the individual and society. The transcendental approach presupposes the transparency of human self-reflection, whereas in our time ambiguity, darkness and emptiness seem to be key-words denoting man's self-experience. The transcendental approach favors all kinds of highly abstract epistemological reflection, without paying much attention to the ethical and societal context in which people of our time try to define who they are. So, there are reasons to suspect whether a transcendental framework is not too limited to do justice to the full range of issues which are raised by contemporary philosophy and philosophical anthropology.

On closer examination we may even go a step further, by questioning the concept of the I in transcendental philosophy from a relational perspective. The transcendental ego is conceived of as a point, it is a point-like mental construction, a "punctual self", to borrow a term of Charles Taylor (1989, 159ff.). One may contrast this conception of the I with Kierkegaard's dictum about the self in his *Sickness unto Death*. According to Kierkegaard, the self is "a relation which relates to itself, and in relating to itself relates to something else" (1849, 43; cf. Evans 1993). This "something else" is God.

To be sure, Dooyeweerd's account of the I is fully relational. The I is "nothing in itself", he says; "it is nothing as long as we try to conceive of it apart from the three central relations, which alone give it meaning" (Dooyeweerd 1960a, 181). These relations are: the relation to temporal reality, including the body; the relation to our fellow human beings; and the relation to God as the Origin of meaning. In this context, Dooyeweerd even discerns an I-self relation, which is a relation between, what he calls, our I-ness (supra-temporal heart, spirit) and our body as the totality of temporal structures.

However, what seems important in this context, is that this I-self relation is conceptualized as a relation between center and periphery. The supratemporal heart (center) expresses itself in a multitude of temporal functions (periphery). In my opinion, it is precisely this metaphor, which shows some of the limitations of the transcendental framework.

First of all, one may argue for a contrary view, namely a conception of the I as being "eccentric" (cf. Klapwijk 1987). Vollenhoven already once said, that it is Christ who is the center of our existence, and not we ourselves (1967, 96). Dooyeweerd has probably been aware of this, as appears from his reference to the notion of "ex-sistence", and from his emphasis on the concentric dynamic towards the Origin. However, the metaphor of the ego as a center seems to obscure the eccentric position of man in his/her relation to the Origin.

Secondly, there are strong reasons to maintain that the I as such is relational, i.e., that the I primarily *exists as* an I-self relation.² By conceptualizing the I as relational, much more justice can be done to Dooyeweerd's emphasis on the dynamic nature of both the I-self relation and the relation of the self to the Origin and to fellow humans. For this dynamic itself is relational. I am basically a responding self. By responding, I become a self. This I-self relation is not a negative unity, as Kierkegaard calls it, i.e. the passive result of the interaction between independent relata. It is as such, as a relation, the expression of our relation to God. The notion of a virtual, transcendental point of concentration appears to be superfluous as soon as we perceive that the concentrating force is completely relationally determined. The I-self relation is deepened and "concentrated" (or intensified, which would be the term of my predilection), because of its being a relation which relates to (or: refers to) God.

Besides, this relational view of man also amounts to a re-appraisal of the term Origin. The relational nature of man seems to mirror the relational nature of God, as triune Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The unity of God is not "punctual", but should be conceived of as the expression of the loving relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The term Origin certainly reflects one of the biblical pictures of God, namely God as the fountain of all life. However, this picture should not one-sidedly dominate anthropology.

Thirdly, Dooyeweerd's metaphor of center and periphery betrays a bias toward the unity of man. Again, the reasons for this bias are still valid. By interpreting the dynamic of self-reflective consciousness as a religious dynamic, Dooyeweerd tries to show both the disintegrating tendency of absolutized theoretical thought and the unifying (and concentrating) power of the biblical religious groundmotive. This inner critique of the Enlightenment project is still of great importance (cf. Habermas 1985, 31). Even Dooyeweerd's at first sight rather confusing qualification of the transcendental ego as pointing to a unity which is both individual and supra-individual, can be appreciated as a deep and important insight, namely as a recognition of the fact that our identity cannot be divorced from a community, a community whose spiritual

unity is determined by creation, fall and redemption. The "one-ness" of this community is dependent upon the divine Origin and warranted by the spiritual unity of its members longing for their redemption in Christ. Dooyeweerd would certainly agree that personhood is a relational category, which derives its meaning from a web of interpersonal relations. Personhood reveals its deepest meaning, when these relations are opened up by and directed to the spiritual community with God.

However, here anew we see how this thoroughly relational view is partially obscured by the transcendental framework. Unity, as transcendental idea, i.e. as virtual point of convergence, cannot simply be equated with (concrete) community. Being one with others in a spiritual community denotes only one of the aspects of personhood. Taking part in a spiritual community also means recognizing the other-ness of the other. Difference (and separate-ness) is just as fundamental to personhood as one-ness. The bias toward unity seems to detract from the many-colored diversity of relations, particularly the diversity of I-thou relations. Rather than as a transcendental unity, the I should be seen as a many-faceted responding agent in a network of relations, the I-self relation included.

5. *Suggestions*

One of the important challenges of a Christian approach to philosophical anthropology is to keep together the two aspects, which were so closely tied together in the work of Herman Dooyeweerd, namely the structural analysis of reality and the inner critique of all kinds of theories and the philosophies and worldviews on which these theories are based. In our time, it is tempting to split up philosophical anthropology (and philosophy in general) and to separate those two aspects. Academic proficiency in the philosophy of one of the special sciences then easily loses its critical, religiously determined sharpness; whereas the analysis of the worldviews behind the images of our age easily transforms into a kind of evaluative impressionism, or, even worse, structureless moralism. However, "structure" and "direction" should be kept together. That is the important task of Christian philosophical anthropology at the close of the twentieth century.

To conclude, I will mention four points which, at least to me, appear as particularly interesting for the near future (other preferences are welcome too, see Stafleu 1991).

First, there is need for a further development of Dooyeweerd's systematic philosophy, especially in relation to the special sciences. For instance, in the context of philosophical anthropology a more detailed account of personal identity is called for. The concept of identity is confusing and multi-layered. One can discern many types of personal identity, not only numerical and qualitative, as Parfit suggests (1984,

201ff.; for a comment cf. Plantinga 1993, 48–57), but also psychic, social, legal, moral and/or religious. Christians often wrongly associate personal identity with what (or who) survives death. They are tempted to equate their spiritual existence after death with certain kinds of mental activity before death. Perhaps, a naive reading of the first chapters of the book of Genesis plays a role here, as if man's creation consists of an almost mechanical putting together of a mind-substance and a body-substance. Certainly, there is a parallelism between creation and death in the biblical teaching. However, just as God's acts in the creation of man cannot be reconstructed, so the dissolution of mind and body in death cannot be theoretically conceptualized, at least not in the sense that certain faculties of the mind remain untouched by death. Ultimately, death is a miracle, a boundary of our understanding.

With respect to the concept of identity, there remain deep and difficult questions (for an introduction cf. Strawson 1959; Glover 1988; Cassam 1994; Wilkes 1988). Identity is a concept with two sides, a structural and an individual (or particular) side. Dooyeweerd has said a lot about the structural side; however, he has never given a satisfactory account of the individual side. Here I see a relation between the longing for such an account and the reviving of discussions about the concept of substance (Evans 1993; Blosser 1993; cf. also Strawson 1959, 87–116). At the same time, I also see possibilities for the relational perspective, in particular in a philosophical re-thinking of research in developmental psychology and some schools of psychotherapy (Olthuis 1993).

Secondly, there is the challenge of the fast and fascinating developments in the special sciences. In the current "decade of the brain" there is of course the challenge of the neurosciences. I do not mean here the thought experiments which for some time have been so popular among philosophers (cf. Dennett 1981; 1991; Hofstadter and Dennett 1981; Wilkes 1988), but the tough and time-consuming research in sciences like molecular biology, neurophysiology and neurobiology and the philosophical reflections on this research and, among other things, the ensuing critique regarding folk-psychology (Churchland 1986; cf. also Hundert 1989).

Thirdly, there is the challenge of our plural, post-Nietzschean, and postmodern society. After the death of God, and in the aftermath of Nietzsche, who asks who has wiped out the horizon behind which God was supposed to exist, there remains an emptiness which is both wished for and aching, like a persistent stomach-ache, according to Bataille (1954). The self both wants to be "the" whole, in a kind of mega-process of merging with the object, with others; and he/she is idle, without roots, and at the edge of nothingness. We may encounter here both extreme forms of subjectivism and of objectivism. In the inner critique of, and the

discussion with, postmodernism, the possibility of absolute contingency should, in my opinion, be questioned (Glas 1993). Absolute individuality ends in chaos, and it should be doubted whether absolute chaos is even thinkable.

Finally, with respect to the challenge of Jewish and early-Christian thinking, much can be learned from the sensitivity to the Transcendent in a thinker like A.J. Heschel (1966), to say nothing of the penetrating critique of E. Levinas of Western philosophy as a totalitarian thinking of the self as same-ness. Man is a being, who is in search of meaning. But man's longing is empty if its fulfillment, i.e. God, cannot relate to him/her. Man's search of meaning is meaningful because of God's search of man. For our thinking this kind of reversal — which implies a conversion — will remain of lasting importance.

Footnotes

¹ This definition reads: "... the innate impulse of human selfhood to direct itself toward the *true* or toward a *pretended* absolute Origin of all temporal diversity of meaning, which it finds focused concentrically in itself" (NCI, 57).

² This expression ("exists as an I-self relation") should be read as a pregnant manner of saying that the I is not something with an existence-in-itself, distinct from the relations in which it is involved. Certainly, relations are relations of something; and properties are properties of something. But this "something" does not exist as such, in itself, completely independent of its relations and properties. Its existence, the nature of this "something", can only be expressed in terms of these relations and properties.

This does not imply a view in which our universe is inhabited by relations only and in which there is no room for entities. And it also does not imply the kind of actualism which, for instance, comes to the surface in the work of Kierkegaard. The difficulty which seems to arise here, can be attributed to our inclination to separate substance from function (or: property), or, in other words, to separate relations from the bearers of these relations. This inclination easily leads to a conception of the I in which the I is something with a real or hypothesized existence-in-itself, apart from its relations. Reformational philosophy, in the versions of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven, has always rejected this kind of substantializing (or reification). Moreover and more importantly, it has emphasized that the concept of substance as such can only emerge within the horizon of theoretical thought. Reality exists as being subject to the law. This "being subject" is the common denominator of reality.

I realize that a lot more is at stake here. What has been said until now does not provide an answer to the question whether a non-substantialist concept of substance would be possible, i.e. a concept of substance in which the (epistemic) distinction between substance and function (property) does not lead to an (ontic) separation of these two. Or, in other words, is there really no concept, or notion, of substance outside the realm of theoretical thinking? Cf. my remark on identity and individuality in the fifth section.

SELF AS QUESTION: A RESPONSE TO GERRIT GLAS

HENDRIK HART

I

My experience of "self" as I prepared this response to Glas's "A Christian Assessment of Philosophical Anthropology" was dominated by a young friend's struggle with death.¹ Against that background — as well as others I will not mention —, I'd like to begin by confessing that, as far as I can tell in our time, the truth about our-selves is not adequately statable in philosophy or philosophical anthropology; whether that truth, philosophy-like, is a statement that tells it as it is, or whether, as in the Bible, truth is a disclosure in which we can find a home for our-selves. So I seek an approach to philosophical anthropology from outside of it, i.e., from our own explicit awareness of people, from a *self-conscious* position within what Dooyeweerd called *naive experience*, which he saw as basic for theory. In that awareness of people I include my own experience of myself and others, but also their experience of self and others. If philosophical anthropology is to contribute to our being people, then its reality ought to include, I believe, the reality of Nicholas Wolterstorff's (1987) *Lament for a Son*. It needs to make space for what the Dutch poet-theologian Okke Jager poetically referred to as the precious vulnerability of our spiritually broken and confused sisters and brothers.² I trust that as Christian philosophers at the end of the second millenium we are humbled by the philosophical legacy of Man, the view of our-selves strongly and abstractly shaped by a powerful, rational/moral, white, male, heterosexual, control-and-order oriented point of view. Philosophical anthropology has not been terribly helpful for blacks, women, people with different sexual orientation, the poor, the vulnerable; or even for valuable dimensions of the Man of Reason's own experience.

It could be helpful, if only for a moment, to consider the question: Can there ever be a general (universal) science (theory, philosophy) of the human? Can we imagine this in our time, knowing what we know today? Charles Taylor (1989) offers long lines, broad frameworks, inclusive concepts, and integrative frameworks that could contribute to who we should be. But do we look for a full, systematic, coherent, universal theory of human nature, of the essentially and immutably human?