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Het maatschappijbeeld van Abraham Kuyper

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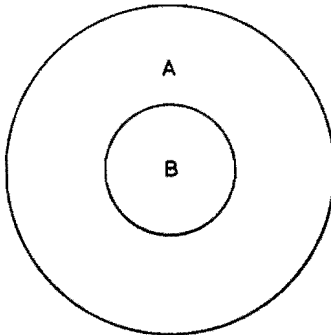
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Summary

The present study deals with the 'image of society' of Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920). Kuyper was a Dutch theologian, founder of the Free (Calvinistic) University, leader of the Antirevolutionary Party and editor-in-chief of a daily newspaper (De Standaard).

In our study we try to find answers to the following questions:

1. What is the societal value-orientation of Kuyper and what value-orientation does he reject?
2. What is the meaning of this value-orientation for Kuyper's religious-political movement? (with reference to the Calvinistic section of the population).
3. What are the consequences of this value-orientation for the relation between the Dutch society as a whole and the Calvinistic section which is a part of it? The following diagram may serve as an illustration of this relation.



In this diagram A represents the Dutch society as a whole, B its Calvinistic section ('the kernel of the nation', a Christian state within a non-Christian state).

The second chapter is a historical-sociological analysis of the political and social development in the Netherlands in the last 30 years of the 19th century, for which Merton's notion of anomie has been taken as the starting-point. The movement of Kuyper is described as one of 'rebellion', dissociating itself from the 'others'. These 'others' are threatening the kernel of the nation (the inner circle of the diagram); special attention is paid to the operation of the self-fulfilling-prophecy-mechanism in the church, school and press, and in political life.

In the following chapter a distinction is made between the value-orientation of Kuyper (the organic thought in social life) and its opposite: a more 'atomistic', individualistic orientation towards society. This dichotomy is important for the image of history: Kuyper projects his own actual situation in history and 'annexes' the history of the Netherlands for his own purpose. In the course of time we see a continual change in this image of history, for instance with regard to the Roman-Catholics in the Netherlands (from enemy to ally).

Chapter IV is an analysis of the inner circle, a social system of 'apartheid'. What are the consequences of this? Only a few are mentioned: the outer world is perceived as hostile, there is a strong tendency towards unity (closing the ranks), a display of power, a filling up of the ranks and a need for authoritarian leadership. These phenomena have to be considered as functions of this social system. There are also some important dysfunctions: the occurrence of tensions and conflicts within the system. In accordance with Parson's classification of the principal types of social structures the system discussed in this study is described as a 'universalistic-ascription-pattern', 'where the focus is on the attainment of an ideal state of affairs, which once attained is considered to be permanently valid'.

The fifth chapter is a discussion of the consequences of this particular value-orientation for the Dutch society as a whole (the outer circle). Kuyper's ideal state of affairs will be attained when the boundaries of the two circles coincide. This means that the pattern of society as a whole must be the same as that of the inner circle: a totalitarian-authoritarian society. To illustrate this there is a short description of the railway-strikes (1903), a notorious topic in Dutch social history. From 1901-1905 Kuyper was Prime Minister, and these

strikes can be used as an 'experimental test'. The attitude of Kuyper and his followers, with regard to the striking workmen, was exactly the same as that of the Liberals, which had evoked Kuyper's criticism in the past: exclusive. In addition to this some remarks are made in this chapter about the relations between the organic orientation of Kuyper and the suffrage (he was strongly against universal suffrage), the jurisdiction and the rural-urban relations. One paragraph is devoted to an actual discussion in the Netherlands, which is still going on: was Kuyper a democratic and progressive thinker and leader in the nineties? Although the conclusion that he was might be drawn from the material examined (cf. especially the articles in Kuyper's own newspaper, *De Standaard*), the answer has to be in the negative. Kuyper was strongly influenced by social darwinism and his 'democratic' action, regarded in that light, must be interpreted as a matter of tactics. '1903' gives a definite answer to this.

Chapter VI opens with a brief survey of the opposition to the principles of the French Revolution of 1789: the social-conservative philosophers of the Restauration: De Bonald, De Maistre and others. Kuyper's religious-political movement is placed against this background, and compared with similar movements in Germany (the *Christlich-Soziale Partei* of Adolf Stöcker) and in France (The *Action Française* of Charles Maurras). These movements have many characteristics in common, in spite of the different national peculiarities.

Our study concludes with some reflections on a wider sociological framework, upon which we can base some hypotheses concerning an explanation. This framework is based on the well-known sociological dichotomies *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft*, folk-urban, sacred-secular, etc. In the movements of Kuyper, Stöcker and Maurras we find a looking forward (back) to social structures of the *Gemeinschaft*-, folk-, sacred type. Their leaders were men who were anxious about structural changes in society, which would destroy the existing structure of society (given by God or Nature).