

# Encyclopaedic models in the Kuyperian tradition (Part 3: towards a network-model)

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## **Abstract**

*This is the third and final part of a series of three articles dedicated to encyclopaedic models in the Kuyperian tradition. Having explored several models and having noticed a few areas in which improvement is needed, I will in this article sketch a new model. Scholarship is better understood and promoted when compared to a network, in which all the fundamental players are in contact with each other without losing their unique nature and role. After demonstrating that such model reflects more adequately what happens in concrete scholarship, I clarify the role of “mediators” and I suggest an appropriate way of understanding the roles of worldviews and theology. It is argued that this model meets several requests (and answers some objections) which emerged in the past (as reported in part 1 and 2) in relation to specific encyclopaedic proposals. The remaining part of the article highlights some positive features of the network-model and finally argues that it is in line with a reformational worldview.*

## **Opsomming**

**Ensiklopediese modelle in die Kuyperiaanse tradisie (deel 3: op weg na 'n netwerk-model)**

*Hierdie is die derde en finale deel van 'n reeks van drie artikels oor die ensiklopediese modelle in die Kuyperiaanse tradisie. Met verskeie modelle wat reeds ondersoek is en met die bewuswording van sekere areas waarin verbeteringe benodig word, gaan ek in hierdie artikel 'n nuwe ensiklopediese model skets. Wetenskap word beter verstaan en bevorder wanneer dit vergelyk word met 'n netwerk waarin al die fundamentele rolspelers in kontak met mekaar is sonder dat hulle hul unieke aard en rol verloor. Ek sal aantoon dat dit wat in konkrete vakkundige navorsing gebeur, meer gepas deur so 'n model gereflekteer word. Hierna sal ek die rol van "mediators" opklaar en 'n gepaste manier van verstaan vir die rol van wêreldbeskouing en teologie voorstel. Dit word argumenteer dat hierdie model aan sekere vereistes voldoen (en seker besware beantwoord) wat in die verlede na vore gekom het (soos in deel 1 en deel 2 genoem) in verhouding tot spesifieke ensiklopediese voorstelle. Die oorblywende deel van die artikel beklemtoon sekere positiewe kenmerke van die netwerk-model en argumenteer laastens dat dit in lyn is met 'n Reformatoriese wêreldbeskouing.*

## **1. Introduction**

This is the final article of a series of three, dealing with the models for scholarship proposed in the Kuyperian reformed tradition. In part 1 the contributions of four of the "fathers" of neo-Calvinist philosophy were presented and in part 2 the discussions of the most prominent schools in this tradition were outlined. In the process, while acknowledging the high value of the Kuyperian models, two main problematic areas were identified. We have noticed that such problems were not totally unknown to the "fathers" and later on several improvements were attempted. Yet the results were only relatively successful and did not obtain much consensus.

The first problematic aspect was identified in the mediating role attributed to some of the frameworks. Furthermore, the multiplication of the mediators was called "sequentiality". In this arrangement the different components of a model, its frameworks or "players" are placed in a chain-like sequence in which each ring interacts with the previous and the next one but has little contact with other rings in the sequence. In some cases it may lead a rather hierarchic arrangement of the encyclopaedic model. The second problem is related to the first: such models do not seem to account for the richness and complexities

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of real scholarship in which multiple connections, relationships and dynamic interactions among frameworks occur.

Although in part 1 and 2 I took note of several suggestions I did not propose a new model. In this article will try to do so, or at least to suggest criteria and possible pathways to achieve a better model. Without trying to say the final word on the topic, I will nevertheless attempt to draw a concrete and principled sketch of an encyclopaedic model for the Kuyperian tradition. I believe such model can take into account (and in some cases even settle?) some of the “quests” for improvement presented in the proposals of several authors examined in the previous two articles.

A brief recollection of such “quests” should be provided at this point. Stoker and Van Til pleaded for a more “cooperative” model, in which the inter-dependence of the different frameworks would be brought to light in a clearer manner. They also auspicated a broader appreciation of theology, in particular for the service it could offer to philosophy and scholarship. Wolterstorff argued that expressivism and mono-directionality obscure the real character of scholarship and pleaded for the recognition of the complications and the richness of frameworks and functions in scholarship. Klapwijk pleaded for the recognition of worldviews as fully entitled encyclopaedic players, operating not only for naive knowledge but for scholarship as well. Duvenage created a dynamic and “open” model, in which scientific and pre-scientific factors work together in a “spiral-like” model which was supposed to limit sequentiality to a minimum.

With these developments in mind, I would like to proceed to the proposal of a new model.

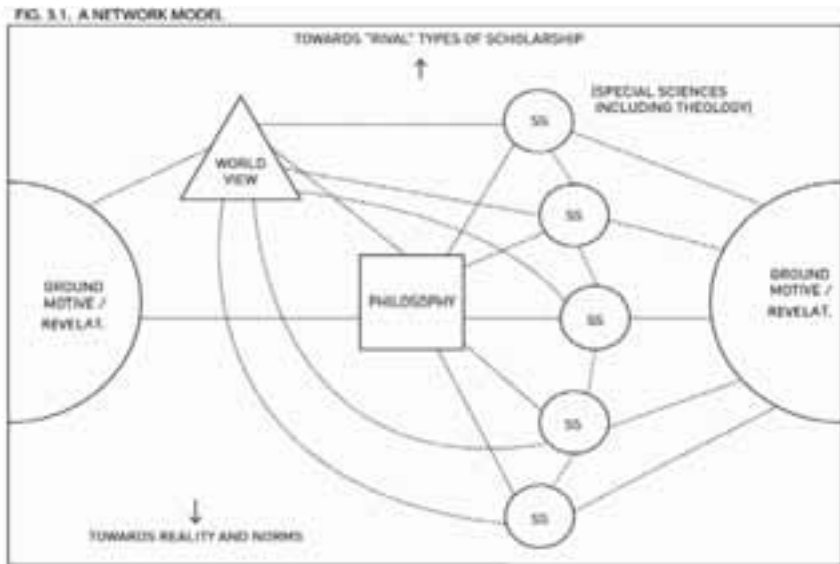
## **2. Sketching the basic idea: a network-model**

I believe a new encyclopaedic model should be inspired by a new metaphor. Having realised the limits of the chain-metaphor, of the concentric circles and of other images, *I suggest that a network idea might be more suitable.*

The frameworks operating in scholarship can be imagined as the nodal points of a network in which a dynamic and complex net of relations is in place. In this network, all the frameworks are in principle accessible to all frameworks, although the specific role, position or nature of each framework need not be ignored or even

relativised. In other words, although in this model the frameworks are placed in direct contact with each other, it is acknowledged that they have specific characteristics, play particular roles and have precise functions.

The figure 3.1 below is not meant to display an exhaustive list of all possible frameworks it rather tries to illustrate the multiple *connections* among the players. Each link is supposed to represent a two-way direction. The map should be understood as representing a globe or a cylinder, in which the two extremes are joined in a single circle (i.e. a religious ground motive). Structurally speaking, the scheme aims at representing not only Christian scholarship but all types of scholarship.



Although sequentiality is abolished, the frameworks retain a precise position, in a sequence going from pre-scientific to special scientific. This underlines the fact that, for example, it is unlikely to achieve sound results in the special sciences without sound philosophical support. At the same time, however (success in) a special science does not depend only on philosophy. The connections are multiple. Philosophy should not (and cannot) try to substitute ground motives and worldviews, which are also indispensable players in the

network. The elaboration of sound (e.g. Christian) scholarship in the special sciences, although greatly supported by philosophy, is a task that only the special scientists can perform and achieve. And they should achieve it without waiting that philosophy reaches a state of perfection, or becomes an “immaculate conception”, as Van Belle (1985:21) once put it.

The first implication of such model is that there is a multiplicity of interactions to be accounted for. This we can try to do in the following section.

### **3. Is this what happens in real scholarship?**

The network-model tries to portray in a more realistic way what happens in concrete scholarship. My intention is not to abolish the “classical” reformational picture, namely that ground motives influence philosophy and philosophy influences the special sciences. We need, however, to recognise and account for a broader net of interactions.

Some of these interactions have already been pointed out by several authors in different circumstances. For example Wolterstorff (1989:72, 77-78; 2004:80, 85) recommended the recognition that the road from religion to science is not “one way”: the direction from science to religion is important as well. This means, if Wolterstorff is right, that the special sciences do influence philosophy and philosophy influences worldviews or ground motives as well. I regard Wolterstorff’s suggestion as valuable, provided such “two ways” traffic is not framed in the chain-metaphor. In a network-model, for example, worldviews too can be (and are in fact) directly influenced by special scientific developments (not necessarily through philosophy). For example, if a person in Chicago experiences sickness in a different way from an Australian aboriginal, this is mostly due to the influence of modern medicine on one’s worldview. One may also imagine the different impressions and thoughts that a biologist, an economist, an environmentalist (and so on) may experience during a stroll in the woods.

A network-model should be more complex than the two-ways-traffic metaphor allows for. One should realise, for example, that the special sciences influence each other as well. A classical example in this context is Maltus’ economic theories influencing (even suggesting?) certain aspects of Darwin’s theory of evolution. In turn,

evolutionary theory has influenced for example sociology, ethics and theology. Strauss (2009:189-191) reports that Parson's view of society as a "system" in equilibrium was suggested to him by the economic works of Pareto and Schumpeter, who had in turn borrowed their ideas from physics. Mathematics has influenced the theological reflection on God's infinity and eternity. Even though some claimed that the original idea of infinity was firstly forged in theology (and later influenced mathematics), apparently the opposite was the case (Strauss, 2009:190 ff; 235 ff). What is important for our specific purpose, however, is that relationships of this sort among special sciences cannot be denied, as they are founded on the inter connections (anticipations and retroceptions) between the modal aspects.

Can philosophy and the sciences influence fundamental commitments (ground motives) as well? Wolterstorff is convinced that they do, and even claims (1976:89; 1989:77; 2004:85) that one's religious commitment can be "killed" (cf. Sloane, 2003:223-232) by scientific theories which oppose such commitment and promote a rival one. Although I think Wolterstorff's formulation is too strong (later on this topic, in 4.3 ), it is quite clear that theories (philosophical or scientific) can have an impact on a person's deepest commitments.

For example the humanist ideal of science (which produced a mechanistic approach in several sciences) had to give way to the opposite humanist ideal of the free personality during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the studies on electricity strongly suggested that the world did not adapt to the accepted paradigm. Such scientific developments did not cause only the rejection of a particular method or world picture, but of the very religious presupposition on which the mechanistic approach was based, namely the nature-pole of the humanist ground motive, expressing itself in the ideal of science.

Of course philosophy is influenced by the special sciences as well (see several examples in Popper, 1963:66-96 and Strauss, 2009:372-273). Kant was influenced by Galileo and by the way he formulated his law of inertia (i.e. by thought experiment). Locke's empirical approach was at least strengthened (if not inspired) by Newton's successes in physics and so on. Therefore neo-Calvinist philosophy has normally recognised that philosophy should work in contact with the special sciences and take their results into account. This is not only possible and legitimate but also necessary.

At this point I would like to specify that, in a network-model, the influences of the different frameworks can hardly be imagined as “autonomous” or completely original. The influence of physics on economics, for example, might have been inspired by a certain ground motive, justified by philosophy, permitted by a certain worldview and so on. No element in the network works autonomously but all contribute to the final result. We could say that *all influences are influenced*.

This doesn't mean that all influences are always positive or that the roles of the different players are simply inter-changeable. By placing the frameworks in a specific position in my sketch above, I have tried to maintain exactly the idea that they have specific functions and characteristics. For example, it is possible in my scheme (see fig. 3.1 above) to distinguish between a pre-scientific and a scientific “area”, with the respective frameworks grouped in it. I don't think it is necessary to insist on the fact that the characteristics of worldviews are different from those of philosophy, and equally different are the roles they are supposed to play in a network.

The crux of this section is that a network-model is more in line with what happens in concrete scholarship. In the above survey, however, I have deliberately said little on worldviews. This is due to the fact that this particular framework (especially its mediating position) was the cause of several controversial discussions within Kuyperian circles. In the next section we are going to focus on the role of worldviews, and after this we will focus on the (equally controversial) role of theology. Before getting there, however, it is necessary to discuss the more general theme of mediation.

## 4. Mediation

### 4.1 Always negative?

While reading the first two articles, some among the readers might have wondered whether mediation is such a negative business in all

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1 It might however be necessary to place some limits on this idea. The biblical ground motive is not influenced or generated by concrete experience or by human theorising. More in general, ground motives “grab” a community rather than being grabbed by it. In this sense they might be regarded as exerting an “original” sort of influence.

cases. Perhaps I might just have selected a few unfortunate cases and then, by generalising, I might have depicted encyclopaedic mediation in excessively negative terms? It might be true that the desired connection prompting the introduction of mediators often ends up in obstruction and disconnection. But is there no place for mediation at all? Does not Klapwijk (1989:46) suggest that mediation should achieve “integration”? Is it possible to imagine a type of mediation which is not “monopolistic” and does not exclude the direct and mutual contact of the frameworks which are supposed to be connected?

Even before 2002 (Coletto, 2002) I have started suspecting that mediators are not all the same. My impression is that scientific mediators are more “monopolistic” than the pre-scientific mediators. The reason is that pre-scientific mediators are by definition related to all sciences. They constitute a kind of natural “backyard” of all sciences, not only one. True, I have pointed out that in some cases they are regarded as a sort of “private backyard” (or a pre-scientific philosophy or theology), but in these cases the nature of these frameworks is misunderstood. I would therefore like to propose the hypothesis that placing theology as mediator between a religious ground motive and the other sciences is more “dangerous” than placing a worldview in that same position.

It is only a hypothesis. The point is that in a network-model mediation is not simply abolished, it is integrated. Mediation should never be exclusive or monopolistic, but always accompanied by the possibility of direct interaction between the concerned frameworks. For example, the mediation of philosophy (between a ground motive and the special sciences) would not be a threat if the special sciences also have access to that ground motive in their own independent manner. In this case, mediation means enrichment and further support, not domination. The point, in other words, is that non-monopolistic mediation should be considered acceptable and in a network-model it is the only type of mediation which is available. With this background in mind, let us now discuss the role of worldviews.

## **4.2 What about worldviews?**

As we know, in Dooyeweerd’s model for Christian scholarship worldviews were not given a mediating role (between a ground

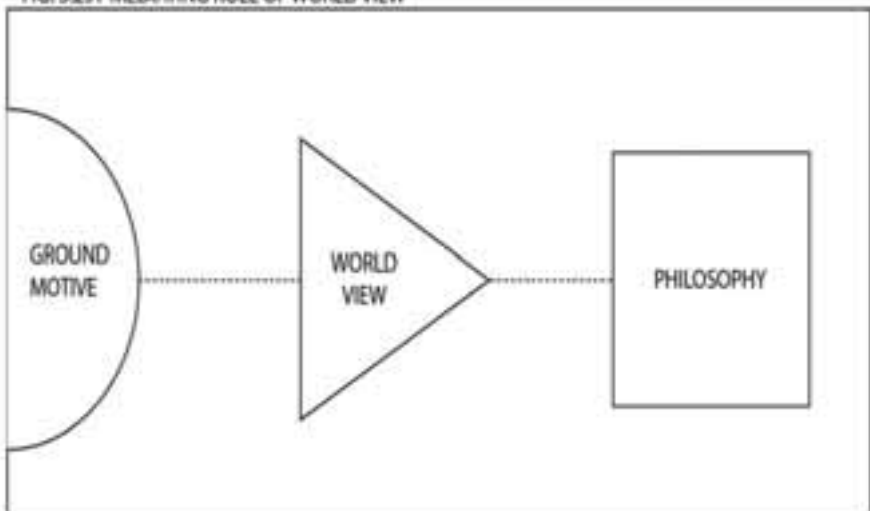


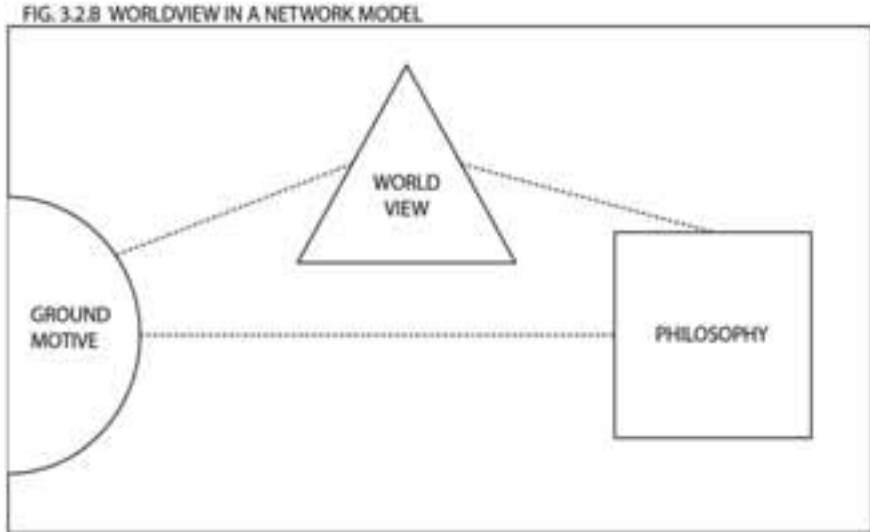
motive and philosophy) because this would have historicised and relativised Christian scholarship. For this reason, worldviews were even kept out of the scholarly process: they were entitled to shape naive knowledge but not scientific knowledge. In fact, says Dooyeweerd (1984, 1:157-158), worldviews can never be “systematised” without losing their very nature.

Yet Klapwijk tried to recover the role of worldviews in the scientific process. He (1987:108) argued that Dooyeweerd’s ground motives are in fact worldviews and that worldviews should have a mediating role between religion and philosophy. As the suggestion was framed in the chain-metaphor, the reformational reaction was quite explicit. Bos (1987) hinted that his strategy led to deformation rather than reformation. Geertsema (1987:160-161) asked whether it did not compromise the possibility of a transcendental critique, and Groenewoud (1987) expressed other doubts. I think these reactions were not unjustified.

Is it plausible, however, to imagine that when framed in a different metaphor and in a different model, it might be possible to re-phrase the influence of worldviews in scholarship in acceptable ways? In the figure (3.2) below the mediating position of a worldview (A) and its position in a network-model (B) are differentiated.

FIG. 3.2A MEDIATING ROLE OF WORLD VIEW





I would argue that if worldviews are not conceived as mediators but as pre-scientific contributors in a network, their role and effects in scholarship might be acceptable. I wonder whether several past objections to the mediating role of worldviews would still apply to the sketch (B) above or whether this arrangement would be more acceptable. The proposed option seems to me in line with Geertsema's (1987:163) observation that worldviews should not be regarded as playing a mediating role but as contextualising both religion and scholarship. Perhaps it might be acceptable to Klapwijk as well: it might suit his quest for a hermeneutic approach, a scholarship for "here and now" which would, nevertheless, not abandon its universal claims.

It might be argued that, nevertheless, even in a network-model worldviews still have a relativising effect on the universal claims of science. It is a fact, however, that scholarship (although grounded in religious motives and although issuing universal claims) is both fallible and linked to its own time. While this is difficult to explain on the basis of the classical reformational model, it might become more understandable if we take into account the above sketch (B).

The latter, however, is not supposed to simply condone relativism. Already in Dooyeweerd's works there are traces of the admission that worldviews do influence scholarship. For example, when trying

to explain why Augustine's reflection was so influenced by Greek philosophy (even though his theorising was in the grip of the biblical ground motive), Dooyeweerd (1980:114-115) argues that it was *the worldview* of the famous church Father that was influenced by pagan philosophy. Whatever one may think of this claim, it implies Dooyeweerd's admission that Augustine's<sup>2</sup> worldview did play a role in shaping his theology and philosophy.

At this point it is necessary to clarify, however, that the particular role of worldviews in scholarship and the reflections that I have just proposed are not matters of life and death for a network-model. The basic network-idea is the most important characteristic of the model: all frameworks are connected without losing their specific roles and natures. Which frameworks should be included, which roles they should play, which position they should occupy, should be open for discussion. Should one feel that the objections against a role of worldviews in scholarship are more important than the arguments displayed above, one should not conclude that the whole network-model should be rejected. The basic tenets of such model do not stand or fall with the inclusion or exclusion of worldviews in the scientific process.

Another framework which caused much discussion was theology, especially in its relationship with philosophy (Coletto, 2009a:97-106). Theology was often regarded as the natural mediator between the Bible and Christian scholarship. Should philosophy work in closer cooperation with theology, as Stoker and Van Til auspicated? Is theology a special or a general science? What positive contribution can it possibly offer to philosophy? As we know, these have been sensitive matters in reformational circles. Some specific reflection, therefore, should be now dedicated to the science of the pistic modality.

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2 In another occasion Dooyeweerd (1984, 1:185-186) argued that the framework channeling the influence of Greek philosophy into Augustine's philosophy was his cosmological (i.e. transcendental) idea. After writing the above paragraph I have discovered that Groenewoud (1987:176-177) had already noticed and discussed this statement by Dooyeweerd (1980:114-115). Groenewoud (1987:199) adds other examples in which Dooyeweerd (cf. 1984, 1:157) seems inclined to admit that worldviews play a role in science.

### 4.3 What about theology?

We have seen that several authors in the Kuyperian tradition tried to reserve to theology a more prominent role than the reformational models offered. In part 1 and 2 I have made clear that some of these efforts, although well-meant, yielded results that were not fully satisfactory. And yet the feeling remains that, due to historical reasons (Klapwijk, 1987:107) reformational philosophy might have been (and still be?) a bit reluctant to recognise the positive role of theology towards philosophy and the sciences. What should this role look like?

First of all, in a network-model of course theology cannot have the mediating role designed by Frame or by other Vantilian scholars. In fact, no science has such a role in our model. Furthermore, I would also argue that there is no reason to regard theology as a “general” science. On this topic, the reasons adducted by Stoker are not convincing. Theology is pistology: a special science studying the world from the pistic “window”.

At the same time, however, the pistic modality occupies a strategic position in the modal scale and there we might find the reason why theology is often perceived as having a special importance. I am not suggesting that the pistic modality is closer to religion, or that it should mediate religion to the rest of the modalities or sciences. I think we should preserve the precious Dooyeweerdian distinction between (modal) faith and (central) religion, leading to the insight that no modality has a special claim on religion and that each modality is linked to religion in its own particular way.

Yet I would like to remind the reader that in figure 3.1 I have drawn the religious ground motive as “re-appearing” on the side of theology and the special sciences. One of my aims was illustrating the idea that theology is not placed in the extreme periphery of the universe of scholarship but is well integrated into it. This is also true of secular scholarship, because secular types of theology do exist and function in their specific networks as well. Theology is always linked to a religious ground motive and (like all other sciences) it should serve and sometimes even take lead in Christian scholarship.

Reformational philosophy has never doubted the *scientific* status of theology and has never asked theology to prove such status on the

basis of criteria supplied by secular philosophy (cf. Murphy, 1990; Barbour, 1990). Neither has it suggested that theology should be integrated with (secular) science in order to strengthen its reliability, as is often argued in some sectors of the so-called “integration movement” (see Sinnema, 2001; Van der Walt, 2005). What needs to be improved in the reformational model is acknowledging the possibility of cooperation between Scriptural theology and philosophy. Without prescribing modalities and circumstances too strictly, I will just offer a few examples of how theology can assist philosophy.

Should Wolterstorff have taken into account the reformed theological insight on the “final perseverance of the saints”, he could have modified his “interactive view of science and religion” accordingly (Coletto, 2009b:401-405). Then he would not have argued that the Christian religion (or faith) can be “lost” due to the adverse influence of certain scientific theories. Note that he had no choice but taking theology into account. Unfortunately his choice fell on a sort of Arminian approach, which cannot be accommodated into truly reformed theology. In this case he created a conflict between truly reformed theology and philosophy.

For a second brief example, philosophical reflections on creation, evolution, emergence and so forth are often marred by poor exegetical expertise. Philosophers venturing in those territories with poor theological support cannot hope to produce much good. In all those areas theological help would benefit philosophy. Third example: the controversies generated in the 1970s around the “power-word”, the relationship between word and law, the three forms of the World of God and so on (see Downs, 1974) were often generated by scholastic reactions to the reforming insights proposed by several reformational authors. Yet Zylstra (1975:32) admitted that lack of theological expertise limited the ability of the reformational party to sort out those issues and to be fully convincing. These are all examples in which the value of sound theological reflection for philosophy and for the special sciences emerges as a necessity.

In reformational circles the impression was developed that whatever philosophers might need from the Bible, can be taken directly from it, by way of pre-scientific understanding and without the help of theologians. Although in our network-model this is a

precious possibility to be preserved, there is all to gain when theologians clarify for us certain issues or warn us of certain dangers. Sometimes all this is quite necessary (see Zylstra, 1975).

One might reply that theologians are often in the grip of dualist patterns. The point is that at certain junctions one needs to make theological decisions, and doesn't have the option whether one should listen to theology or not. The only question is what theological position one is going to choose and this will be mainly suggested by one's ground-motive orientation. The instances in which philosophy might need theological support may not be as frequent as when theology needs philosophical support, but this is not the point. The point is rather that it is time to abandon old prejudices and reluctances to create a true network of Kuyperian scholars who are willing to cooperate for the sake of sound Christian scholarship. On this point Kuyper was unequivocal:

(...) if non-Christian philosophy ignores the results of theology as though it were no science, theology is in duty bound to enter its protest against it. If, on the other hand, the philosopher himself is regenerate (...) then of course in his studies he includes the results of theology, together with the results of all the other sciences, and it is his care, architectonically, to raise such a cosmological building that the results of theology also find their place naturally in it (Kuyper, 1965:614-615).

In the following two sections (5 and 6 ) by moving to more general considerations we should have a look at the advantages which are implied in a network-model.

## **5. The advantages of a network-approach**

### ***5.1 Avoiding exaggerations and distortions***

I have already argued that this model helps avoiding the problems related to mediation, sequentiality and excessive simplification. It can also help avoiding certain specific and recurring distortions and exaggerations. It is especially the framework chosen as "central" mediator which is normally the target of such problems. In the Kuyperian models especially theology and philosophy were often placed in that position. With the help of our historical overview it is possible to realise that in the past both disciplines were over-estimated in several ways. A few mechanisms can be observed.

Firstly, the mediator is not properly distinguished from the pre-scientific frameworks. On the contrary, the mediator is regarded as the “owner” of such pre-scientific resources and whenever such resources are shown to operate in scholarship their influences and effects are attributed to the mediator.

Secondly, in some cases the mediator “includes” within itself even other scientific frameworks. In the case of the Vantilian school, for example, one may remember Van Til’s (1974:1) argument that philosophy and the sciences are “indirectly theological”. In the long run this led to a sort of theological “annexation” of several Christian disciplines (Coletto, 2009c:29-31). This may be considered a rather radical example, yet the inclination to regard as “philosophical” *frameworks or influences* which are just pre-scientific or extra-philosophical should be an object of careful investigation even in reformational circles.

Concerning frameworks, consider for example how Strauss (2009: 196-197) speaks of philosophy as a “paradigm” (both scientific and pre-scientific according to Kuhn) or as a “theoretical view of reality” (worldview?) or as channeling a “Scriptural view of reality” (2001:87). In all these cases philosophy is closely associated to worldview. Concerning influences, in a certain period we may have several special sciences adopting similar patterns, methods or approaches. We may say that it was a certain *philosophy* which produced such a result. But why was a certain philosophical trend preferred to another? It is often the case that this is due to the direct influence of a ground motive, an influence which is in turn strengthened by the adoption of a certain philosophy. By distinguishing more accurately, therefore, between scientific and pre-scientific influences and between philosophy and other frameworks it may be possible to avoid the patterns emerging so often in the mediation-approaches.

These mechanisms may in turn lead to (psychological) attitudes which are detrimental to Christian scholarship. They might for example lead to the neglect of important fields of research or to scarce inter-disciplinary cooperation, due to the fact that the mediator is regarded as the most important discipline in which a scholar or community can be involved (Coletto, 2009c:36-37). In the next few sections I would like to show how a network-model can help enhancing both the expansion of Christian scholarship in all its

departments and the development of a much needed inter-disciplinary cooperation.

## **5.2 Renewed commitment in the special sciences**

In the second article the question was asked whether excessive emphasis on the role of a mediator might not cause lack of interest for progress in other fields. The mediator is often regarded as “representing” and somehow “containing” in itself the whole array of disciplines. It becomes advisable, therefore, to concentrate the energies of an (often small) academic Christian community on theological or philosophical studies: they will in due time yield the right results for all the disciplines. The example of Vantilian scholarship (part 2) was offered as a clue that this might indeed produce “restricted” forms of scholarship (see also Coletto, 2009c). As a matter of fact, Vantilian scholars (although sharing the belief that theology is crucial for the development of Christian scholarship), have kept refining their theology and have produced very little outside of it. In part 2 it was asked whether something similar might not happen (or have happened) to reformational scholarship as well.

A network-model might surely highlight the need for “looking after” all the players in the network. The net of interactions itself demands first of all an integral approach. If the network is the complete result, no preliminary and partial success (e.g. the achievement of a relatively stable theological set up) can be regarded as sufficient. The network idea should act as a reminder that each player in the system influences the frameworks that we cherish the most. As a consequence nobody will simply sit back and relax while knowing that some parts of the system are under pressure, or under-developed or neglected.

## **5.3 Enhanced cooperation**

The network-model highlights the net of relations among encyclopaedic players and as a consequence highlights the need for inter-disciplinary cooperation. If the result of the “queen of the sciences” mentality is isolation and lack of communication, the most likely consequence of a “network” mentality is the acknowledgment of the mutual relatedness of the perspectives and of the need for cooperation. What I have in mind here is cooperation among scholars sharing a “paradigm” or network.



Of course Christian scholarship requires interaction with other types of scholarship as well, but it is also important to acknowledge that Christian scholarship needs to improve its “internal” inter-disciplinary communication. Too often the history of Kuyperian scholarship has been a history of conflict between different perspectives, where the hidden agenda was to obtain broader recognition for one’s own discipline (see e.g. Coletto, 2010:165-166).

Of course the participants should first make sure that what they bring to the table is sound Christian scholarship. Philosophers, for example, are usually prepared to listen to theologians provided, as Vollenhoven (2011:292) once said, that what they have to say may not be the result of a synthesis-approach or mentality.

## **6. The network-model and the biblical worldview**

Finally, I would like to argue that a network-model is in tune with a biblical worldview. The argument might sound strange: are not encyclopaedic models supposed to be in tune with reality rather than with one’s own preferences or orientations? Nevertheless, the way we “design” many of our models (e.g. for society, for the church and also for scholarship) are also inspired by a basic pattern, we could say a ground motive or a worldview. Encyclopaedic models are always descriptive and prescriptive at the same time.

This is of course not unique to Christian models. Humanist encyclopaedic models also present features which are quite related to the humanist nature-freedom “matrix”. For example, the inclination to regard the special sciences as autonomous with respect to philosophy is a fundamental trait of several models inspired by a certain atomistic approach. The distinction between natural sciences and humanities reflects the nature-freedom duality. The positivist attempt at imposing the method of the natural sciences on all disciplines was dictated by a worldview in which objectivity and the “facts” (related to the nature-pole) were more or less venerated and science was the only way to the Truth. On the other hand, the Thomist encyclopaedic arrangement with its queen and handmaids, each serving the others in a hierarchic and nevertheless symphonic arrangement, mirrors the “grace above nature” pattern quite well.

It should not surprise, therefore, that a Kuyperian encyclopaedic model should also have the ambition of being in tune with a biblical worldview. How can one describe such worldview?

I find quite useful the following description by Marshall (1991:7-10),<sup>3</sup> As his original formulation is related to social and political matters, it needs a bit of “translation” to be made applicable to encyclopaedic issues. This is how I would re-phrase it:

1. Because sovereignty resides in God, no scientific discipline can claim sovereignty for itself or above others.
2. All scientific disciplines represent “callings” and are, as such, equal in the eyes of God.
3. Every part of life is to be lived in direct responsibility to God. As a consequence the sciences should not be seen as arranged in a hierarchical order but as arranged side by side, supporting one another in their specific vocations, all equally *Coram Deo* (Marshall 1991:7-10).

Marshall’s formulation has its background in the principle of sphere sovereignty. Although this principle is not explicitly stated in the Bible it is suggested by many biblical texts. Although it was written long ago, a particularly good discussion of the biblical basis underlining this principle was offered by Runner (1970:144-152). Perhaps the biblical text supporting more directly this principle and the worldview sketched above is 1 Corinthians 12:12-26. Here the unity of the body and the variety of the members are revealed, and it is argued that mutual service is a fundamental characteristic of life in this world. This is the fundamental pattern underlining the encyclopaedic model sketched in this article.

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3 Marshall’s original formulation is as follows. “One motif is that God is sovereign over everything in the world. The second one is that, because sovereignty resides in God, no earthly institution can claim sovereignty for itself” (p. 7). “Calvin stresses that all human activities are ‘callings’ and are, as such, equal in the eyes of God. (...) Every part of life is to be lived in direct responsibility to God, and therefore no activity or institution can claim to mediate between God and man. Hence no institution has (...) a sovereignty which can override others” (p. 9). “They are not arranged in a hierarchical order reaching up to God, but are arranged side by side, supporting one another in their specific vocations, all equally *Coram Deo*” (p. 10).

## 7. Conclusion

I have started the reflections contained in this series of three articles long ago. In the middle of the 1980s, as a member of a theological institute I had the impression that in certain circles theology was more or less “venerated” and I was wondering whether there might be a way to reform such encyclopaedic arrangements. I found in several reformational publications the hint that there could be an alternative model. During the years I have been listening to many proposals and complaints from the pens of several authors. Of course the network-model sketched above does not claim to be the final word on the topic. It is just the best I can imagine and for this reason I would like to invite others to further contribution on the topic.

Personal experience tells me that encyclopaedic models, albeit not openly discussed, can be quite powerful tools. They can hide and conceal, they can blind and deviate scholars towards irrelevant paths. This is the reason why these models should not remain hidden or taken for granted but rather explored thoroughly. Hopefully, they can also have enlightening and empowering effects.

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