Book review

Andrew Basden: Foundations and Practice of Research: Adventures with Dooyeweerd's Philosophy (London: Routledge, 2020) ISBN 978-1-138-72068-8, hbk, £115, pp xxviii + 349

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This book serves as both a sequel and a complement to Basden's *Foundations of Information Systems* (Basden, 2019) reviewed in this journal Vol 55 No 4 (2019) (Bishop, 2019).

In *Foundations of Information Systems* Basden provides a new research paradigm for Information Systems based on Dooyeweerd's philosophy – here he opens out the scope to see how Dooyeweerd's philosophy is applicable to research in general and across all academic disciplines.

The purpose behind the book, according to Basden, is to share and to explain Dooyeweerd's radical philosophy. Most books on research and research methodology focus on one or another field – here Basden explores how Dooyeweerd's philosophy can be applied to all research fields. That one philosophical approach can do this is a bold claim. But as this book testifies, it is a claim that is justified.

Basden writes: "Research is fascinating, and I have found Dooyeweerd's philosophy enriches it" (p. 1). Basden's enthusiasm for both is clear from this book. He writes out of the conviction that:

> Dooyeweerd's philosophy can ... be used as a conceptual tool and provide guidance, especially in directing research into healthy directions (p.2)

Basden sees the "core mandate" for research as "*to offer theoretical findings to contribute to humanity's bodies of knowledge that enhance our understanding of the way reality works*" (p. 4 – italics in original).

The book is split into four parts. The first two explicate Dooyeweerd's philosophy, with particular emphases in everyday experience, diversity and coherence, meaningfulness (Part I); and theoretical thought with a focus on Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique of theoretical thought (Part II). Part III provides some practical tools and provides lots of examples of how Basden and others have applied Dooyeweerd's approach to their research endeavours. Part IV – the shortest – is a call for others to join in the adventure of research with Dooyeweerd.

Dooyeweerd was a Christian philosopher and this, Basden observes, enabled Dooyeweerd to address "philosophical and scientific questions from a very different direction than do most philosophers" (p. 15); Dooyeweerd's starting points are thus different from most philosophies. This, however, does not mean it is only applicable for use by Christians.

One of the chief facets of Dooyeweerd is that he took everyday life and experience, what he termed pre-theoretical thought, seriously. In Chapter 2 Basden shows how this provides important insights into the research application, activity and context. He shows how research cannot be divorced from everyday experience.

Another important part of Dooyeweerd's approach is his emphasis on meaning and meaningfulness. As Basden notes, this is often neglected by the majority of philosophers. This is the subject of Chapters 3 and 4.

Dooyeweerd's emphasis on the diversity and coherence of reality as seen in his modal aspects, or what Basden terms "spheres of meaningfulness", is a unique insight of Dooyeweerd. His suite of fifteen aspects, their sphere sovereignty and sphere universality provide the tools for understanding reality and research.

The issue of the role of philosophy in research is examined in Chapter 5. Here the role of worldviews and ground-motives is explored.

In Chapter 6 he shows how Dooyeweerd transcends the realism/anti-realism debate and discusses the nature of truth and the non-neutrality of theoretical thought.

Chapter 7 examines the role that Dooyeweerd's three-part Ground Idea has in research and in the place of diversity, coherence and totality of meaning. These he then applies to fields of research in Chapter 8.

In Chapter 9 Basden takes us through Dooyeweerd's fifteen modal aspects (quantitative, spatial, kinematic, physical, biotic, psychic, analytic, formative, lingual, social, economic, aesthetic, juridicial, ethical and pistic). For each aspect, he provides a description, identifies the kernel, looks at the "good possibility" that the aspect reveals in reality, how it depends on the earlier aspects, how it differs from the other aspects, references to where the aspect is discussed by Dooyeweerd, analogies of the aspect, common misconceptions regarding the aspect and ways in which it 'antecipates' the later aspects. This chapter provides a useful handbook on each aspect.

Chapter 10 examines an oft-neglected facet of research, the *activity* rather than the content or application. Here he makes some excellent points such as the notion that competitiveness in research is valid is not a truth but an episodic commitment. Also that criticism, a central part of research, should never devastate – it is part of the ethical aspect.

Chapter 11 illustrates the fruitfulness if Dooyeweerd's approach, here Basden reviews how it has been utilised in the stages of research projects.

In Chapter 12 he provides an excellent itemising of criticisms that have been aimed at Dooyeweerd's philosophy. Though he ignores reasons that he sees as dogmatic disagreements – these it seems come mainly from Christians and seem to consist of I don't like, or I disagree with, Dooyeweerd. He also ignores any theological issues that Dooyeweerd has been accused of, such as his view of the supratemporality of the heart, the minimising of the role of the church, and so forth. Some of the critiques he notes, such as it is too Western an approach, are merely noting that Dooyeweerd is incomplete and thus needs to be developed further.

The final chapter provides ample evidence of taking Dooyeweerd seriously, he also offers the call to join in the adventure of applying Dooyeweerd.

Throughout the book are scattered "Research opportunities", which provides interesting avenues to explore and adds extra value to the volume.

The book shows how Dooyeweerd's approach can be applied to research and as such, it is not a philosophy book, rather it is a book that applies philosophy (16). It provides many excellent case studies of how Dooyeweerd's philosophy has been applied. It is a unique resource.

In 2016 Basden wrote:

> I am concerned about contributing to mainstream academic research, rather than to Christian academic research.

This book shows that Basden has done both – this book will be of use to both the Christian and the non-Christian engaged in any form of research. This book shows that Dooyeweerd's approach can work outside Reformational 'silos'.

The book is dedicated to Richard Russell and Mike Wingfield. It is particularly fitting that Russell should get such a dedication as he has been tireless in the UK to introduce others to Dooyewerdian philosophy – one of those he did was Basden (and the author of this review).

Bibliography

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