

INTRODUCTION

In this edition of Aspects you will find various articles on the recent Christian Philosophical Conference, which was held at VU University, Amsterdam from 16-19 August. You can read, for example, an interesting review by chairman Glas, and you will learn of the winner of the Herman Dooyeweerd award. Last but not least we will also inform you of the SPICE-program which is being run by the Gereformeerde Hogeschool (a reformational college of higher education in Zwolle).

I hope you will enjoy reading this edition!

On behalf of the board,

Ida Slump-Schoonhoven



AN INSPIRATIONAL CONFERENCE

More than 250 people from 30 different nations attended the Christian Philosophical Conference held in August at the VU University Amsterdam. It was the highpoint of our association's Jubilee celebration for its 75th anniversary. In his opening speech former prime minister of the Netherlands Jan-Peter Balkenende said "It is always a pleasure when you know that all across the globe people know what you mean when anyone speaks about Reformational Philosophy." And with that he outlined what many were to experience in the next few days, both in the joint sessions on the theme The Future of Creation Order as well moments of relaxation, like the boat trip along the canals of Amsterdam.

The 75th birthday of our organisation was celebrated in a small church in Baambrugge. The reflection by Professor Kees van der Kooi connected perfectly with the theme of the convention "How many are your works, O LORD! In wisdom you made them

all" (Psalm 104:24). In response, thanks to the Lord was expressed in the many hymns that were sung.

The organising committee, aided by a 'crew' of students made sure of a successful conference in all respects. In the words of chairman Gerrit Glas: "The conference has been experienced as rich, inspiring, warm and – admittedly – demanding."



THE FUTURE OF CREATION ORDER

DOES THE CONCEPT OF A CREATION ORDER HAVE A FUTURE? YES, WAS THE ANSWER BY THE THREE MEMBERS OF THE FINAL PANEL. ELEONORE STUMP (SAINT LOUIS, USA) EMPHASISED THAT THERE IS NOT ONLY ORDER IN THE WAY LAWS AND NORMS GOVERN NATURE AND MANKIND. THERE IS ALSO A DEEPER ORDER THAT HAS TO DO WITH MEETING WITH GOD AND THE HUMAN HEART. THIS ORDER IS NOT KNOWN BY REASON BUT BY FAITH. WE CAN SPEAK ABOUT GOD IN TERMS OF “KNOWING THAT” (IN PROPOSITIONAL TERMS) - KNOWING *THAT* GOD EXISTS AND *THAT* HE WANTS CERTAIN THINGS. BUT THE KNOWLEDGE THAT COMES WITH MEETING GOD GOES MUCH DEEPER AND CANNOT BE UNDERSTOOD IN TERMS OF “KNOWING THAT”. PROFESSOR STUMP REFERRED TO ST. AUGUSTINE’S CONFESSIONS (FIFTH BOOK), WHICH IS ABOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD THAT IS UNSPEAKABLE AND CAN MORE EASILY BE EXPRESSED IN TERMS OF “SEEING” THAN IN WORDS OR LANGUAGE.

Does the concept of a creation order have a future? Yes, was the answer by the three members of the final panel. Eleonore Stump (Saint Louis, USA) emphasised that there is not only order in the way laws and norms govern nature and mankind. There is also a deeper order that has to do with meeting with God and the human heart. This order is not known by reason but by Faith. We can speak about God in terms of “knowing that” (in propositional terms) - knowing *that* God exists and *that* he wants certain things. But the knowledge that comes with meeting God goes much deeper and cannot be understood in terms of “knowing that”. Professor Stump referred to St. Augustine’s Confessions (fifth book), which is about the knowledge of God that is unspeakable and can more easily be expressed in terms of “seeing” than in words or language.



Lambert Zuidervaart (ICS Toronto, Canada) also said that the relationship between God and the created order should not only be drawn in terms of commandments by the sovereign God and an obedient creation. He emphasized the elements of partnership and development. Norms become normative because they “open up”. Christian philosophy should not place everything on the concept of Creation order. Order has to do with orientation, and in that there are three elements to consider: regularity, normativity and direction.



Nick Wolterstorff tried to relieve the worries of the organizers. The conference seemed to be born out of concern; concerns that the theory of evolution makes man into an accidental phenomenon and that social order is merely a human contrivance.

He referred to a lecture by biologist Denis Alexander, who showed how concepts like purpose and design found a new place in evolutionary thinking. He also questioned why it appeared to be a negative that mankind has a role in the development of order for their relationships. He insisted that the tradition that has arisen from Dooyeweerd's philosophy join with other Christian traditions, like the Thomistic tradition and the work of the contemporary philosophers like David Kelsey.

Earlier Henk Geertsema pointed to the continuing importance of the perspective of creation and creational order. Creational order is not a blueprint, but an order that is drawn in the interaction between a communicating God and an answering creation, in which mankind is especially involved. Geertsema did however make two side notes; the biblical story on creation does not dismiss death and damnation from before the fall. There is a dark side in creation, even in the very beginning. The second point is that after the coming of Jesus Christ and his work there is a definite change and that creation lives in hope. Creation should be related to its culmination and exists in relation to its eagerly-awaited completion.

During the conference there was a lot of attention given to the concept of emergence, a new version of the idea that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Physicists and information technologists have given this new life: certain interactions between parts can unpredictably lead to new properties that have consequences for the behaviour of the

combined parts. Does emergence answer to certain lawfulness or is the new order a product of the process of emergence? Answers proposed to these questions varied. Biologist Jitse van der Meer leaned more towards the latter. Gerrit Glas and Lydia Jaeger were more careful. Emergence is a concept that describes certain behaviour and it is not an explanation for the fact that new characteristics emerge. Emergence is a concept that presupposes a certain form of reductionism.

In reviewing the conference, the organisers were satisfied that the conference atmosphere had been excellent and had facilitated an intensive and fruitful scholarly exchange. Once again, these days made it clear that Christian

Philosophy is not only something for specialists, but rather by building on the leading ideas of the founding fathers of Reformational Philosophy has intensely practical meaning outside of philosophy: in thinking on culture, fashion, organisation, health care, politics, new media and communications.

Gerrit Glas



HERMAN DOOYEWEERD AWARD 2011

During the international conference the Herman Dooyeweerd Award 2011 was awarded to Dr. Daniel F.M. (Danie) Strauss for his book *Philosophy: Discipline of the Disciplines*, and for his work as editor of the *Collected works of Herman Dooyeweerd*. The jury (dr. Harry van Dyke, dr. Henk G. Geertsema, dr. Gerrit Glas and dr. Johannes Schick) lauded him in these terms: "The perfect generalist, with a knowledge base that is of as much use for initiates as it is for novices". They appraise his book as "(...) the work of (...) some-

one who has independently worked with Dooyeweerd and who is not afraid of walking a different path. The work indeed takes the reader in many directions."

Congratulations to Danie Strauss!



SPICE A JOINT PROGRAM OF DORDT COLLEGE, USA AND THE GH ZWOLLE, NL

The Gereformeerde Hogeschool Zwolle (a reformed institute of higher education) offers bachelor programs in Education for Primary schools (age 4-12), Nursing, Social Work, Theology and Teacher Education in Religion, and masters programs in Special Educational Needs and Learning and Innovating. Every year, from January to May, foreign students have the opportunity to participate in the so called SPICE ((Study Program in Contemporary Europe) program, offered by the GHZ, in joint cooperation with Dordt College (Iowa, USA) and the ARP. This program is English-language based and includes courses on culture and society, art and architecture, Dutch, theology and philosophy. The last-mentioned course will be given by a professor on behalf of the Association for Reformational Philosophy, who will teach the history and systematics of philosophy from a Christian point of view.

More information can be found on www.gh.nl.

ARP AND PHILOSOPHIA REFORMATA

Philosophia Reformata is the international scientific journal of the Association for Reformational Philosophy. The journal publishes scholarly articles and book reviews (in English) in all areas of philosophy, particularly in the tradition of reformational philosophy.

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Aspects of Reformational Philosophy is the international information bulletin of the Foundation for Reformational Philosophy and the Association for Reformational Philosophy. The Association pursues philosophy in the light of the Bible as the Word of God. The Foundation aims to spread the fruits of this pursuit. Both do their work in the conviction that all philosophy is religiously determined. Aspects will be sent on request.

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