

Introduction

A Maestro of Maestros

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This is a very brief introduction to a seminal article on science written by a Maestro of maestros. There is a 2005 article on this page under the rubric of history by Roel Kuyper about the maestro of the Reformational philosophy of history, M. C. Smit. Smit is member of a generation of Reformational maestro philosophers who did much to spread and develop the philosophical foundations created by Herman Dooyeweerd, who in this scheme of things, may thus be considered a maestros' Maestro.

This article is written in a very compact style and assumes much of Dooyeweerd's wide-ranging philosophy. To fully appreciate it, one needs to read his literature widely, his as well as that of scholars that have further developed this tradition, a dynamic community that by now is very international and has found its practical expressions in various colleges, under- as well as post-graduate, in several countries, plus a range of social organizations in different areas of life, including labour unions, political parties and think tanks. Canadians and Americans may not be aware of them, but they are active in these countries at many different fronts. Vancouver, for example, is heavily influenced by this school of thought, though few Vancouverites are aware of it. One could consider them professional moles that seek to undermine the wide-spread secular spirit of the city.

I never refer to myself as a "Dooyeweerdian," for there is too much technical philosophy there that I do not fully comprehend, let alone be able

to defend, even when much of it *seems* to make sense to me and has enriched my life.

I am so far down the line in that hierarchy of maestros that of all Reformational consumers, I am the least qualified to write such an introduction. Note that I qualify myself as a *consumer* rather than *practitioner* of philosophy. I use the insights of my betters by applying them to my life and ministry. They have helped me make sense of life and give direction and structure to my life's work, both in ministry and writing. Actually, of course, my writing has always been a major part of my ministry and now, in retirement, is almost the whole of it.

I rather describe myself as "Reformational" or "Kuyperian." But even that mostly in a general sense of adhering to the "square inch" theory of Kuyper. I am no specialist in Kuyper's prolific philosophical and theological writings. I have just become more acutely aware of that by reading the first chapter of a "recent" Kuyper book by Jeroen Koch: *Abraham Kuyper: Een Biografie* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Boom, 2006). Nevertheless, with all these disclaimers, I've had the nerve to introduce Kuyper at various fronts in my books and even have dedicated a page to him on this website.

A major reason I have dared do so is the long international line of scholars for whom I have respect and who have written high recommendations for Kuyper's approach to culture. Another reason is that my studies have made me aware of the serious distortions missionaries have introduced throughout much of the world. I found a serious antidote in Kuyperian Reformational thinking to which quite a number of Nigerians have responded positively.

I am using this introduction in this place to make clear my position in the Reformational environment, for some there are who expect me to be a specialist at various levels. Let it be clear once and for all, I am no specialist in anything, though I have considerable knowledge in various fields as anyone can detect by looking at the three main pages on my website: Boeriana, Kuyperiana and Islamica.

In terms of the main subject of this file, my major remark is to caution the reader to be aware of the datedness of this material. Knudsen, in his Introduction, uses absolute language that immediately struck me as over the top. To be sure, this occurred to me only once, but at a crucial juncture. He depicts Dooyeweerd as seeking “to erect a Christian, a truly scriptural philosophy.” “Truly scriptural” is a term few Christians still use. Most of us are all too aware that our thinking is never closer than approximate. Dooyeweerd himself was already aware of this and rejected any such absolutist claim for his philosophy. It may well be the effect of postmodern thought that makes us retreat from such claims today.

As to the datedness of Dooyeweerd’s own article, in his conclusion he writes, “For us there are only two ways open, that of Scholastic accommodation..., or that of the spirit of the Reformation....” Given the fact that the original version of this article dates from 1953, one can understand that. Major Christian discussions in the West were between the two major Occidental branches of Christianity, Protestantism and Catholicism. However, the floodgates have let loose and other religions now make serious counterclaims that today make it impossible to restrict the discussion of the philosophy of science just to those two traditions. I am, I hate to confess, not very conversant with such philosophical discussions among some religions, but it is certainly no longer possible to exclude either Islam or Judaism from them.

My two comments are not critiques. Dooyeweerd and Knudsen lived in a different era. I am merely drawing your attention to the fact that wider approaches are needed within which to apply Reformational insights. You need to be aware of that during your reading if you are going to benefit from it.