

## Dooyeweerd's Philosophy of Economics

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Abraham Kuyper repeatedly stressed the desirability of an independent Calvinist science of economics. At the Free University of Amsterdam, economists with such ideals would indeed appear, but their normative approach to economics was overshadowed by the rise of economic positivism. As a pupil of Kuyper, Herman Dooyeweerd provided Calvinist economics with a philosophical foundation. In this article, Dooyeweerd's philosophy of economics based on his "philosophy of the cosmonomic idea" is summarized and placed into a historical context. Also explained is how his philosophical interpretation of Kuyper's principle of sphere sovereignty results in (the necessity of) an "intrinsically Christian economic theory." Dooyeweerd appears to be an outspoken advocate of normative economics, both in science and in practice.

### Introduction

This article deals with the economic thought of Herman Dooyeweerd (1894–1977).<sup>1</sup> A chairman of the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences once called him "the most original philosopher the Netherlands has ever produced, even Spinoza not excepted."<sup>2</sup> This statement may be somewhat exaggerated, but we may at least call Dooyeweerd one of the most original Dutch philosophers of the twentieth century. He was, moreover, an influential one as well, since today his work is still discussed and has many admirers not only in the Netherlands but also in the United States, Canada, Australia, South Africa, and Korea. Dooyeweerd was a professor of law at the Free University of Amsterdam, founded in 1880 by the Dutch theologian and statesman Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920). His academic

work, however, can better be classified as philosophical. Inspired by his teacher Kuyper, Dooyeweerd saw it as his duty to formulate a philosophical foundation for the neo-Calvinist worldview. “One of the fundamental principles of this new philosophy,” he writes in the introduction to his *magnum opus*, “is the cosmological basic principle of sphere-sovereignty. Its development was suggested by (the famous Dutch thinker and statesman) Abraham Kuyper, but depends on the introduction of a religious Christian foundation into philosophy.”<sup>3</sup>

Dooyeweerd’s philosophy, systematized in his *De wijsbegeerte der wetsidee* (3 vols., 1935–1936) and an expanded translation, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* (4 vols., 1953–1958), is not easy to summarize. It exudes the intellectual climate of the early twentieth century and is written in a peculiar vocabulary. The main ideas of the “philosophy of the cosmonomic idea,” as it came to be known, are as follows.<sup>4</sup> For Dooyeweerd, our reality is not the product of chance but a divine creation. Man does not ascribe meaning to reality, but reality itself *is* meaningful due to the fact that it is a cosmos, that is, an ordered whole. As we will see later on, creational reality exhibits its meaningfulness in the existence of a multiplicity of modal aspects (ways of being). A second major idea in Dooyeweerd’s philosophy is his discovery of the religious root of thought itself. This is to say that (philosophical) thought is never neutral and always needs to start from an Archimedean or transcendental point to grasp the meaningful totality of reality. The latter point implies that all immanence-philosophy—philosophical theories that are rooted in faith in the self-sufficiency of human reason—are mistaken. According to Dooyeweerd, Christian philosophy in its neo-Calvinist interpretation is the only philosophy that does justice to both Scripture and the book of nature.

Although there is an ongoing stream of publications about the philosophy of the cosmonomic idea, little attention has been paid to its meaning for the various natural and social sciences. In particular, Dooyeweerd’s philosophy of economics is still largely unexplored territory. Some commentators have argued that he did not write extensively about economics because he was only moderately interested in the subject. This is unlikely, however, given the extent to which he acquainted himself with nonphilosophical disciplines. Moreover, Dooyeweerd did pay quite some attention to economic subjects throughout his many publications. The fact that there is still no adequate account of his philosophy of economics may therefore rather be due to unfamiliarity with Dooyeweerd’s ideas (or perhaps their difficulty). In this article, I provide a first step toward such an account by summarizing his philosophy of economics and placing it into a historical context. The aim of this article is twofold. In the first place, I want to show how Dooyeweerd’s perspective on economics results in an “intrinsically

Christian economic theory.”<sup>5</sup> Dooyeweerd will be characterized as an outspoken advocate of normative economics, both in a scientific and in an everyday context. In the second place, I want to draw parallels between Dooyeweerd and his teacher Kuyper. I will show that Dooyeweerd's philosophy of economics in many ways builds on the ideas of the latter.<sup>6</sup> At the same time it can be seen as a philosophical foundation for Kuyper's ideal of a distinctive neo-Calvinist economics, a subject that I would like to discuss first.

## Calvinist Political Economy

At the beginning of the previous century, the Dutch journal *De Economist* published several critical book reviews of recently published attempts at Calvinist political economy (*staathuishoudkunde*, in archaic Dutch). Reviewer C. A. Verrijn Stuart, at that time a prominent Dutch economist, argued that an economics handbook written by a Calvinist author should not be confused with a Calvinist science of economics. Although there are no fundamental objections to the former case, the latter would be an “entirely unscientific idea” and a “complete misunderstanding of the nature of science.”<sup>7</sup> Because the task of an economist is simply to study economic phenomena and to discover causal relationships between them, his or her worldview does not play a role at all. Verrijn Stuart is clearly an advocate of what came to be called positive economics.

The book under review was T. de Vries' *Beginnselen der staathuishoudkunde* (English translation, *Principles of Political Economy*) from 1904, which seems to be one of the first attempts at Calvinist political economy. In contrast to Verrijn Stuart, the author emphasizes that the standpoint of the economist does matter: “The Calvinist philosophy and worldview too are based on principles which shed a peculiar light on the questions of political economy” and it is her aim to spread it.<sup>8</sup> Besides the triad of creation, fall, and redemption, De Vries draws attention to another three Calvinist fundamentals, namely the sovereignty, providence, and common grace of God. The absolute sovereignty of God refers to his dominion over creation. God is the legislator: All that is created is subject to his laws and ordinances, including the economy. Divine providence refers to God's continuous upholding and government of the creation, and is closely connected to his common grace. In its economic aspect, God's common grace enables man, fallen into sin, to subdue the earth, to acquire material wealth, and to develop society and its economy. According to De Vries, all economic life as well as the modern science of economics can be seen as fruits of the divine plan.

Earlier in 1904, P. A. Diepenhorst obtained a doctoral degree for his *Calvijn en de economie* (*Calvin and Economics*). Diepenhorst, the first economics

professor at the Free University of Amsterdam, explicitly writes that it is not his intention to come up with an economic theory based on Calvinist foundations. Nevertheless he speaks of “a goldmine of ideas that are highly relevant for economics” hidden in the work of John Calvin.<sup>9</sup> In the following chapters, Diepenhorst discusses Calvin’s critical stance toward usury, his rehabilitation of trade and commerce, and his emphasis on labor as a divine vocation. As is apparent in the final chapter, these ideas are not only highly interesting in themselves but also give occasion to a Calvinist science of economics. After all, if one is committed to biblical truth and presupposes a close relationship between economic methodology and the worldview that one holds, one is bound to come to an economics that takes into consideration the basic principles of the Bible. “Calvinism,” according to Diepenhorst, “has something to say about every aspect of economic life and therefore a restless search for the consequences drawn from this worldview is needed.”<sup>10</sup>

De Vries’ book is particularly sprinkled with quotations from Kuyper. It could have been written in response to Kuyper’s repeated call for the development of a genuine Calvinist science of economics. In his inaugural address at the dedication of the Free University, Kuyper spoke of this as a necessity. Just like the “Christian conscience” outside the academy, the school of law (which was then still responsible for economic thinking) should offer resistance to “the prevailing political economy, current business practices, and the rapacious nature of social relationships.”<sup>11</sup> Kuyper’s call fits into his wider striving after a re-Christianized society in which all spheres of life are directed at and subordinated to Christ. There is not an inch in the whole domain of human life, he claimed in the same address, of which Christ does not say, “Mine!” The absence of a real Christian economy and economic science would mean that these spheres of life continued to be separated from Christ. Ten years later, in his opening address to the First Social Congress in Amsterdam, Kuyper expressed his disappointment not to “possess” at his university “any men from the field, as specialists in political economy.”<sup>12</sup> As a consequence, he saw himself compelled to come up with an “architectonic critique” of the architecture or organization of society. The grinding poverty and deep social needs of his times, Kuyper argued in his opening speech, were (indirectly) caused by the poison of the French Revolution.

In retrospect, the Kuyperian dream to construct an economics on Calvinist foundations at the Free University hardly got off the ground. Dutch economists such as J. A. Nederbragt, Diepenhorst, T. P. van der Kooy, and Bob Goudzwaard made an effort for it but were overshadowed by advocates of positivist economic science. Calvinist economics inspired by Kuyper is a typical expression of normative economics. It starts from the idea that science cannot and should

never be value-free and neutral, for example, because it always commits itself to higher political, ethical, and religious ideals. In contrast, the positivist economics that came to dominate the mainstream of economics is based on the idea that value-free and neutral science is very well possible and should be the standard. By distinguishing between *what is* (facts, data, experiments) and *what ought to be* (norms, opinions, wishes) and disposing itself of the latter, objectivity in economics could be achieved. As far as I know, Kuyper never commented on the rise of economic positivism as such, but he would undoubtedly have resisted it, as he did in the case of scientific positivism more generally.<sup>13</sup> His concept of a responsible science of economics involves a combination of economic analysis and policy, but above all obedience to the “divine ordinances” for society.

## The Economic as an Aspect of Reality

Although Dooyeweerd's philosophy of economics is clearly Calvinistic in orientation, it cannot be seen as an implementation of Kuyper's ideal. Dooyeweerd was a philosopher rather than an economist, and his economic reflections mainly emanate from the way in which his philosophy of the cosmonomic idea is constructed. Let us start at the beginning.

Dooyeweerd conceives of *the economic* as a modal aspect of reality. That is to say that there is something in everyday life that we call economic(al). The economic, in other words, is a way in which reality manifests itself. According to Dooyeweerd, it is actually the case that *everything* that exists has an economic aspect. All things (entities) either have an economic object function, subject function, or qualifying function. Examples of the first category are books, plants, and animals. They can be valued and exchanged as economic objects. For other entities, such as a labor union, the state, or a human being, the economic is part of their identity. In that case the economic is a subject function. An economic qualifying function is attributed to entities that find their destination or fulfillment in the economic. Here examples are companies, banks, and stock exchanges. However, just from the fact that everything in reality has an economic aspect it cannot be concluded that the economy encompasses everything or that everything can be reduced to their economic aspects alone. The economic *an sich*, in other words, does not exist. According to Dooyeweerd, creational reality derives its very meaning from the presence and indissoluble interrelation of a variety of aspects, namely the numerical, spatial, kinematic (movement), physical, biotic (biological), psychic, analytical, historical, linguistic, social, economic, aesthetic, juridical, ethical, and pistical (faith) aspects. These aspects always manifest themselves together and are mutually irreducible.

At this point, it is interesting to make a comparison with Kuyper. The latter stated in his address *Soevereiniteit in eigen kring* (in English, *Sphere Sovereignty*) that there is such a thing as an independent economic domain willed by God. According to Kuyper, society is not ordered hierarchically but subdivided into different spheres each with a typical form of sovereignty and normativity. He accordingly distinguishes among the ethical, scientific, ecclesiastical, commercial or social, and domestic spheres. “The cogwheels of all of these spheres,” Kuyper argues, “engage each other, and precisely through that emerges the rich, multi-faceted, multiformity of human life.”<sup>14</sup> Dooyeweerd applies this sociological principle of sphere sovereignty in a philosophical way to reality as a whole. Everything that exists has an economic aspect and not only those things that relate to the commercial sphere, although only such spheres have an economic qualifying (or leading) function.

The position of the economic between the social and the aesthetic in Dooyeweerd’s list of aspects is not an arbitrary one. According to Dooyeweerd, the aspects that listed earlier ground the ones that come later. This means that the economic presupposes all the preceding aspects, from the numerical to the social. Without the existence of these aspects, there cannot be such a thing as the economic. In regard to the economic’s foundation in the social aspect, he remarks, “Conventional or ceremonial economy is not found in primitive society, but in developed social life only.”<sup>15</sup> Only where there are social relationships and intercourse, will economic valuation be brought about. Given the indissoluble cohesion and interrelation of the various aspects of reality, it is not surprising that there are many references within the economic to other aspects. The idea of economic growth for example refers to the biotic aspect, economic equilibrium to the physical aspect, and economic value to a combination of the numerical and the historical aspects. At the same time, preceding aspects point forward and succeeding aspects backward to the economic itself. “Logical economy, technical economy, linguistic economy, aesthetic economy, economy in social manners, juridical economy” are according, to Dooyeweerd, “obvious analogies of the original economic aspect of our experience.”<sup>16</sup> In regard to the later aspects, the economic itself is a foundational and indispensable aspect.

How, actually, does Dooyeweerd define the economic? The meaning kernel, as he calls it, is summarized as “value-balancing savement” or simply as frugality.<sup>17</sup> Economics presents itself if scarce means have to be allocated to satisfy (ultimately insatiable) human wants and needs. In order to arrive at an economical and thrifty allocation, economic man weighs up the pros and cons and takes into account the value of the economic means. This preliminary definition was worked out in more detail in Dooyeweerd’s *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*.<sup>18</sup>

The foundational scientific meaning of the economic, he argues, "is the sparing or frugal mode of administering scarce goods, implying an alternative choice of their destination with regard to the satisfaction of different human needs." The terms *sparing* and *frugal* are subsequently defined as "the avoidance of superfluous or excessive ways of reaching our aim." Economics thus deals with an efficient solution to the economic problems that arise when (1) there are human wants and needs, (2) the means to satisfy these wants and needs are scarce, and (3) different allocations of these means are possible. The solution to this problem "demands the balancing of needs according to a plan, and the distribution of scarce means at our disposal according to such a plan." It will be clear to economically trained readers that Dooyeweerd's definition closely follows that of other twentieth-century economists. Economics is no longer seen as a quest for wealth but rather as an attempt to overcome scarcity.

## Economic Normativity

Some commentators (e.g., García de la Sienra) have rightly noted the strong similarities between Dooyeweerd's characterization of the economic and that of his contemporary Lionel Robbins.<sup>19</sup> In *An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science*, Robbins not only speaks of an economic aspect but also defines economics as "the science which studies human behavior as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses."<sup>20</sup> Apart from the fact that Robbins discusses economics *as a science*, his definition indeed resembles that of Dooyeweerd. There is, however, an important difference that critics of Dooyeweerd's alleged uncritical acceptance of this neoclassical definition of economics have overlooked. After all, Robbins is merely interested in the *technical* side of the economic problem in which economics deals with an efficient allocation of means in the pursuit of the maximization of the satisfaction of wants. Which means are allocated and which ends are chosen is settled by the preferences of the involved individuals and is a matter of that person's ethics. The economist considers them as given in the data and does not presume to pronounce on their ethical propriety.

Dooyeweerd, in contrast, is above all interested in the *normative* side of the economic problem. Accordingly he calls the principle of frugality a behavioral *norm*, something people in daily life ought to obey in order not to act uneconomically. Up to this point Robbins would probably still agree. However, Dooyeweerd adds to his definition of economics that "sparing" and "frugal" refer to "our awareness that an excessive or wasteful satisfaction of a particular need at the expense of other more urgent needs is uneconomical." Apparently economic

normativity for him not only pertains to the efficient allocation of means but also to judgments about the urgency of human needs. In other words, not all needs are equally deserving of our scarce means. The fact that Dooyeweerd in this respect indeed deviates from Robbins becomes clear from his later observation that the “technical-economic principle of efficiency ... lacked the very moment of the alternative destination of scarce goods for the different needs after a scale of urgency, which is essential in a sparing administering of economic goods proper.”<sup>21</sup> Economic man must render an account of the administration of his scarce means as well as his chosen ends.

Frugality, the characteristic of the economic aspect according to Dooyeweerd, is only one of the economic norms of reality. There are more “universally valid economic law-like regularities [*wetmatigheden*], which are included in the structure of the economic aspect itself and are rooted in the divine creational order.”<sup>22</sup> Kuyper had argued that all spheres of society, including that of commerce and social life, ought to obey their own “law of life.” (In his speech on the social question, he connected the occurrence of poverty with interference in the divine ordinances of social life.) In addition, Dooyeweerd ascribes a specific “law sphere” to the economic aspect, as well as to all other aspects. These economic laws are universally valid but are not natural-scientific. As is true for all “cultural” aspects that come after the logical aspect, economic laws have a normative character. That is to say, human beings are indeed subject to these laws and ought to obey them, but they have the freedom to break them. In the latter case, though, an economic act becomes uneconomical with disruptive consequences.

In his work, Dooyeweerd provides several examples of “God’s economic-specific ordinances.”<sup>23</sup> For example, he speaks of the economic law of supply and demand that determines the economic price, including a law of economic inequality in regard to ownership, division of labor, and aptitude or talent. The latter is already manifest in the separate creation of man and woman. Elsewhere he argues that God’s laws “at each time in history call on that specific corporate structure that fits the economic circumstances.”<sup>24</sup> Whatever we think about these examples, it is important to observe that Dooyeweerd insists on the fact of economic normativity.

Surprisingly, in Dooyeweerd’s philosophy economic normativity is different from ethical normativity. The ethical is, after all, a separate aspect with its own law sphere. This leaves open the possibility that, in a normative sense, an economic act is economical and unethical at the same time, and vice versa. Such a combination is unlikely, though, for the economic and ethical are closely related: (1) because the ethical presupposes the economic, which is reflected in the importance of a “just *distribution* of the sacrifices demanded by love with respect

to the different moral duties”;<sup>25</sup> and (2) because in Dooyeweerd's philosophy the earlier aspects ideally open or disclose themselves in the direction of later aspects. By taking into account aesthetic, juridical, and ethical norms and norms of faith, the economic can be deepened and developed further. For example, a positive relationship between the economic and ethical is established when “the frugal manner of administering scarce things in their alternative destination for the satisfaction of human needs ... is directed by love towards our neighbour.”<sup>26</sup> Such an economic disclosure is part of a broader cultural development. It can therefore be said that an economy that has no eye for aesthetics (which concerns right balance and proportion), justice, morality, and faith is still primitive. The kind of interpretation that the disclosure of the economic aspect receives depends on, among other things, the worldview (“ground motive” in Dooyeweerd's terminology) that currently shapes our culture. From a Christian point of view, however, there should be particular attention to stewardship, charity, and mercy.

## Dooyeweerd and the Science of Economics

Thus far I have only discussed Dooyeweerd's concept of economy, that is the economic in practice, and not so much his views on economics. What actually is his stance toward this science? First of all, we have to establish that economics in the philosophy of the cosmonomic idea has indeed a right to exist. For each aspect of reality a scientific inquiry is meaningful and so is the science of economics. According to Dooyeweerd, the task of an economist is “to investigate empirical reality under a particular modal aspect, namely the economic.”<sup>27</sup> However, from a philosophical point of view this task is less innocent than it seems. By focusing one's analytical capabilities on the economic aspect, and thus making it abstract, a theoretical distance from everyday reality is created. It is true that such a distance is inevitable, but it still does violence to reality. Because of their indissoluble cohesion and interrelationship, the aspects of everyday reality do not allow for a simple scientific analysis. For the economist it is therefore important to realize that the science of economics is and always will be an abstraction. Economics only studies one of the many aspects and is thus never able to fathom reality in all its facets.

Just like Kuyper, Dooyeweerd speaks of the necessity of a Calvinist economics, though *Calvinist* has given way to the more ecumenical term *Christian*. Without a Christian economics, he argues in line with his teacher, this sphere of life would be withdrawn from Christ. A “practice of economic science dominated by the ground motive of the Christian religion” should devote itself to “a reformation of the foundations of economic theory themselves.”<sup>28</sup> Unsurprisingly, according

to Dooyeweerd such a reformation should take its starting point from his own philosophy. Within this philosophy three points would be of particular importance. First, a Christian economics should acknowledge its place amidst the other aspects and their scientific disciplines. Economics is not an all-encompassing science and cannot function in “isolation with closed shutters.”<sup>29</sup> Second, it should recognize and track down the normative character of the economic aspect. In the creational order, economic laws and norms are only provided as principles and therefore require further positivization, concretization, and application. Third, a Christian economics should come up with its own political economy. Such a Christian political economy has to respect the nature and destination of the various societal spheres and should agitate against any violation of economic sphere sovereignty.

In his work, Dooyeweerd criticizes all the schools of economic thought that, in his eyes, opposed these insights from the philosophy of the cosmonomic idea or simply neglected them. As to the first point, he passes criticism on economic theories that make absolute the economic aspect of reality, that is, regard it as an all-embracing principle. The Classical school of economics, Marxism, and the so-called *reine Ökonomie* each in their own way had lost sight of the fact that there is no such thing as a pure economic reality. In economic exchange, in typical economic spheres of life (corporations, industry, markets, and so on), and in the economy in general, all aspects from the numerical to pistic play a role as well as the economic aspect. As to the second point, Dooyeweerd rejects the views of the French Physiocrats, English Classical economists, Austrian school, and German historical school, which respectively depict economic laws as natural laws, mathematical equations, and ideal-typical rules. According to Dooyeweerd, these views are at variance with the normative nature of the economic aspect. The natural-scientific pretensions of these schools of thought after all leave no room for the normative assessment of economic behavior.

Likewise, mainstream economics, in his time neoclassical economics, was guilty of a natural-scientific concept of economic laws. “Modern economic theory,” Dooyeweerd writes, “has ruled out the normative nature of the economic aspect of reality ... in a premature way and has—in an uncritical acceptance of the distinction between normative sciences and empirical explanatory sciences—joined the latter framework.”<sup>30</sup> An important feature of modern positive economics is its attempt to explain and predict economic behavior. Dooyeweerd believes this is doomed to fail because human behavior always has multiple causes. Even typical economic behavior is subject to both economic and noneconomic motives. Man is more than *homo economicus*, a term that Dooyeweerd consistently refers to as a fiction. Every attempt to explain many-sided human behavior in terms of

pure economic laws inevitably results in what Dooyeweerd (with Walter Eucken) calls the “great antinomy”: an insoluble tension between theory and observation.

Dooyeweerd not only has difficulties with the empirical character of contemporary economics (although he does not deny the importance of empiricism), but also with its tendency to exclude normative standards. In this context, it is useful to recall the difference between Dooyeweerd's and Robbins' definitions of economics. Whereas according to Robbins the economist should give technical insight into the economic problem, namely how scarce resources can be allocated to *given* ends in an efficient and optimal way, according to Dooyeweerd economists have a voice in the determination of the ends themselves. Dooyeweerd vehemently opposes the reduction of the science of economics to a “logic of choice,” in which ends are regarded as extra-economic data stemming from subjective arbitrariness. When economists are not allowed to give their professional opinion on the prudence and importance of particular economic ends, an “absolute subjectivity of economic choices” will result.<sup>31</sup>

It appears that for Dooyeweerd differences in economic views are closely related to differences in “religious” convictions. The ground motive of modern economics since the eighteenth-century Physiocrats and Classical economists was “humanistic.” Two key terms within this worldview are *nature* and *freedom*. Modern economics advocates economic freedom as an initial step toward wealth on the one hand (for example by allowing the economic individual to pursue his enlightened self-interest without government intervention), but maintains that economic life is governed by immutable natural laws (or at least regularities) on the other. Because these ideas are incompatible and a continual tension exists between the personality ideal of freedom and the scientific ideal of controlling nature, the humanistic ground motive cannot serve as a healthy basis for economic development. Exactly this, Dooyeweerd believed, was taking place in Western society. This makes him speak of a disharmonious disclosure of the economic aspect under the guidance of the “faith of the Enlightenment.” A one-sided and excessive liberalization, individualization, and rationalization of economic life, provided with a theoretical foundation by economists, resulted in an “idolatry of the abstract individualistic idea of the ‘homo economicus.’ A hard-headed calculation of private profits became the only rule of conduct in economic life; it broke every bond with economic communal principles.”<sup>32</sup>

Again a parallel can be drawn with Kuyper. In his analysis of the social question of poverty, Kuyper had pointed out that the French Revolution, under the influence of the Classical school of economics, preached an unwholesome combination of greed, individualism, and *laissez faire, laissez passer*. Adherence to this “mercantile gospel” of the struggle for money by the bourgeois class would

inevitably lead to a struggle for life for the working class, while Christ turned against capitalization and urged us not to collect treasures on earth. According to Kuyper, the French Revolution's promotion of a selfish struggle after material possessions resulted in a disruption of the "social bond of an organic-coherent societal life."<sup>33</sup> Dooyeweerd in his philosophy comes to a similar conclusion. Contemporary economics rooted in the Classical school tended to absolutize the economic aspect. However, where economic motives come to predominate, reality is violated, and societal and economic life encounter difficulty. "The Scriptural view of reality is therefore definitely superior to the humanistic one," Dooyeweerd argues, "because, guided by the ground motive of Word-revelation, it takes into consideration the irreducibility and sovereignty of the economic aspect as well as its indissoluble coherence with all other aspects of creational reality."<sup>34</sup>

## Conclusion

Much more could be said about the economic thought of Dooyeweerd. I did not for example pay attention to his rejection of the planned economy (which violates sphere sovereignty and does not recognize free enterprise as a fruit of historical and cultural differentiation), his views on corporate social responsibility (the company's main end would not be profit-making but the improvement of human welfare through innovation and cultural development), or his philosophical analysis of the question of employee participation in corporate decision-making (which again violates sphere sovereignty and devaluates the role and legal status of the entrepreneur). It will be clear, though, that the philosophy of economics outlined above provides resources to discuss such societal issues. Although there is certainly no complete Calvinist economic theory in Dooyeweerd, his ideas may very well serve as a starting point. A handful of economists have indeed attempted to apply his philosophy within the science of economics, of which the work of Goudzwaard may be the best known outside the Netherlands. At the same time, the potential of Dooyeweerd's philosophy of economics is far from being properly explored, let alone exhausted, and is perhaps more relevant than ever. Everything points to the fact that the current financial crisis is more than an economic crisis. More than ever we seem to need a vision of the economic that takes into account aesthetic, juridical, ethical, and faith-based norms.

## Notes

1. An earlier version of this article was published in Dutch, "Dooyeweerd's filosofie van de economie," *Radix* 37, no. 3 (2001): 191–201.
2. G. E. Langemeijer in the Dutch newspaper *Trouw*, October 6, 1964. All translations from Dutch texts are mine unless otherwise noted.
3. Herman Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, 4 vols. (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: H. J. Paris/Presbyterian and Reformed, 1953–1958), 1:vi.
4. Of course I cannot go into detail here. For English introductions to Dooyeweerd's philosophy, see Johannes M. Spier, *An Introduction to Christian Philosophy* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1954); L. Kalsbeek, *Contours of a Christian Philosophy: An Introduction to Dooyeweerd's Thought* (Toronto: Wedge Publishing Foundation, 1975); Samuel T. Wolfe, *A Key to Dooyeweerd* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1978); and most recently, Jonathan Chaplin, *Herman Dooyeweerd: Christian Philosopher of State and Civil Society* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011). For a critical engagement with Dooyeweerd's philosophy in this journal, see Eduardo J. Echeverria, "Review Essay: The Philosophical Foundations of Bavinck and Dooyeweerd," *Journal of Markets & Morality* 14, no. 2 (Fall 2011): 463–83.
5. Herman Dooyeweerd, "Het wetsbegrip in de economie," *Mededelingen van de Vereniging voor Calvinistische Wijsbegeerte* (August 1946): 2.
6. See Bob Goudzwaard, "Christian Social Thought in the Dutch Neo-Calvinist Tradition," in *Religion, Economics and Social Thought*, ed. Walter Block and Irving Hexham (Vancouver: Fraser Institute, 1986), 251–79; John P. Tiemstra, "Every Square Inch: Kuyperian Social Theory and Economics," in *Religion and Economics: Normative Social Theory*, ed. James M. Dean and Anthony M. C. Waterman (Boston: Kluwer, 1999), 85–98; and various articles in vol. 5, no. 1 (Spring 2002) of the *Journal of Markets & Morality* for an overview of Kuyper's socioeconomic thought and the neo-Calvinist tradition initiated by him.
7. Coenraad A. Verrijn Stuart, "Mr. T. de Vries. Beginselen der Staathuishoudkunde. I. Inleidend gedeelte," *De Economist* 53, no. 2 (1904): 924, 927.
8. Tiemen de Vries, *Beginselen der staathuishoudkunde*, vol. 1, *Inleidend gedeelte* (The Hague: T. C. B. ten Hagen, 1904), 5.
9. Pieter A. Diepenhorst, *Calvijn en de economie* (Wageningen: Vada, 1904), 21.
10. Diepenhorst, *Calvijn en de economie*, 335.

11. Abraham Kuyper, *Souvereiniteit in eigen kring* (Amsterdam: J. H. Kruyt, 1880), 34. This lecture is available in English translation as Kuyper, "Sphere Sovereignty," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 461–90, 487.
12. Abraham Kuyper, *Het sociale vraagstuk en de christelijke religie* (Amsterdam: J. A. Wormser, 1891), 5. In English, see Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, ed. James W. Skillen (Sioux Center: Dordt College Press, 2011), 17: "One of the pitiful fruits of state monopoly, which continues to increase in this country's universities, is that we have not yet even produced academic specialists. None of us at this Congress stands out as an expert in economics, for example."
13. See, for instance, Kuyper on common grace in science, *De gemeene gratie in wetenschap en kunst* (Amsterdam: Höveker & Wormser, 1905), recently translated into English as *Wisdom & Wonder: Common Grace in Science & Art*, ed. Jordan J. Ballor and Stephen J. Grabill, trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman (Grand Rapids: Christian's Library Press, 2011).
14. Kuyper, *Souvereiniteit in eigen kring*, 12; Kuyper, "Sphere Sovereignty," 467–68.
15. Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, 2:67.
16. Herman Dooyeweerd, "De analogische grondbegrippen der vakwetenschappen en hun betrekking tot de structuur van den menselijken ervaringshorizon," *Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen* 17 (1954): 179.
17. Herman Dooyeweerd, *Encyclopaedie der rechtswetenschap* (Amsterdam: Drukkerij D.A.V.I.D, n.d.), 16, 17.
18. Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, 2:66–67.
19. See Adolfo García de la Sierra, "The Economic Sphere," *Axiomathes* 20, no. 1 (2010): 81–94.
20. Lionel Robbins, *An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1935), 16.
21. Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, 2:122.
22. Dooyeweerd, "Het wetsbegrip in de economie," 2–3.
23. See Herman Dooyeweerd, "Medezeggenschap der arbeiders in de bedrijven," in *Antirevolutionaire staatskunde* 1, ed. Anne Anema et al. (Kampen: Kok, 1924–1925), 291–306.
24. Herman Dooyeweerd, "Tweeërlei kritiek. Om de principieele zijde van het vraagstuk der medezeggenschap," in *Antirevolutionaire staatskunde* 2, ed. Anne Anema et al. (Kampen: Kok, 1926), 6.

25. Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, 2:161, italics mine.
26. Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, 2:153.
27. Herman Dooyeweerd, "De sociologische verhouding tussen recht en economie en het probleem van het zgn. 'economisch recht,'" in *Opstellen op het gebied van recht, staat en maatschappij*, ed. Herman Dooyeweerd et al. (Amsterdam: S. J. P. Bakker, 1949), 221.
28. Dooyeweerd, "Het wetsbegrip in de economie," 2.
29. Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, 1:548.
30. Dooyeweerd, "De sociologische verhouding," 257.
31. Dooyeweerd, "De sociologische verhouding," 258.
32. Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, 2:361; cf. Herman Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture: Pagan, Secular, and Christian Options* (Toronto: Wedge Publishing Foundation, 1979), 196–99.
33. Kuyper, *Het sociale vraagstuk en de christelijke religie*, 20.
34. Dooyeweerd, "Het wetsbegrip in de economie," 3.