

2221 Theory & Practice 1: Lecture 13¹

Sensory Perception in Christian Counselling: Insights from Herman Dooyeweerd's Philosophy

© Dr Jan R. Ridgway PhD

A. Introduction	1
B. A Starting Point: the Word of the Lord	2
1. What do we mean when we say, 'the word of the Lord'?	2
2. Implications	3
C. Dooyeweerd's Contribution.....	4
1. Supratemporal root of human existence	5
2. Refraction (or breaking apart) of supratemporal meaning	6
a) aspects of meaning	6
b) four levels of human experience	8
3. The body as the whole of man's <i>temporal</i> existence	8
D. Implications	11
1. Body-mind problems in therapy.....	11
a) body-mind opposition	11
b) bodymind holism.....	12
2. Over cognitivising in present psychotherapy	13
3. Sensory perception in therapy	14
a) gestalt therapy	15
b) constructive criticism	16
Conclusion.....	18
References	19

A. Introduction

In this course, we are open to the use of valid insights from non-Christian sources. We understand that practice to be no more than continuing what is evident in the wisdom literature, where numbers of proverbs are taken from non-Israelite sources and transferred to the holy Scriptures.² However, this 'integrative' approach demands our active discerning of spirits (e. g., 1 Jn 4: 1), our alertness to the world's ability to 'squeeze us into its mould' (Rom 12: 2). We cannot afford to be gullible and swallow everything that seems 'right' in our own eyes because, for one thing, we will be involved with vulnerable people who will be highly susceptible to our influence.³ Not only do we have to review the practice of others but also our own practice in the

¹ Thankful is given to two students who have read this lecture and provided me with corrections and suggestions. Nevertheless, any remaining errors are my own.

² At least two approaches conflict on this point: some argue that something is valid only if written in the Bible; others claim that things not written in the Bible may also be legitimate. I take the latter view.

³ According to St James, teachers will be judged much more strictly than others (3: 1)

light of the Word of God. We are to ‘destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ’ (2 Cor 10:5 ESV). The task being outlined is not easy because the enterprise is against ‘principalities and powers’ and not just an intellectual exercise! However, we must not only be critical, we have also to develop psychotherapies of our own. I use the plural because we probably require more than a few therapies to cover the possible ailments people meet in everyday and clinical psychopathology. But, then, the question becomes, if the Lord has given us this work to do where do we start?

B. A Starting Point: the Word of the Lord

1. What do we mean when we say, ‘the word of the Lord’?

Some would say that the ‘Word of the Lord’ simply equals the Holy Scriptures, the Bible. However, although the Scriptures *are* the Word of God, the Scriptures point to the whole range of manifestations of the Word. Pre-eminently, Jesus Christ, *is* the Word of God (Jn 1: 14; Rev 19: 13). God's eternally begotten Son is the ‘express image of [God's] nature (Heb 1: 3). God's Word as Jesus is present as the complete expression of God in the flesh (Col 2: 9). Before the Fall into sin, God revealed Himself to Adam and Eve as the voice in the Garden. In Genesis 15, we have the graphic expression, ‘the word of the Lord came to Abram’, where the Word seems to be almost a person that can be sent. God also sends his Word and heals people (Ps 107: 19-20). He created the heavens and the earth by His Word, by His breath/spirit (Ps 33: 6). Climatic changes are the actions of God's Word (Ps 147: 15-17). The creation is also a revelation or expression of God's nature (Ps 19; Rom 1: 20). When we hear sermons or messages in worship services, we also hear ‘the Word of God’ (e. g., Acts 6: 2, 7) even though preaching is always fallible. A person may also speak a ‘word of wisdom or knowledge’ (1 Cor 12: 8), which are words from the Lord. The Scriptures are a verbal expression of the Word but can only be understood by the Spirit.⁴ The Word is both Spirit and power (Heb 4: 12-16) pulling our hearts away from the worship of false gods to the worship of the one true God. The word of God regenerates our hearts and ‘abides for ever’ (1 Pet 1: 23-25).

⁴ See 1 Cor 2: 6-16. We can know much *about* the Scriptures and yet not know God. The Pharisees were like that according to Jesus.

Only one integral Word is active despite all these demonstrations, which are all bound together by virtue of their being God's expression of Himself. Pollen expresses the thought this way:

[T]he Word of the Lord is whatever proceeds from Him and expresses His own thoughts, His creativity, His intentions, His desires, His emotions. The Creation itself is a manifestation of the Word of the Lord. The manna in the wilderness was another, as is His healing of the afflicted. The same can be said of all natural phenomena' (Pollen, 2000).

2. Implications

The Word of God saved us from our bondage to the powers of darkness, wresting us from the kingdom of evil and giving us status as sons and daughters of the living God. The Word of God gripped us in the core of our beings and opened our eyes to see the God of our Lord Jesus Christ as the true God. We were also filled with God's Spirit and redirected into the paths of righteousness. None of that momentous work associated with the cross of Christ means that we are now infallible in what we think or do. We are still subject to the effects of the Fall. However, our hearts now move in a new direction and hopefully are more sensitive to the wishes of Word and Spirit.

From the Wisdom literature and wisdom sayings throughout Scripture, it is clear that the Lord can teach us many things that are not directly mentioned in the scriptures.⁵ Isaiah 28 illustrates this principle: the farmer is instructed by the Lord (vv 26, 29) in what he should do regarding certain crops (vv 23-29). However, this positive appreciation of what has been called 'general revelation' does not imply that we should be naïve about 'the world, the flesh and the devil'⁶ (see Eph 2: 1-3), which will continually harass us. Scripture contrasts merely human wisdom with the wisdom of God (1 Cor 2: 5, 6) and 'the spirit of the world' with 'the Spirit of God' (1 Cor 2: 12). We cannot parade the latest therapy that we like and imagine we are safe from 'the world' because of 'general revelation'. As a Christian community, we must do the hard work of discerning truth from error, rejecting the bad and clinging to what is good.

⁵ Being an Anglican, catholic and reformed, I accept that Scripture expressly forbids us to do some things but what is not expressly forbidden *may* be allowable.

⁶ An expression from the Prayer Book compiled during Edward VI's reign (only son of Henry VIII) under the tutelage of the famous Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556), Archbishop of Canterbury.

C. Dooyeweerd's Contribution

For this lecture, I will use ideas from the philosophy of the Dutch, neo-Calvinist *Herman Dooyeweerd* (1894-1977) as a necessary framework. For Dooyeweerd, God is the Creator and creation is always dependent on God for its existence.⁷ On the one hand, we live in Him and He is not far from any of us (Acts 17: 27) but on the other hand, 'no one has seen God at any time' (Jn 1: 18; 1 Tim 6: 16). Dooyeweerd expresses this crucial distinction between Creator and creature in terms of Being and meaning.⁸ Only the Creator has Being, whereas creation *is* meaning.

This formulation may appear strange but it is a crucially important one. Much of the difficulty with understanding parts of Dooyeweerd's thought arises from the fact that he rejects the idea of substance, that created things have an underlying substance that guarantees their existence.⁹ Westerners, typically nowadays, understand things to have sub-stratum substances plus a meaning that humans assign to them. That understanding fails to recognise the radically dependent nature of creation.¹⁰ The meaning of creation is summed in the Biblical words: 'For from him and through him and to him are all things' (Rom 11: 36, NRSV). Creation is necessarily God-referring. In other words, all creation points to God as its beginning, its continuance, and its consummation. Creation has no existence apart from this God-referring character. In this context, God can not have meaning; meaning is defined as referring to something else, which God, being God, does not do.

Humanity's failure to recognise its dependence on God was the primal sin of the Fall. In eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve were implicitly acting as if they could be independent of God. Many instances of this tendency are recorded in Scripture including Nebuchadnezzar who is brought down to the level of an animal eating grass until his pride gives way in his realisation of his creaturely place before the

⁷ 'In Him we live, move and have our being' (Acts 17: 28).

⁸ Another way he expresses this distinction is the idea that law is the boundary between God and creation. The old disproof of God's omnipotence using the question, Can God create a rock that he cannot lift? fails because it assumes that God is subject to law. As Calvin said, God is not subject to law but, on the other hand, he is faithful to His Word.

⁹ We derive this faulty understanding from our Classical Greek background.

¹⁰ If creation *has* meaning, Dooyeweerd's concern is that it somehow has a 'substance' or 'nature' *independent* of God; Dooyeweerd worked from the bedrock assumption that no creature is independent of God for its existence.

sovereign God (Dan 4). Pride is a deadly sin because of its motivation to displace God and rule in His place. The continuing weakness of humanity is the temptation to believe that it can live beyond its proper condition as dependent creature and rebel against the One who has created all things. Acting as if we are independent of God continues to be the major feature of human activity including counselling and psychotherapeutic theories and practice.

1. Supratemporal root of human existence

Dooyeweerd makes the challenging statement that the centre of human existence is not in the temporal realm but in, what he calls the *supratemporal* condition.

According to the Scriptures, when we die, something remains; the temporal is put aside ('absent from the body', 2 Cor 5: 8) but we are 'with Christ' (Phil 1: 23).

Dooyeweerd identified that 'soul' or 'spirit' with what he called the 'supratemporal heart'. The importance of the *heart* is glimpsed in a favourite verse of Dooyeweerd's '[God] has put eternity [the world, AV] into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end' (Eccl 3: 11, ESV). The 'heart' is the religious centre of what humanity does for 'out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks' (Matt 12: 34; Lu 6: 45). Hence, the exhortation to '[k]eep your heart with all diligence for out of it [the heart] are the issues of life' (Prov 4: 23).

When a replacement for Saul the king was being undertaken, the Lord rebuked Samuel with the words, 'For man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart' (1 Sam 16: 7) where 'heart' means inner, hidden character. In the well-known, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts' (Ps 139:23) we observe the hiddenness of the heart. Also, the scripture, 'thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God and report that God is in you of a truth' (1Co 14:25) evidence the covert nature of the heart. Jeremiah's statement that 'the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?' (17: 9) further underlines the secret character of the heart, which nevertheless stands open before Almighty God. Most importantly, the heart stands before the Lord either in faithfulness more or less, or faithlessness more or less.¹¹

¹¹ The first and great commandment, said Jesus, is to love God with all our hearts, souls and minds.



Supratemporal means beyond time or transcending time (but *not* God's eternity, which no mortal can share). The organic metaphor *root* implies a helpful picture for understanding Dooyeweerd's idea of root (hidden underground) and its expression above ground. The supratemporal is the root, while the above ground is the seen, temporal stem and flowers. The domain of the

supratemporal is vital to our understanding because in it resides the fullness of the Root, the unity of meaning, which is individualised by cosmic time into the temporal meaning we experience in the world. Meaning and humanity are in an indissoluble relation in the supratemporal condition; hence, in temporal existence, the two also exist together. Things do not exist *in themselves* but require humankind for their full realisation.

2. Refraction (or breaking apart) of supratemporal meaning

Dooyeweerd used another common metaphor to speak of how his philosophy can move from totality to individuality.¹² He speaks of the fullness of *meaning, central, supratemporal* meaning (1. above) being 'refracted in the order of time into a rich diversity of modi, or **modalities of meaning**, just as sun-light is refracted by a



prism in a rich diversity of colors' (Dooyeweerd, 1960: 7, bolding and font change mine). In his metaphor, he asks us to imagine light [supratemporal meaning] passing through a prism [cosmic time] being broken up (refracted) into the colours [meaning aspects (see below)]¹³ of the rainbow.

Figure 1 White light's dispersal into colours

a) aspects of meaning

The supratemporal fullness of meaning is refracted by cosmic time into 15 irreducible *meaning aspects* identified as: numerical, spatial, kinematic, physical, biotic, psychical, logical, historical, lingual, social intercourse, economic, aesthetic,

¹² In the Anglo-Saxon world, we are much more familiar with moving in the opposite direction.

¹³ Also called, modes, modes of experience, aspects of meaning, law spheres and sides.

juridical, moral, and finally faith¹⁴ (1940/2005-2006; 1960: 7; 1969: 3, 24). These aspects are manners or modes of human experience of things and do *not* refer to specific things or events themselves but only to the ‘particular and fundamental mode, or manner, *in which we experience them*’ [the concrete things] (Dooyeweerd, 1960: 6, italics mine). (For example, one cannot go and find a sensitive modality anywhere.) With each mode of meaning is a corresponding *kernel of meaning*, which ensures the essential character and irreducibility of the modality or aspect. The aspects

Table 1 Modal scale of meaning aspects and kernels

(Meaning aspects shaded and in red [1-6] are known as ‘natural’ aspects. The natural aspects are related to lower realms of individuality structures [such as the inorganic, organic, animal]. Meaning aspects unshaded and in blue [7-15] are known as ‘normative’ or ‘spiritual’ aspects.)¹⁵

MEANING ASPECT	MEANING NUCLEUS
15. Faith or belief	Faith, firm assurance
14. Moral	Love¹⁶ in temporal relationships
13. Juridical	Retribution (recompensing)
12. Aesthetic	Beauty and Harmony
11. Economic	Saving
10. Social intercourse	Courtesy, politeness
9. Lingual	Symbolic meaning
8. Historical	Formative power
7. Logical	Distinction
6. Sensitive (Psychical¹⁷)	Sensory perception and feeling
5. Biotic	Organic life
4. Physical	Energy
3. Kinematic	Motion
2. Spatial	Continuous extension
1. Numerical	Discrete quantity

As counsellors, we attend particularly to the sensitive or psychological aspect and its corresponding meaning kernel, sensory perception and feeling because this mode is most significant for our ministry of therapy or healing. For example, depression and

¹⁴ Names tend to vary slightly even within Dooyeweerd.

¹⁵ A special science is associated with each of the 15 aspects beginning with mathematics, geometry, physics, mechanics, biology, psychology, logic, history, linguistics, sociology, economics, aesthetics, jurisprudence, ethics and theology. Philosophy directs itself to the totality of human experience of reality but not as a replacement for any of the special sciences just enumerated.

¹⁶ Love in this modal sense does not mean the love referred to in the two great commandments, which are supratemporal and particularised in all the above aspects of creation.

¹⁷ Dooyeweerd used the term psychical earlier and then changed it to ‘sensitive’ because of misunderstandings surrounding the word psychical.

anxiety are principally sensitive disorders even though they function in all aspects. Other disorders such as eating and drinking addictions may also be related to sensory or feeling deprivation for example. Some overeat because they are anxious or depressed. Some under-eat alarmingly to the point of death because of touch deprivation (e. g., Gupta, Gupta, Schork, & Watteel, 1995).

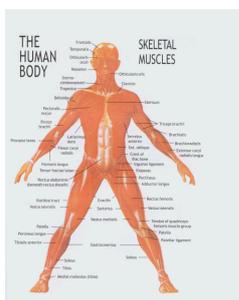
b) four levels of human experience

So far, we have identified the supratemporal, the temporal, the modal levels of human experience and shortly we will speak of ‘individuality structures’ to complete this picture. Friesen (2003-2006a) cites Dooyeweerd’s use of the word ‘descent’ from the first level to the others. Hence, we begin with the supratemporal and descend to the temporal, which includes the modal level. ‘And the temporal and modal levels together encompass the fourth level, that of [individuality structures](#)’ (Friesen, 2003-2006a).

3. The body as the whole of man’s *temporal* existence

The critical role of the supratemporal must not be used to obscure the importance of the temporal realm.¹⁸ Humanity is supratemporal at *heart* but temporal in its *experiential functions*, which are lived out in the body. However, we will miss Dooyeweerd’s unusual meaning if we understand ‘body’ to be only the ‘**abstract material body**’ or merely physical body.

Rather the ‘body’ is ‘the whole of man’s temporal existence’ (Dooyeweerd, 1942:



Proposition IX) and therefore includes much more than merely its physical or biotic structures. Hence, the image presented is *not* a good representation of what Dooyeweerd means by body. (I doubt whether any image can fully capture his meaning because ‘body’ for him means the whole of temporal existence including all perceptions, feelings and actions.

¹⁸ Nor should we infer from Dooyeweerd’s focus on the supratemporal that he purposes to develop a dualism between the supratemporal and the temporal. Just as no dualism exists between root and stem, no dualism exists between supratemporal and temporal.

The whole of humanity's temporal existence, 'the body', is made up of four 'individuality structures'¹⁹: the (1) **physico-chemical**, (2) **biotic**, (3) **psychic[al]** or **instinctual feeling**, and (4) **act-structure** (Dooyeweerd, 1942: Proposition XIII, bolding in original). (Psychotherapy or counselling is occupied with all of these structures, *particularly with the last two.*)²⁰ These structures are *not* parts of the human body. Nor can particular parts of the body be directly associated with one or another of them. Anatomically, 'the human body with all its parts *necessarily* functions **equally in all four structures**' (Dooyeweerd, 1942: Proposition XII, bolding in original). Dooyeweerd refers to these structures as being intertwined from lower to higher structures to form an *enkaptic* whole.

Enkapsis is the interlacement or interwovenness of different individuality structures within another structure as in atoms of oxygen and hydrogen and their combination to make water. Notice in this example that the constituent parts retain their unique character. In the human body, the four individuality structures above are interwoven with the others in human temporal existence. The individuality structures –the physico-chemical, the biotic, the psychic and the act structures – are interwoven in this enkaptic whole but retain their own inner-*sphere sovereignty*²¹ (Friesen, 2003-2005: n. p.).

However, Friesen explains further that the enkaptic whole may have a completely different character from the parts, which is true for both water and its constituents atoms of oxygen and hydrogen. But, this condition is obviously true for humans: the whole human being is uniquely different from any of the four individuality structures taken separately. Furthermore, humans are not defined or qualified by any of the four structures including the act-structure. In humans, the physico-chemical structure is enkaptically bound to the biotic structure, which is in turn bound to the psychic or *instinctive feeling* structure which is finally bound to the act-structure. However tempting it is to select one of these temporal structures to define humanity, we need to stand with the Scriptures and affirm that humanity as the image of God means that humanity is ultimately not definable by some temporal attribute or structure.

¹⁹ This terminology relates to Dooyeweerd's wish to avoid any compromise with substance philosophy. Hence, things do not *have* a structure; they are typical examples *of* structure.

²⁰ Drug therapy and genetic explanations of psychopathology relate to the biotic structure.

²¹ Each retains its unique meaning even while being enkaptically interwoven with the others; to reduce all the structures to the biotic, for example, is to contravene the principle of the sphere sovereignty of each of the four structures..

Each of these four structures is *qualified* or characterised in distinct ways: the first is *qualified* by a **physico-chemical** function; the first structure ‘functions enkaptically’ with the second structure, which is qualified by a **biotic** or **vegetative**²² function. The second structure ‘functions enkaptically’ with the third structure which is qualified by a **sensitive function**; the ‘third structure, in turn, together with the earlier structures, functions enkaptically in a fourth structure, the so-called **act**-structure of the human body’ (Dooyeweerd, 1942: Proposition XIII, bolding in original). Only the four structures enkaptically bound together make up the human body.²³

The third and fourth structures are particularly relevant to psychotherapy and psychopathology because the ‘psych-’ beginning of psychopathology denotes the psychological aspect of human experience (see p. 7 above). Hence, *psychopathology* is about something being wrong in the sensitive aspect of experience: the person’s sensory perceptions and feelings are unstable, excessive or even disturbed. Clinical anxiety and depression, which are levels of these conditions that come to the attention of professionals, are sensitive disorders along with bipolar disorder. On the other hand, *psychotherapy* is re-nurturing activity directed towards chronically disordered psychological experience.

Of the psychological/sensitive structure Dooyeweerd says, ‘within certain limitations, these functions [of this structure] are outside the control of human volition’ (Dooyeweerd, 1942: Proposition XIII). We cannot just will feelings, which function sensitively, to go away when we want. If you are badly depressed or anxious, we cannot just decide that we will stop being depressed or anxious. However, certainly, we can modify our sensitive reactions because of their enkaptic relation with the act-structure. For example, if we wake up out of a nightmare with our hearts thumping, we can lie still and remind ourselves that it was only a dream even though we still feel the physiological effects of being chased by a tiger or monster. Soon, our feelings will gradually return to normal but not always without some attention to our surroundings with the light on!

²² Vegetable-like. For example, plants et cetera are qualified (characterised) by the biotic function as their highest subject function.

²³ I trust you can see the greater significance Dooyeweerd places on the body than is found in other theories.

The act-structure is multi-sided because human acts can be led or qualified by any *one* of the nine uppermost [blue colour] aspects (Table 1), known as ‘normative’ aspects. These are so-named because norms or oughts exist for each aspect although our responses to these norms will vary across cultures and across eras. What may be polite in this culture may not be polite in another but that does not mean that politeness does not exist or does not matter. Etiquette is important in every culture and has a particular expression in all cultures. Etiquette also changes with time, particularly in those cultures, interestingly, that have been touched by the Christian gospel, including secular cultures. Acts of etiquette are qualified by the social aspect but such human acts function in all the others aspects at well.

Above I said that nurturing denotes therapy. My argument for this understanding would be based on therapists, therapy and even self-therapy often being understood as ‘re-parenting’ (e. g., Kaplan, 2001) combined with healing of the ‘inner child’ being popular (Missildine, 1963). Moreover, counsellees frequently begin to feel towards their therapists the way they used to feel with their own parents, the famous transference feelings that Freud’s followers utilised in the development of psychoanalytic psychotherapy (e. g., Masterson, 1978). Psychotherapy is nurturing aiming to produce greater order in sensitive experience. Nurturing action is qualified, characterised or led by the moral aspect – with its modal kernel of love – although it functions in all other aspects as well.

D. Implications

1. Body-mind problems in therapy

a) body-mind opposition

Some therapists would categorise therapies into ‘body’ versus cognitive (soul) domains, often opposing one group to the other. This division identifies therapies that make use of muscle massage, body posture, and respiration rates, for example, in the ‘body’ category. Wilhelm Reich (Daniels, 2006), probably the father of these approaches believed that ‘neurosis’ (disordered sensitive functioning) was ingrained in the patient’s rigid musculature and could be made apparent by poking, prodding, kneading, rubbing and light hitting actions until emotional expressions surfaced. Fritz Perls’ gestalt therapy is another example of a so-called ‘body’-focussed therapy. However, further thought reveals that these therapies focus on a particular structure *of* the body, namely the biotic individuality structure mentioned above.

On the other hand, cognitive therapies are dominant today and appear to diverge markedly from the above. One such therapy is the rational-emotive behaviour therapy of Albert Ellis, which focuses on the rationality of the self-talk of the counsellee (Ellis, 1962). He believed thought and emotion were inseparable and that in changing our thoughts or beliefs we change our emotions.

However, the body-cognitive split is an erroneous idea. Given what has been said above, the 'body' is the whole of temporal existence and therefore, cognitive activity is part of the body. We can, of course, distinguish among the different structures of individuality that make up the body, which has been done above. When we use that approach, the body's musculature can be understood to differ from thinking.

Nonetheless, the same supratemporal self/heart is expressed in rigid musculature *and* irrational self-talk. Hence, no fundamental opposition between them exists and 'body language' and 'talk' therapy are to be used together without embarrassment (Lowen, 1958). Once the supratemporal condition is understood and the body is understood as the temporal expression of the *I*, then the freedom to focus on all the individuality structures in therapy is open to us.

b) bodymind holism

A modern negative prejudice exists regarding mind-body dualisms in general (Bisson, 2006) leading to a Western eagerness to espouse monism (Fleckenstein, 1997), often inspired through some forms of Buddhism, or nondualisms (Katz, 2004; Prendergast, Fenner, & Krystal, 2003). Many therapies, particularly those in the alternative therapies group, espouse forms of holism or monism (Hooft, 2002). Often, they work with the central idea of energy (Helpguide-Mental Health Issues, 1996-2006) that is expressed in body and mind, which are two different forms of energy. What is the nature of that energy? Is the energy 'God'? A higher Power? According to Armstrong (1985/2002), a Catholic apologist, it does not really matter what it is called. Whatever the unitary energy is, the energy breaks into body energy and mind energy which are both said to be expressions of the original energy.

This holism is far from the biblical teaching that a boundary exists between God and creation, a law boundary. 'God is *above* the law; creation is *under* the law' (Kalsbeek, 1975: 73). However, much more resides in this topic than simple recourse to a theism, which posits a radical discontinuation between God and man. For while

we must distinguish between God and man, we must also reckon with the biblical fact that, man is made in the image of God. Humanity is said to be made ‘a little lower than God’ (Ps 8: 5, NASB) ‘or the angels’ (KJV), which is a profoundly significant status. And ‘in Him we move and have our being’ (Acts 17: 28) being ‘indeed his offspring’, says St Paul (17: 28). Jesus said to the Jews, ‘Is it not written in your law . . . you are gods (Jn 10: 34). Moses is sent to Pharaoh and the Lord says, ‘I will make thee a god (as God, NASB) to him’ (Exod 7: 1, KJV). St Paul says in Galatians 2, that he no longer lives but Christ lives in him and ‘the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith[fullness] of the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me (verse 20). As John says in his first letter, ‘As He is, so are we also in this world’ (4: 17). God is ‘not far from any one of us’ (Acts 17: 27) and ‘Christ is in you, the hope of glory to come’ (Col 1: 27).²⁴²⁵ I am not advocating pantheism, the false belief that all is God. What I am suggesting is that we can adopt a theism, which is almost deism: the gulf existing between God and humanity becomes so large that one wonders how ever God will come to be ‘All and in all’ (1 Cor 15: 28). What I am probably nudging towards is a type of *panentheism*²⁶, the understanding that we are in God but that God is also completely beyond us.

2. Over cognitivising in present psychotherapy

At present, it is apparent that therapy has become overly cognitive with the popular talk-therapies being rational-based therapies, which aim to find and correct irrational self-talk or thinking errors. This development is partly a reaction to the determinism of behaviourism and the irrational directions of existentialism. Additionally, the birth of widespread computer models contributed to a 1960s ‘cognitive revolution’ in psychotherapy. However, the swing away from the concentration on ‘biotic’ approaches above discloses the existence of a pernicious dialectical process: namely, psychotherapy is torn between body and ‘rational’ soul elements, which can never be reconciled because each vies with the other to be *the* explanation of humanity’s mysterious I.

²⁴ A scholar who has developed my understanding of Dooyeweerd greatly is J. Glenn Friesen who advocates a form of Christian nondualism. See his extensive website <http://members.shaw.ca/jgfriesen/index.html>. Nondualism as I understand it believes that neither dualism nor monism is correct.

²⁵ Much remains to be developed on this topic, which I will take up in the next lecture.

²⁶ All creation is in God but God is not all.

Nonetheless, no temporal identification of the *I* can hope to be successful (Carter, 2006). The *I* is supratemporal and cannot be located in temporal reality (Friesen, 2003-2006b). For the time being, cognitive therapy in various forms is in the ascendency in non-Christian and Christian circles alike (e. g., Backus, 1985) and expected to be adequate for all types of people and conditions. It is believed to be superior to other forms of therapy when clearly, the data does not support this supposition (Ward et al., 2000; Watson, Gordon, Stermac, Kalogerakos, & Steckley, 2003).

3. Sensory perception in therapy

The over-reliance, not to say dominance of rational forms of psychotherapy is hardly challenged today. The problem with such one-eyed foci is that we force all counsellees into a single pattern of care which may be completely unsuited to their requirements. One may, for example, have counsellees who are badly damaged emotionally because of lack of bodily contact in their families.²⁷²⁸ If these people are just treated using ‘rational sentence-analysis’, one wonders whether much healing will ensue. I am aware that even such therapists do far more than they claim in expressive, visual and feeling domains; they look kindly at counsellees, orient their faces and posture towards counsellees in an attitude of respectful listening, which is bound to have a positive effect on the touch deprived.²⁹

The spirit of restraint in touching children positively³⁰ was reflected in the words of J. B. Watson (1928), the creator of behaviourism (whose ideas were enacted in NZ by a Dr Truby King who also had some influence in Australian households!)

²⁷ With your next counsellee or even in discussion with each other, identify for the other person the people in his/her family who touched them. [Of course, in some families, inappropriate touching occurs and causes great harm. But, I am not talking about that situation in this context.]

²⁸ Interestingly, a significant correlation exists between families who do not touch, and violence and depression (Field, 2002/2003). The corporation *Johnson & Johnson* (1995) indicate that touch can have great healing power in early infant care. However, more than that, the use of touch by a doula – another woman who attends the mother during the birth with supportive touch – towards the mother in labour has also been shown to have remarkable effects.

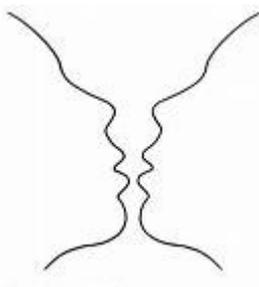
²⁹ However, perhaps such people are also in need of touch, hugging and massage than they are in analysing and scrutinising, activities they are probably already quite good at doing, though ethical issues arise in normal counselling situations..

³⁰ We know that children in 18th century Methodism had their wills broken by the redoubtable Susannah Wesley from an early age (Digital History, 2007). John Wesley, in a sermon (Col 3: 20) about obeying parents is able to repeat his mother’s words, ‘Let a child, from a year old, be taught to fear the rod and to cry softly’ (Wesley, 1872/2000: sections 10-11).

Nearly all of us have suffered from over-coddling in our infancy. How does it show? It shows in invalidism... coddling is a dangerous experiment... the fact that our children are always crying and always whining shows the unhappy, unwholesome state they are in. There is a sensible way of treating children. Treat them as though they were young adults. Never hug and kiss them, never let them sit on your lap. If you must, kiss them once on the forehead when they say good night. Shake hands with them in the morning... try it out. In a weeks time you will be utterly ashamed of the mawkish, sentimental way you have been handling it (Watson, cited in Kraemer, 1999).

a) gestalt therapy

Gestalt therapy (GT) views humanity as need-fulfilling organisms through the 'process of Gestalt formation and destruction' (Wallen, 1970: 8). GT's view is reflected in Maslow's phrase that 'man is a perpetually wanting animal' (1943: 370). According to Wallen, '[n]eeds energize behaviour and organize it on the subjective-perceptual level and on the objective-motor level' (1970: 9).



If we become thirsty, then getting water becomes 'figure' and whatever we have been doing becomes background. Once our thirst is satisfied, then something else will become figure and the water will become ground. (As in the adjacent sketch, we may focus on either two faces or an hourglass shape.) When thirsty, we were aware of our state through the *sensation* of thirst. GT emphasises the role of sensory perception convinced that this particular mode of experience informs truly as to what our organismic needs are (Barlow, 1981), which require satisfaction. Satisfaction of needs is required if the ultimate goal of self-actualisation is to occur.

The process of satisfying needs, which depends on the formation of clear gestalts ('I need water', or 'I want a hug'), can be derailed by being interrupted or uncompleted. Wallen (1970) mentions 'poor perceptual contact with the external world and with the body itself' (Wallen, 1970: 11) and the 'the open [verbal] expression of needs is blocked' (p. 11) as being two reasons for these interruptions that cause 'unfinished business'.³¹ With regard to the first point, he remarks that counselees often are not aware of what their hands, feet, eyes or voices are doing as they communicate; their general experiencing includes little awareness of the sensory element. The rationale

³¹ He also mentions repression understood as a muscular action whereby particular muscles may be used to inhibit the expression of impulses/needs.

for GT is that when people learn greater awareness of what is taking place within them when they have contact with the world, they will have greater awareness of their true needs. Inhibiting expression of the needs, that one is aware of leads to half-heartedness. Half-heartedness interferes with the awareness of other sorts of needs that would lead to a stronger gestalt (Wallen, 1970).

b) constructive criticism

i) the 'need' problematic

Needs-based thinking dominates well-known types of psychotherapy (e. g., Glasser, 2000-2006). Exemplified by Maslow's (1970) seven levels of need but derived from psychodynamic sources, GT shows its Freudian connections by retaining a major element of Freudian psychology. 'Needs' appear to be innate and instinctive and reflect the Freudian *id*. Just like the *id*, needs are necessitous elements of our makeup. However, one can give many examples where such a use is invalid. One can say that one has a 'need' to travel but overseas travel is not a necessity nor is the 'need' to shop or consume or be entertained endlessly. The post-Freudian generation has created a monster with ravenous innate needs that have to be satisfied or catastrophe will strike. Calling something, a *need* gives it a justification, a validation that it does not actually have. The problem with the concept of needs in general is its over-extended meaning and its use as an almost infallible rule as to what *ought* to be done. Seemingly, any wish or goal can become a need and thereby warranted. We have needs today for things that former and future generations would or will strongly question. What we call needs are in fact often wishes, desires, impulses or lusts. The problem with promoting a needs-based worldview is that one encourages an insatiable mode of consuming, where one never gets to contentment with enough (Phil 4: 11).

Legitimate desires for affection, for companionship, for love, for friendship, for fellowship and contact all exist properly but desires for them are bound by norms, by oughts, by proprieties of what is fitting. Instead of calling what Maslow has nominated as needs – he also calls them desires on a number of occasions – we could call them goods provided in life by God for our benefit. Unlike GT, the creation is not organised by our needs so much as by our God-referring meaning as image of

God who work to unfold creation to God's glory.³² Needs-based thinking is attempting to remove the distinction between necessary and desirable.

GT and others use needs to mean 'organisers of behaviour', as 'setting the goals for behaviours'. However, human actions occur in a normative context, meaning that God has set regulative boundaries for how we should or ought to act. If we choose not to be faithful to those norms then we will experience judgment at some point because we will surely reap what we sow. Needs as used in GT comes from regarding humanity as simply an animal driven by desire or pulled towards the satisfaction of innate, instinctive need. I trust you can understand that when this worldview is lived out, it falls far short of the biblical revelation of humanity as image of God. This discussion does not mean we cannot use the word need but that we should be cautious following the present worldly ways of regarding needs as autonomous, innate pathways that should dictate how we should live. (Ironically, Freud's ideas have been turned upside down in this formulation.)

ii) a place for sensory perception

Sensory perception is important in psychotherapy because sensory perception and feeling function within the psychical aspect of human experience, which is the proper focus of psychotherapy. Sensory perception is an important part of our experience and GT has rightly identified lacks in this area to be a proper concern for counsellors. GT implies that we need – a normative requirement! – to develop greater awareness ourselves of what the counsellee is 'saying' or 'not saying' by her breathing rates, voice intonation, limb movements, facial patterns and colour.

However, unlike GT, we would not be developing this area to provide a privileged entry into the client's 'real' organismic needs because we do not understand temporal 'needs' to be at the core of humanness. In fact, nothing temporal is at the core! Rather, the supratemporal image of God expresses itself in the 'body' as the temporal expression of humanness. These *temporal* expressions of humanness include sensory perception. The supratemporal is the root of the body and the body is the temporal expression of the root.

³² Interestingly, Maslow's hierarchy of needs may reflect some of the aspects in the modal scale (p. 7).
Theory & Practice 1
Semester 1, 2007

Hence, we work with sensory perception and seek to *unfold* it through GT's methods of developing greater awareness to promote better proportional development among temporal expressions. Typically, when we flee away from painful feeling and take refuge in expressions that are safer and less challenging our development becomes lop-sided and unbalanced. Some will hide in the intellect, in fantasy, or in banal, predictable talk. Hence, our therapeutic rationale would not be strongly focused on a presenting problem so much as beginning with counselees' self-presentations with the more general aim of increasing sensory perceptive awareness. We do this work assuming psychical problems may be due to undeveloped or mal-developed sensory perception. Further research is needed to develop these ideas further.

Conclusion

Dooyeweerd's philosophy is fertile ground for developing psychotherapy methods. His notion of the supratemporal self and its temporal expressions allows for concerns about 'body' and 'soul' to be fully realised in a radically different approach from non-Christian holism or dualism. His framework provides a stimulus for developing a psychotherapy that takes the role of sensory perception seriously without reducing humanness to one type of experience. Furthermore, his understandings go beyond attention to the 'body' but imply necessary awareness of the relationship between the supratemporal self and temporal life.

References

- Armstrong, D. (1985/2002). Reversing the inward spiral: A critique of eastern monistic religion. Available Internet: (<http://ic.net/~erasmus/RAZ342.HTM>) (15th January 2007).
- Backus, W. (1985). *Telling the truth to troubled people*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Publishers.
- Barlow, A. (1981). Gestalt-antecedent influence or historical accident. Available Internet: (<http://www.gestalt.org/barlow.htm>) (13th January 2007).
- Bisson, D. (2006). Alleluia! Good news for the body: ring out with Easter joy! Can laughter and hospitality give us insight into resurrection? Available Internet: (http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0MKY/is_7_30/ai_n16348223) (15th January 2007).
- Carter, S. (2006). Presence and absence. Available Internet: (<http://www.sensoryawareness.org/pagesnews/06/spring06/presenceseymour.html>) (12th January 2007).
- Daniels, V. (2006). Wilhelm Reich and his influence. Available Internet: (<http://www.sonoma.edu/users/d/daniels/reichlecture.html>) (11th January 2006).
- Digital History. (2007). Children and child rearing. Available Internet: (http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/do_history/young_people/child_rearing.cfm) (12th January 2007).
- Dooyeweerd, H. (1940/2005-2006). Het tijdsprobleem in de wijsbegeerte der wetsidee. [The problem of time in the philosophy of the law-idea.] by Herman Dooyeweerd. (J. G. Friesen, Trans.). *Philosophia Reformata* 5: 160-192, 192-234. Available Internet: (<http://www.members.shaw.ca/hermandooyeweerd/Tijdsprobleem.pdf>) (18th June 2006).
- Dooyeweerd, H. (1942). De leer van den mensch in de wijsbegeerte der wetsidee. Stellingen voor het referaat van prof Dr H Dooyeweerd op de komende Jaarvergadering onzer Vereeniging. [The Theory of Man: Thirty-Two propositions on anthropology: Propositions for consideration from Prof Dr H Dooyeweerd at our Association's upcoming Annual Meeting.] First appeared in the *Correspondentiebladen* 7(5): 134-143 and then later published in 1954, *Sola Fide* 7(2): 8-18.
- Dooyeweerd, H. (1960). *In the twilight of western thought: Studies in the pretended autonomy of theoretical thought*. Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company.
- Dooyeweerd, H. (1969). *A new critique of theoretical thought. Vol. 1: Prolegomena* (D. H. Freeman & W. S. Young, Trans.). Philadelphia, PA: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.
- Ellis, A. (1962). *Reason and emotion in psychotherapy*. Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press.
- Field, T. (2002/2003). Violence and touch deprivation in adolescents. In *Adolescence* Winter 2002. Available Internet: (http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2248/is_148_37/ai_97723210/print) (5th January 2007).

- Fleckenstein, K. S. (1997). Addressing the Cartesian fallacy: Toward methodological monism. Research speakers forum. Available Internet: (<http://athena.english.vt.edu/~dubinsky/rmf/97plenabs.html#fleckenstein>) (15th January 2007).
- Friesen, J. G. (2003-2005). Studies relating to Herman Dooyeweerd. Linked glossary of terms: Enkapsis. Available Internet: (<http://members.shaw.ca/jgfriesen/Definitions/Enkapsis.html>) (3rd July 2006).
- Friesen, J. G. (2003-2006a). Studies relating to Herman Dooyeweerd. Glossary of linked terms: Dimension, horizon, perspective. Available Internet: (<http://members.shaw.ca/jgfriesen/Definitions/Dimension.html>) (18th November 2006).
- Friesen, J. G. (2003-2006b). Studies relating to Herman Dooyeweerd. Linked glossary of terms: Selfhood. Available Internet: (<http://members.shaw.ca/jgfriesen/Definitions/Selfhood.html>) (31st May 2006).
- Glasser, W. (2000-2006). Reality therapy in the year 2000. An invited address The Evolution of Psychotherapy Conference held May 25-29, 2000 at the Anaheim Convention Center, Anaheim, CA. Available Internet: (<http://www.wglasser.com/rt2000.htm>) (12th December 2006).
- Gupta, M. A., Gupta, A. K., Schork, N. J., & Watteel, G. N. (1995). Perceived touch deprivation and body image: some observations among eating disordered and non-clinical subjects. Available Internet: (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?itool=pubmed_Abstract&db=pubmed&cmd=Display&dopt=pubmed_pubmed&from_uid=7562675&itool=ExternalSearch) (9th January 2007).
- Helpguide-Mental Health Issues. (1996-2006). Body-mind mental health therapies: A guide to treatment. Available Internet: (http://www.helpguide.org/mental/mind_body_therapy.htm) (15th January 2007).
- Hooft, S. v. (2002). Book Review - *Healing the soul in the age of the brain* by Elio Frattaroli Viking Press, 2001. Available Internet: (http://mentalthelp.net/poc/view_doc.php?id=1141&type=book&cn=91) (15th January 2007).
- Johnson & Johnson. (1995). Touch and labor in infancy: Clinical implications. Available Internet: (<http://www.hkjpaed.org/johnson/TouchInLabourAndInfancy/index.htm>) (8th January 2007).
- Kalsbeek, L. (1975). *Contours of the Christian philosophy: An introduction to Herman Dooyeweerd's thought*. Toronto, Canada: Wedge Publishing Foundation.
- Kaplan, T. M. (2001). Growing towards wholeness through grief: The journey of the wounded child within. Available Internet: (<http://www.creativegrowth.com/teresa.htm>) (11th January 2007).
- Katz, J. (2004). Review. Sacred mirror: Nondual wisdom and psychotherapy by J. J. Prendergast, P. Fenner, and S. Krystal (Eds.). Available Internet: (http://www.paragonhouse.com/catalog/product_reviews_info.php?products_id=315&reviews_id=14) (15th January 2007).
- Kraemer, S. (1999). Promoting resilience: Changing concepts of parenting and child care. In *International Journal of Child and Family Welfare* 3: 273-287. Available Internet: (<http://www.childrensproject.co.uk/resilience.asp>) (11th January 2007).

- Lowen, A. (1958). *The language of the body*. NY: Collier Books.
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A Theory of Human Motivation. Originally Published in *Psychological Review* 50: 370-396. Available Internet: (http://www.advancedhiring.com/docs/theory_of_human_motivation.pdf) (13th January 2007).
- Maslow, A. H. (1970). A theory of human motivation. Chapter 4 in *Motivation and personality* (2nd ed). Available Internet: (<http://www.xenodochy.org/ex/lists/maslow.html>) (13th January 2007).
- Masterson, J. F. (1978). The borderline adult: therapeutic alliance and transference. In *Am J. Psychiatry* 135: 437-441. Available Internet: (<http://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/cgi/content/abstract/135/4/437>) (11th January).
- Missildine, W. H. (1963). *Your inner child of the past*. New York: Pocket Books.
- Pollen, C. (2000). What is "The Word of the Lord"? Available Internet: (http://www.accuros.com/thornbush/pollen/ps119_89.htm) (4th January 2007).
- Prendergast, J. J., Fenner, P., & Krystal, S. (Eds.). (2003). *Sacred mirror: Nondual wisdom & psychotherapy*. NY: Omega Book.
- Wallen, R. (1970). Gestalt therapy and gestalt psychology. In J. Fagan & I. L. Shepherd (Eds.), *Gestalt therapy now* (pp. 8-13). NY: Harper Colophon Books.
- Ward, E., King, M., Lloyd, M., Bower, P., Sibbald, B., Farrelly, S., et al. (2000). Randomised controlled trial of non-directive counselling, cognitive-behaviour therapy, and usual general practitioner care for patients with depression. *British Medical Journal* 321: 1383-1388. Available Internet: (<http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=27542>) (12th January 2007).
- Watson, J. C., Gordon, L. B., Stermac, L., Kalogerakos, F., & Steckley, P. (2003). Comparing the effectiveness of process-experiential with cognitive-behavioral psychotherapy in the treatment of depression. In *J Consult Clin Psychol.* 71: 773-81.
- Wesley, J. (1872/2000). On obedience to parents. Sermon 96. Available Internet: (<http://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/Wesley/sermons/serm-096.stm>) (11th January 2007).