

Johan Stellingwerff, *Geschiedenis van de Reformatorische Wijsbegeerte*, (Stichting voor Reformatorische Wijsbegeerte, 2006) 238 pages. ISBN 10: 90-9020371-0.

This book was published to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Association for Reformational Philosophy. It is noteworthy in itself that Johan Stellingwerff, who was 81 at the time of publication, continues to write and publish. The beautiful cover displays his own painting of van Gogh's "The Sower"— a symbol of the seed sown by reformational philosophy that continues to be fruitful today.

The book is part history, part personal recollection, and part personal philosophical argument and conclusions. Sometimes these parts are not clearly distinguished. There are many typographical errors, and the book needs closer editing. The chronology is difficult to follow, and many important dates and scholarly sources are not provided. Stellingwerff also assumes knowledge of previous works by himself, M.E. Verburg, J.H. Kok, R.D. Henderson, A. Tol and K.A. Bril (p. 11, fn1-2).

The first three chapters give a very broad-brush historical summary, going back to Augustine and Calvin, and to philosophers like Descartes and Kant. Some readers may question Stellingwerff's conclusion that '*verzuijing*' – the proportionate recognition to Christian and humanist institutions in the Netherlands – resulted from the emancipation of the Gereformeerde "little people," of socialists, Catholics, women, and Jews. He says that Kuyper's idea of sphere sovereignty supported such emancipation, and that Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven provided its philosophical conclusion (pp. 11-16).

Several chapters are devoted to the development of the philosophies of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven. Stellingwerff reports how Vollenhoven rejected theism because theism concerns the being of God (pp. 27, 41). He points to the influence of A. Janse on Vollenhoven (pp. 29-30, 37, 84, 86fn2, 91) and of W. Zevenbergen on Dooyeweerd (pp. 30-31). He says that Dooyeweerd's idea of cosmic time arose after reading of Heidegger (p. 114). But Stellingwerff does not investigate the important historical issue of where Dooyeweerd obtained this key idea of cosmic time.

Some of the most interesting chapters concern later reformational writers, such as J.P.A. Mekkes, K.J. Popma, M.C. Smit, H. van Riessen, J.D. Dengerink, Evan Runner and others, as well as the next generations of reformational philosophers. Stellingwerff has compiled a great deal of interesting information about these people. And he has summarized their important ideas, such as Smit's view of two kinds of time. Stellingwerff briefly outlines developments of reformational philosophy in North America and South Africa. He advocates more dialogue with other traditions and religions. It is surprising to learn that Klaas Schilder obtained his doctorate under Eugen Herrigel, the author of *Zen in the Art of Archery* (p. 62). Sander Griffioen's contrast of law and the Tao is also interesting (p. 221). The final chapter is Stellingwerff's own argument against Islam.

I am intrigued by Stellingwerff's ambivalence as to whether or not there is a fundamental conflict between the philosophies of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven. His simultaneous affirmation of Dooyeweerd and negation of Dooyeweerd's key ideas reflects the current religious dialectic within reformational philosophy. Stellingwerff devotes a chapter to Vollenhoven's "Report of Divergences." And he summarizes some differences with Dooyeweerd (p. 155). But Stellingwerff minimizes these differences, or resolves them

in favour of Vollenhoven. He says that Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd were inspired by the same spirit, that they proceeded from different viewpoints and only accentuated different ideas, that they complemented each other, and that their differences are like two sides of one face (pp. 10, 49, 99, 105, 138).

A good example of Stellingwerff's ambivalence is his discussion of van Riessen. He sharply criticizes van Riessen and his student Egbert Schuurman for their "stagnated" philosophy" (p. 133). Van Riessen spoke of entities and not aspects, and saw reality as only individual, and the law as universal. Van Riessen had too little historical and philosophical depth, he did not distinguish his views enough from current philosophy, and he improperly sought a compromise between Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven— he had "the voice of Dooyeweerd, but the spirit of Vollenhoven" (pp. 136-138, 158). But Stellingwerff reverts to his view that Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven can be harmonized. And he omits detailed discussion of Dooyeweerd's last article, directed against another of van Riessen's students, in whose philosophy Dooyeweerd found logicism, genuine antinomies, and the presuppositions of modern epistemology that only darken our insight.

Stellingwerff's criticism of van Riessen's attempted compromise seems inconsistent with his own advocacy of a third way that "best represents the progress of reformational philosophy" (p. 180). But what is this third way? Stellingwerff says that we can either analyze Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven so as to bring about further divergences, or to promote their common insight (p. 91). Stellingwerff chooses to attempt harmonization, but in doing so, he assimilates Dooyeweerd to Vollenhoven. For example, he rejects Dooyeweerd's key ideas of cosmic time and the supratemporal heart in favour of Vollenhoven's views. Stellingwerff refers to Dooyeweerd's "metaphors" of prism, root, and supratemporal selfhood in relation to eternal and temporal (pp. 72-75, 90). Stellingwerff rejects supratemporality as being either dualistic or monistic (it cannot be both, and in my view is neither). And Stellingwerff adopts the debatable view that eternity is extended time (pp. 74, 90, 115-116, 120, 142). He interprets Dooyeweerd's and Kuyper's view of the regenerated heart in terms of "timeless eternity." But Dooyeweerd distinguishes the *aevum* both from God's eternity and from cosmic time.

Stellingwerff says that the key issue in reformational philosophy is the substitution of pluralism for both monism and dualism (pp. 15, 34, 38, 74, 81, 88-89, 93), and that it should analyze created diversity in its order and coherence (p. 9), and direct its attention to the qualities and functions of created reality (pp. 19, 27). But Dooyeweerd is not a pluralist in Stellingwerff's sense. Dooyeweerd begins not with diversity, but with the transcendental ideas of Origin and supratemporal totality; only then does he consider the third idea of temporal coherence. For him, the separation of the aspects is not ontical, but only intentional. And Dooyeweerd criticizes the "serious misunderstanding" that aspects are abstracted properties of things. Is Stellingwerff anachronistically reading in ideas of pluralism from later conferences (pp. 219-223)?

A related issue is Stellingwerff's desire to demonstrate that Vollenhoven is just as important as Dooyeweerd, and that he was a systematic philosopher in his own right. He calls Vollenhoven the 'forerunner' of Dooyeweerd. But even if it can be proved that Vollenhoven assisted in developing Dooyeweerd's philosophy (Dooyeweerd denied this), this argument makes sense only if the philosophers agreed. On the other hand, Stellingwerff says that Vollenhoven was Dooyeweerd's most important judge, sharpest

critic, and first reformer (pp. 39, 99). To criticize and to reform implies a divergence, and not a harmony of viewpoints. Stellingwerff emphasizes that Vollenhoven was more precise and logical than the intuitive and romantic Dooyeweerd (pp. 32-45). But Stellingwerff does not mention Dooyeweerd's criticism that Vollenhoven's problem-historical method attempted to be too logically consistent.

By the end of this book, a reader may wonder what is left of reformational philosophy. Even Vollenhoven's view of antithesis has been replaced by the idea of taking the "gold of the Egyptians" (an idea that used to be criticized as philosophical synthesis). What is it that still makes this philosophy 'reformational'? There has always been the issue whether neo-Calvinism is indeed Calvinistic. Stellingwerff does not examine the responses by Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven to the investigation of this issue by the Curators of the Vrije Universiteit. Dooyeweerd elsewhere criticized Groen van Prinsterer. And Dooyeweerd praised only Kuyper's address on sphere sovereignty, certain devotional or meditational works, and his *Stone Lectures*.

Stellingwerff believes that some statements in Kuyper's *Stone Lectures* are Gnostic and mystical, including Kuyper's idea of the regenerated heart (pp. 64, 65, 90). But Stellingwerff omits mentioning that Dooyeweerd praises these very statements! Do we really need to label this as Gnostic? As for mysticism, Stellingwerff regards it as a *striving* to transcend (p. 37). But for Dooyeweerd, we already transcend time in our heart! Dooyeweerd's mysticism is the experience of our *present* supratemporal heart reality, out of which proceed or "issue" our temporal acts, including theoretical thought.

Or does 'reformational' merely mean a continued reform of philosophy, without concern for continuity with the past? But then there is no longer any common basis or foundation to reformational philosophy. There is no criterion to judge the adequacy of the criticism of the past. Dooyeweerd certainly refused to accept the criticisms leveled at his philosophy, and he provided a criterion – the importance and reality of the supratemporal heart and religious root. In his last article, Dooyeweerd insisted again on their necessity in order to understand the nature of theoretical thought, its difference from pre-theoretical experience, and even the basis for the irreducibility of the modal aspects. And in *Twilight of Western Thought*, Dooyeweerd said that the Christian ground-motive of creation, fall and redemption is misunderstood unless it is interpreted in relation to this supratemporal religious root. Stellingwerff is right that religious ground-motives are not theoretical presuppositions; they work in our supratemporal heart (p. 94). But Stellingwerff, unlike Dooyeweerd, compares them to Vollenhoven's philosophical types and time currents (pp. 57, 58, 67, 108).

Stellingwerff's book is an interesting introduction to the history of reformational philosophy. But his conclusions are premature, and much more work needs to be done. We should not move too quickly to systematization and attempted harmonization. We need to look for the sources, both Calvinistic and non-Calvinistic, that have influenced reformational philosophers. And we need to acknowledge the real and radical differences between Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd. In reformational philosophy, there was more than one sower, and they were not planting the same seed.

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