



Meeting the buddha on the road – An essay on christian scholarship¹

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Abstract

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This essay looks at the christian theory of science from a very specific context. The essay is divided into two parts. In the first part two different (christian) theories of science, those of Dooyeweerd and Stoker, will be discussed. In the second part, these theories will be analysed against the background of recent developments in the theories of science and knowledge in the field of law and legal theory.

The conclusion from the first part is that christian scholarship (and, conversely, a christian university) has nothing to do with the morality of either students or lecturers. It should also be clear that one cannot speak of “the” christian paradigm of science, but that there are various theories and paradigms.

In the second part various problems with these two theories are discussed. These include the objectivist stance of both Dooyeweerd and Stoker, Dooyeweerd’s archimedean point of departure and Stoker’s use of so-called scriptural truths. These problems are highlighted by recent developments in legal theory of which christian scholarship must take cognisance.

1 Paper based on a lecture in the series of H.L. Swanepoel commemorative lectures delivered at Potchefstroom University during 2000. Thanks to André van der Walt and Lourens du Plessis who read an earlier draft and made helpful comments.

2 In some cases I have not followed the normal rules of spelling pertaining to capital letters – this is done deliberately in order to demythologise and to indicate the relative nature of certain concepts.

The conclusion is that, in the first place, there is more than one way in which the concept “christian scholarship” can be understood and, in the second place, that the label “christian” does not necessarily make such theories acceptable. At the very least, two theories dealt with in the article are in serious need of updating.

1. Introduction

Sheldon Kopp's book *If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him* (1974), deals with psychoanalysis as a contemporary form of pilgrimage, much like the religious and military pilgrimages of old. Kopp's thesis is that people who embark on this type of pilgrimage often look for a guru (or buddha) who will provide them with final and liberating answers.

Wishing to learn, and confusing being taught with learning, they often seek out helpers, healers, and guides, spiritual teachers whose disciples they would become. ... The seeker comes in hope of finding something definite, something permanent, something unchanging upon which to depend (Kopp, 1974:1, 3).

This, says Kopp, does not lead to true enlightenment but only produces more effective neurotics. Instead, what one should be looking for is a true teacher who offers his students something else, that is:

[T]he reflection that life is just what it seems to be, a changing, ambiguous, ephemeral mixed bag. It may often be discouraging, but it is ultimately worth it, because that's all there is (Kopp, 1974:3).

For this reason anyone or anything setting him-/her-/itself up as a buddha, as the source of final answers, should be killed or at least avoided.³

In many ways, scientific or scholarly activity is also a pilgrimage. Of course, what this pilgrimage is about has been understood differently in different times. Very few scientists these days, for example, still share the optimism and belief in science characteristic of nineteenth-century thinking (Schlag, 1991:444). Part of the enterprise of science in the postmodern era is the exercise of trying to understand exactly what science is, how scientific knowledge is formed and verified and what the role of theory is in these processes. In many ways, scientists are also searching “for something definite, something permanent, something unchanging upon which to depend” (Kopp, 1974:3). This search is best

3 Kopp (1974:12): “What the guru knows that the seeker does not is that *we are all pilgrims*. There is no master, and there is no student”.

reflected in the various theories pertaining to science that have been developed.

This essay examines the “pilgrimage of science” from a very specific context. Having spent a large part of my academic life at Potchefstroom University, I ingested a particular christian paradigm of science as a matter of course. The time has now come to reflect upon this to determine its feasibility within the context of postmodern theories or paradigms of science and of knowledge within the field of law.

The question central to this discussion really is whether the theories pertaining to scientific practice within a christian paradigm and of the “christian university” do not in actual fact constitute the buddha referred to above. Do they offer that which does not exist – definite and unchanging certainty? To answer this question one needs to look very closely at what this kind of theoretical position entails and what it produces.

The concept or notion of a christian university means different things to different people. For some, it is an anachronism that harks back to medieval ideas and practices. In this view, such a university is regarded as outdated at best and parochial at worst. For others, a christian university is a haven of conservative values and morality where students and/or lecturers can be expected to act in a certain manner. This second view is particularly prevalent and equates a christian university with a specific code of moral behaviour. It assumes that a university can be “christian” in the same way that a person can be.

Neither of these views needs to be taken very seriously. The first seeks to attach a label without engaging with the real question. The second represents a view that is not even supported by the theory on which this type of university is itself based.⁴ A better approach would be to assume that a christian university needs, as a basic requirement, to be a *university*. This rather obvious statement implies that a christian university must be involved in the business of practising science. This in turn implies that the term “christian university” can only refer to a university that bases its scientific practice on a particular christian paradigm directing its work. It is this scientific paradigm that constitutes the subject matter of this article.

4 I refer here specifically to the idea of sphere sovereignty (or “soewereiniteit in eie kring”) that takes as point of departure that a university should not try to do the work of another type of societal construct such as, say, a church or a state.

To evaluate the particular christian (or reformed) philosophy of science, this paper is divided into two parts. In the first part two different (christian) views of science will be discussed. The views of Herman Dooyeweerd and H.G. Stoker can be regarded as representative of two strands of this philosophy and will be briefly discussed.⁵ In the second part, these theories will be analysed against the background of recent developments in theory of philosophy of science and knowledge within the field of law and legal theory. But, it should be emphasised that "... law is no different from any other product of human cognition" (Winter, 1989a:1106; Winter, 1991:1618). The insights represented here should, therefore, be extrapolatable to all fields of science.

2. Models for a christian university

2.1 H. Dooyeweerd

Dooyeweerd developed his theory in the early twentieth century with two goals in mind. In the first place, he wanted to provide an alternative for the rationalism of philosophers like Kant and Descartes (Botha, 1991:55). Kant represents the views of what Dooyeweerd calls humanism – the view that reason had been freed from religious dependence after the Middle Ages (Dooyeweerd, 1948:3; Dooyeweerd, 1953:12).⁶ For the humanists, according to Dooyeweerd, the Middle Ages had been characterised by the fact that reason was made subordinate to the requirements of faith and the church. The Enlightenment brought an end to this – reason was now regarded as autonomous and independent from god or religion – man can understand and control the world through reason (Dooyeweerd, 1962:32; Dooyeweerd, 1948:9; Dooyeweerd, 1953:35; Botha, 1991:55).⁷

In the second place, Dooyeweerd considered the multitude of philosophies and schools in science as dangerous. It became impossible for the various schools to communicate, because there was no common ground from which to argue (Dooyeweerd, 1948:1; Dooyeweerd, 1953:36-37). This, Dooyeweerd thought, would eventually lead to the destruction of western culture (Botha, 1991:55). He therefore wanted to

5 Of necessity, the discussion will be brief. Those interested in knowing more about these theories are referred to sources quoted.

6 Dooyeweerd (1948:3) calls humanism the "prejudice about the autonomy of theoretical thought".

7 Dooyeweerd (1962:32) characterises all scientific views that regard human rationality as autonomous as "immanensie" (immanent) philosophies.

construct a common ground as a foundation on which communication could be effected (Dooyeweerd, 1962:15).

To achieve these goals, Dooyeweerd suggested the concept of the religious ground motif. According to him, all scientists have a basic religious view of how reality was created, how it fits together and what its purpose is (Dooyeweerd, 1962:22; Klapwijk, 1987:93). This would constitute their religious ground motif, which determines how they view reality in their research. These ground motifs can be detected in the theoretical concepts they use. What is more, all science investigates aspects of reality (for instance law) and all aspects (or modalities) function according to laws created by god as part of creation, whether or not these scientists recognise and admit this. However, they cannot study reality (or an aspect of reality) from within reality – this inevitably leads to a distortion of reality (Dooyeweerd, 1962:33; Dooyeweerd, 1948: 9).⁸ Reality can only be studied from a vantage point outside reality (Dooyeweerd, 1962: 31; Dooyeweerd, 1953:8; Botha, 1991:56), from an archimedean point,⁹ a religious ground motif.¹⁰

In essence then, scientific practice involves the religious ground motif of the scientist, who tries to explain how the modalities of reality work by means of theoretical concepts (Dooyeweerd, 1962:26; Botha, 1991:57). The transcendental standpoint of the scientist (his religious choice) together with the modal laws that apply to the specific aspect of reality (Dooyeweerd, 1962:30) therefore determine the theory that can be used within a specific field of study. The assumption is therefore that reality is structured and orderly, and that the scientist can and must explain this structure and order. (The subsequent logical assumption is that his own explanation of reality in the “Wysbegeerte van die Wetsidee” is the correct one (Dooyeweerd, 1948:11 ff.)) That is why proponents of various forms of christian scholarship are particularly interested in critical

8 “(Z)e wreekt de verabsolutering door het daarin bevangen teoretische denken in innerlijke antinomieën te verstrikken”.

9 Dooyeweerd (1962:31): “Het (het ware uitgangspunt) zal steeds *boven* het teoretische antithesis moeten verheven zijn, om als centrale betrekkingpunt van de synthesis te kunnen fungeren ...” See also Dooyeweerd (1953:8): “Only by transcending the speciality of meaning can I attain to the actual view of totality (this) we call the *Archimedean point* of philosophy”.

10 Dooyeweerd (1962:47) states that all philosophies since the start of western civilisation can be explained and classified according to their religious ground motif. See also Dooyeweerd, 1948:17 ff. and Dooyeweerd, 1953:169-494 where the history of philosophy is given on this basis.

analysis of the presuppositions¹¹ of specific scientific theories and philosophies as they find expression in theoretical concepts.

For Dooyeweerd, in contrast to Kant, scientific practice is therefore never neutral or independent from religion. The religious ground motif is an intrinsic part of scientific practice and not merely a later addition. This is also what makes a conversation between philosophical schools possible. From a scientist's formulation of theoretical concepts his religious ground motif can be abstracted and the defensibility of his theory can be tested.

2.2 H.G. Stoker

The Potchefstroom philosopher H.G. Stoker accepted the basic dooyeweerdian points of departure. He distinguished between pre-scientific and scientific knowledge. Pre-scientific knowledge places man in a direct and total relationship with everything, but science is about knowledge *per se* (Stoker, 1969:133; Kock, 1973:191). Scientific knowledge is always verifiable, systematised and technical-methodological.¹² However, according to Stoker, this type of knowledge has boundaries determined by, among other things, the fact that reality is essentially tainted and corrupted by sin.

According to Stoker, scientific knowledge can be acquired from two sources, namely reality (what he calls the cosmos) and the bible (Stoker, 1969:138). Although the bible cannot and should not be used as a scientific textbook, it does contain truths that cannot be deduced from reality. God's revelation in scripture is therefore pre-scientific, but can be studied scientifically to enable one to find scriptural truths. These truths provide the basis and purpose for the christian paradigm of scholarship and is therefore of an absolute nature (Stoker, 1970:61). According to Stoker the following are examples of scriptural truths:

- God is self-sufficient, reality is not. Therefore nothing in reality may be regarded as self-sufficient – that would lead to “-isms”.¹³

11 For Dooyeweerd the worldview that contains these presuppositions must be distinguished from a *Weltanschauung* which is nothing more than a subjective view of reality and this is, of course, of no use to science. The difference between pre-scientific and scientific thought lies in the *Gegenstand* relationship of the latter, which is based on analysis and artificial abstraction (Dooyeweerd, 1948:1, 8).

12 Stoker (1970:56) defines science as: “Soveel moontlik tegnies-metodies gesistematiseerde en soveel moontlik tegnies-metodies geverifieerde kennis van die kenbare as sodanig”. See also Stoker, 1969:134-138 and Kock, 1973:192.

13 For example, the idea that freedom is everything leads to liberalism, or, the idea that man is self-sufficient leads to humanism.

- God's law is valid for the whole of reality. This represents a rejection of subjectivism.¹⁴
- Reality consists of an essential plurality.
- Man is created in God's image.
- Reality has been radically tainted and corrupted by sin and is therefore never inherently good (Stoker, 1970:80; Stoker, 1969:133; Kock, 1973:193).

It should, however, be emphasised that the finding of scriptural truths is not to be entrusted to "ordinary" scientists. Theologians have to unearth these truths which will then be applied in the various scientific disciplines.¹⁵

Stoker does not deny that scientific study by different schools can and do lead to similar results and findings. Scholarship from a christian paradigmatic perspective differs from others because of its insistence on the origin, basis, purpose and unity of science (Stoker, 1970:60). The fundamental principle at issue here then is the acknowledgement of the fundamental importance of religion for science in that it enables the scientist to see reality as it really is (Stoker, 1970:60).

2.3 Summary

It seems clear from this brief description that "christian scholarship" as postulated here (and, conversely, a christian university) has nothing to do with the morality of either students or lecturers. It should also be clear that one cannot speak of *the* christian philosophy of science, but that there are various theories and philosophies. There are, of course, aspects on which most christian philosophers agree. Most agree that scientific practice depends on a religious choice exercised by the practitioner, and that this choice influences both theory and concepts in science. How this influence takes place and where it is located is not, however, clear or agreed upon. Both Stoker and Dooyeweerd did, however, develop philosophical systems based on these points of departure to explain reality.

14 In this context subjectivism means that man cannot be regarded as the "measure of all things".

15 Stoker (1969:142): "Net soos die kenbare in die kosmos tot wetenskap verwerk moet word, moet die gegewens van die Heilige Skrif tot wetenskap verwerk word. Dit doen die teoloog. ... Aan die ander kant mag 'n nie-teoloog hom nie sonder meer op 'n Bybelteks beroep nie, en behoort hy hier die hulp van die teoloog in te roep". (See also Stoker, 1970:96.)

3. Critical notes

3.1 Between subjectivism and objectivism

The history of theories of knowledge is characterised by the conflict between objectivism and subjectivism. Objectivism involves the view that:

- reality consists of determinate objects that exist independent from human rationality and have characteristics independent of human determination;
- these objects can be classified according to natural or inherent characteristics or criteria – this is the view known as “foundationalism” or “essentialism” (Winter, 1990:651); and
- rationality deals with statements and principles that accurately represent or describe these objects (Winter 1989a:1108; Singer, 1984:26-29).

Subjectivism, on the other hand, involves the view that statements, rules and categories are simply expressions of a subject’s purposes, feelings and religion. Consequently, they are practically infinitely manipulatable (Winter, 1989a:1108). It also involves a rejection of the idea that objects have essential or natural characteristics.

Dooyeweerd’s theory of knowledge is based on the idea of objects and modalities that exist independently from human thought or interaction. They are, after all, part of creation. The way in which the modalities are structured and classified is also not the result of human thought, but based on the essential nature (called the “*sinkern*” in Dutch and Afrikaans) of the modalities. And, finally, this system is presented as an accurate representation of reality. Both Dooyeweerd and Stoker therefore rejected subjectivism and it is clear from the above that their views fall squarely within the objectivist paradigm. Dooyeweerd’s theory is therefore also basically kantian, despite his goal of providing an alternative to Kant.¹⁶

One of the problems with this, as with all modernist thinking, is that subjectivism and objectivism are believed to be the only two options for explaining how knowledge works. Given the choice between “ ... the

16 Winter (1989a: 1108) quotes Rorty in this regard: “‘Reason’ as the term is used in the Platonic and kantian tradition, is interlocked with the notions of truth as correspondence, of knowledge as discovery of essence, of morality as obedience to principle”. (See also Winter, 1990:651.)

belief that meaning has foundations in objective correspondence with the world ...” or “... that meaning can be nothing more than the arbitrary result either of social convention or of unconstrained subjectivity ...” (Winter, 1989-2:2229), most modernists choose the first option. Dooyeweerd and Stoker are no exceptions to this “[c]artesian anxiety”¹⁷. But these are not the only options available.¹⁸ As Singer (1984:66) states:

We are not destined to live in a world in which we must choose between believing in some ultimate permanent foundation for law and morality (rationalism) or believing that all views are as good as all others and it does not matter what we believe or do (nihilism). ... When we give up the idea that the legal system has a foundation, a “rational basis”, we are not left with nothing. We are left with ourselves, and we are not nothing.

Winter has indicated the possibility of an experientialist theory of knowledge, (Winter 1989b:2229; Winter, 1989a:1105 ff.; Winter, 1990: 657 ff.) and both Winter and Singer deal with other theories such as those proposed by Rorty and Bernstein (Singer, 1984: note 8 and accompanying text). This does not necessarily mean that these theories would provide a better explanation of knowledge and science, but simply that a credible christian paradigm must take cognisance of these and other theories. In this, as in the case of other texts, the various philosophies subscribed to by christian scholars are in line with the claims, arguments and discourse of postmodernism (Schlag, 1990:169 note 6).

3.2 Dooyeweerd and the archimedean point

Dooyeweerd’s objectivist stance also explains why he had to find a fixed point or archimedean point outside reality. If reality is constructed as being independent of human rationality and thought, the human act of belief must somehow fall outside this reality.

There are three basic problems with this. In the first place, it assumes that reality is structured in such a way that it has an outside and an inside. It assumes that reality is something like a container that one can climb out of. It is interesting to note that there is a congruence between the thinking of Dooyeweerd and Stanley Fish in this regard (Schlag, 1987:53-58; Winter, 1990:662).

17 Winter (1989a:1127) explains that “[c]artesian anxiety” in its starkest form as the choice between objectivism and relativism or between foundationalism and nihilism.

18 Winter (1989a:1109): “What I want to suggest is that this two-dimensional opposition of objectivism and either subjectivism or relativism is an inadequate basis for understanding law as a human rational”.

But what if one should conceptualise reality differently? Then it becomes possible to see theory (and religious ground motifs) as something very firmly rooted “in” reality. As Winter (1990:664) states:

What humans are situated “in” is not some reified entity that looks like a box or container. Rather, we are situated in a real physical and social environment that is always in flux and always contingent.

In the second place, even if one accepts the idea of a fixed point outside reality, this does not mean that that standpoint is objective or neutral. Even if there is a world “out there”, there are no descriptions of that world “out there”. Reality looks the way it does because that is how we have structured it. This does not necessarily deny that reality was created by god, but merely states that what we understand about reality is a result of human ideas and prejudices. Even if one believes in modal laws and god-made structures, our understanding and explanation of them remain human constructs. In our understanding of reality we also construct reality. We are both the singer and the song, the player and the cards.

In the third place, however, it must be stated that it is doubtful whether it is possible to have “an [a]rchimedean point outside of some situated, historical practice or perspective” (Winter, 1990:645). That also implies that there is no transcendental morality that determines human thought and action (Winter, 1990:692). “There is no there there until we put there there” (Hutchinson, 1985 853). It is impossible for humans to transcend reality (as if it were a container we could climb out of).

3.3 The role of religion

Within the dooyeweerdian scheme, religion plays a determining role. But the importance that Dooyeweerd attaches the role of religion in science is probably overstated. Various writers have indicated that things like political affiliation, cultural conditioning and gender play as big a role. Of course, the point is not that politics or culture or gender somehow directs science or subjects “from outside”. Rather, the emphasis is on, for instance, law as an “ongoing, socio-cultural construction” (Winter, 1991: 1607) or the idea that “law is politics, not because law is subject to political value choice, but rather because law is a form that power sometimes takes” (Schlag, 1991:448).

This reality is illustrated by the fact that someone like Stoker could use a particular christian philosophy to justify apartheid (in the case of universities at any rate) (Stoker, 1970b:209-222). In this case his culturo-ideological affiliation probably played a much bigger role than his religious choices (Van Wyk, 1994:435-454). Or maybe the point is that our religious and other views are inextricably interwoven in the sedimen-

tary layers of our conscience. A credible philosophy of science underlying practice of science within a christian paradigm must explain the role of not only religion in science, but also of culture, politics, gender and education, to name but a few.

3.4 Stoker and scriptural truths

One of the biggest problems in a christian philosophy of science is the question about the role of the bible in scientific practice. Although Stoker is at pains to state that the bible cannot be used as a science textbook and even warns against the use of biblical quotes in scientific writing, the bible nevertheless plays a big role in his views. But, if scriptural truths must guide scientific practice, it is inevitable that the hermeneutic question regarding the interpretation of the bible must play a role. Stoker solves this problem by leaving the finding of scriptural truths in the safe hands of theologians, but this is, in the long run, not satisfactory. There are two reasons why the idea of scriptural truths at work in scientific practice is ultimately dangerous.

In the first place, one should remember that everything is interpretation. Interpretation of the Bible does not imply some kind of divine intervention, but is as dependent on personal convictions as the interpretation of other texts. To illustrate this the views of two christian scholars regarding human rights will be discussed.

Johan van der Vyver's view of human rights is one of the first truly South African theories on this important subject. He based his views on an explicitly dooyeweerdian point of departure – according to him human rights are part of the structural principles built into creation by god.¹⁹ This implies that the state must include these structural principles in legislation. For him a bill of human rights is therefore not the result of a social contract (as is the case with Locke) or subject to the will of the legislature (as is the case with Hobbes), but a necessary part of the structure of creation (derived from Dooyeweerd) (Van der Vyver, 1984: 12-14).

For Francois Venter this is (was?) not acceptable. For him human rights cannot be squared with a calvinist view on law, authority and the state (Venter, 1984:13-14). He bases his view on scriptural truths about the non-threatening nature of state power (based in turn on Romans 13:3-

19 Van der Vyver (1975:17): "God het met die skepping in beginsel menseregte voorsien ... die regs vormende orgaan (is) in dié verband aan onveranderlike struktuur beginsels gebonde ...".

420) and the fact that the theory of human rights is derived from humanism²¹ which makes it unacceptable for traditional christian thinkers. He is also opposed to the non-christian concept of freedom which, according to him, forms the basis of the theory of human rights. Therefore he argues that the virility of the “radical reformational thinking” must not be disregarded by “calvinising” “ideas foreign to scripture”, but that the “depth and breadth of the bible must be studied” to get to the correct concepts.²²

In reaction to this, there are two temptations. The first is to react in typical objectivist fashion that “if people do not agree, someone is thinking incorrectly” (Singer, 1984:34). This would be an acceptable reaction within objectivist christian philosophies of science – if there are differences, it must be because the wrong scriptural truths were used!

But this denies the very real role played by interpretation. The second temptation is therefore to typify Van der Vyver’s view as dooyeweerdian and Venter’s view as stokerian or to excuse Venter’s view as a product of its time, but that is not the important point. The purpose of the comparison is to indicate that the use of a reformational or christian approach by different scholars does not necessarily guarantee the same interpretation of “scriptural truths”.

The second reason for scepticism about scriptural truths has to do with the feminist critique of the bible itself and with dogmatic interpretations of this text. There is no doubt that both the Old and New Testament must be understood within the context of the patriarchal system operational at the time of their writing and that the religion based on such views is deeply sexist and patriarchal (Dowell & Hurcombe, 1981:67; Ruether, 1983:19). This sexism is part and parcel of both calvinism and the Philosophy of the Cosmomic Idea in the form of the idea of the created social order (an idea found in the views of both Van der Vyver and Venter). As Ruether (1983:98) states:

In Calvinism, women not only were but are equivalent with men in the image of God. In their essential nature, women have as much capacity for conscience and spiritual things as do men. The subordination of

20 Venter (1984:13): “Hierop moet ten minste twee stukke kommentaar gelewer word: eerstens die feit dat owerheidsgesag in beginsel geen bedreiging vir die burger inhou nie ...”.

21 For Venter (1984:13) individualism, liberalism and rationalism are all examples of humanism, because they support an emphasis on humanity.

22 Venter (1984:13). All quotes translated from the original Afrikaans.

women to men is not an expression of an inferiority either in nature or in fallen history. Rather, it reflects the divinely created social order by which God has ordained the rule of some and the subjugation of others: rulers over subjects, masters over servants, husbands over wives, parents over children. This hierarchical order is not a reflection of differences of human nature, but rather of differences of appointed *social office*. The man rules not because he is superior but because God has commanded him to do so.

The point therefore is that the identification of scriptural truths is always a process of election – one in which some truths are more true than others. And this choice is at least partly determined by the social situatedness of the interpreter. All female and/or feminist christian scholars should be very worried about sexist assumptions that are regarded as scriptural truths.

4. Conclusion

Can we actually 'know' the universe? My God, it's hard enough finding your way around Chinatown (Allen, 1978:28).

The purpose of this essay was not to provide an alternative philosophy or to canvass all christian views or philosophies of science. The purpose was more modest: it was an attempt to offer a critical analysis of theories often used and quoted indiscriminately. From this analysis a number of conclusions can be drawn about theories of science generally. These conclusions are discussed below.

In the first place it should be clear that the popularly-described concept "christian scholarship" can be understood in more than one way and that, in the second place, the label "christian" does not necessarily make the theories acceptable. As Singer (1984:36) states: "Even if those theories determine results, what makes [them] legitimate?"

In more general terms at least three conclusions can be reached regarding theories of science in general.

- In the first place the objectivist/subjectivist dichotomy is outdated and must be rejected. The rejection is based on the insight that science, truth and theory are all human products or constructs (Winter, 1991: 1601). This is not a claim for subjectivism, but a claim that our understanding of the world and of science is not "... a pregiven, static configuration of power, but rather ... an ongoing socio-cultural construction" (Winter, 1991:1607). A credible christian philosophy of science within the christian paradigm needs to take cognisance of this.

- In the second place the essentialist claim that objects have absolute meaning and characteristics must also be rejected. This insight goes to the heart of one particular strand of christian philosophy of science and it is even doubtful whether such a philosophy can survive without the essentialist pretensions of absolute categories (modalities) and characteristics (“sinkern”). But contemporary thinking on this implies that, in the first place, the role of theory is not to “... end all modulations with a determinate formula to govern practice” (Winter, 1990:657). The role of theory is rather to explore the “magic chasm” of possibility to enable more considered action, and it also implies that we can no longer abdicate our responsibility for our actions. It is easy to accept the world (and science) as it is, if you can claim that that is simply how it has been created. But we can no longer blame the choices we make (in law, in science and in life) on some truth “out there” as if our choices are compelled by some transcendent morality. As Singer states: “We will have to take responsibility for making up our minds” (Singer, 1984: 6).
- In the third place the sexist basis and implications of certain traditional christian philosophies of science should not be ignored. As with everything in life, it has consequences for how the world will be seen and will be. If women are seen as naturally subordinate to men, because that is part of the created “social order”, this thinking will necessarily be reflected in how the position of women is seen in law and in other spheres of life. It will also be reflected in how female scientists are treated by a university postulated on this world view and paradigm of science. Theories are not without consequences – they affect how we live and what we do.

It is time to kill the buddha. How we live and what we do, is up to us.

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Key concepts:

critical legal studies
 Dooyeweerd
 jurisprudence
 Stoker
 theory of knowledge
 theory of science

Kernbegrippe:

Dooyeweerd
 kenteorie
 regsfilosofie
 Stoker
 wetenskapsleer