

Neo-Mysticism and Frederik van Eeden

by Herman Dooyeweerd

(Almanak van het studenten corps van de Vrije Universiteit, 1915)

Translation, introduction and notes by Dr. J. Glenn Friesen

Introduction

Herman Dooyeweerd wrote this article when he was a 20 year old student at the Free University of Amsterdam. His ideas are not fully-formed, nor do they always seem to be consistent. But the article sets out many themes that recur in Dooyeweerd's own philosophy. In some cases, Dooyeweerd's later work incorporates themes that he criticizes here. An example is the use of his quotations from Goethe's *Faust*. In the footnotes, I have indicated some connections to Dooyeweerd's later work.

Dooyeweerd's article is in two parts. Part I is a general and wide-ranging discussion of what he calls 'neo-mysticism.' Of interest here is the broad range of Dooyeweerd's reading in the area. He is familiar with some Buddhist, Hindu, and Islamic ideas. He has read the psychology of Wilhelm Wundt and of William James. And he makes reference to ideas of Henri Bergson regarding intuition. He also writes about Nietzsche's finding of the antithesis between Dionysian and Apollonian ideas in Greek thought; this is helpful in interpreting his later view of the Greek Ground-Motive.

Part II is for me the most interesting. It is devoted to the work of Frederik van Eeden, who represents this neo-mysticism but who also goes significantly beyond the other neo-mystics. Dooyeweerd's style in Part II is so different, so passionate and emotional that one might at first think that he is quoting from van Eeden. But these are Dooyeweerd's own thoughts. Dooyeweerd is critical of the pantheistic tendencies that he sees in van Eeden. But he is nevertheless enormously attracted to van Eeden's mystical ideas. Van Eeden's emphasis on our double self, on the importance of intuition, and the idea of "scientific mysticism" are themes that are evident in Dooyeweerd's own work.

It is clear that Dooyeweerd was familiar with much of van Eeden's work, and it seems that he may even have attended a lecture. He refers to Van Eeden's novels, his

Studies, and to van Eeden's book-length poem *Het Lied van Schijn en Wezen* [The Song of Appearance and Reality]. This long poem was written by van Eeden over a period of 30 years (from June, 1892 until May, 1922). The poem was published in three separate parts, each reflecting changes within van Eeden's thoughts, from an initial monistic pantheism to his later embracing of Roman Catholicism. In 1914, when Dooyeweerd wrote this article about van Eeden, only Parts I and II had been published. Part III of the poem, which sets out van Eeden's Christian ideas, was begun in 1912 but not completed until 1922.

By the end of *Het Lied van Schijn en Wezen*, van Eeden has moved to his Christian faith. He says,

Laat mij Uw liefde in al wat leeft bemerken
 bestraal mijn weg met Uw drievoudig licht:
 Uw Vaderschap, Uw Geest, Uw Liefde-werken. (*Lied* III, XII, 23)

[Let me see your love in everything that lives
 Shine with your threefold light upon my way:
 Your Fatherhood, Your Spirit, and your works of Love].
 [my translation]

Dooyeweerd writes in a passionate, emotional way about how van Eeden's works affected him, and he concludes by pleading for a similar Christian work of art. I believe that we should view Dooyeweerd's own Philosophy of the Law Idea as responding at least in part to his own plea. Dooyeweerd's Philosophy of the Law Idea makes its own passionate appeal to our heart, and like van Eeden before him, Dooyeweerd sets out a "scientific mysticism," albeit one from an explicit Christian perspective.

In previous articles,¹ I have argued that Dooyeweerd's philosophy was influenced by the mystical Christian theosophy of Baader and Boehme. Since then I have found explicit instances where Dooyeweerd was made aware of Baader and of Baader's ideas.²

¹ J. Glenn Friesen: "The Mystical Dooyeweerd: The relation of his thought to Franz von Baader," [<http://www.arsdisputandi.org/>] Vol. 3 (2003), and "The Mystical Dooyeweerd Once Again: Kuyper's Use of Franz von Baader," [<http://www.arsdisputandi.org/>] Vol. 3 (2003).

² I intend to provide details of Dooyeweerd's explicit knowledge of Baader in a forthcoming article.

I believe that Baader's Christian theosophical approach allowed Dooyeweerd to incorporate in his philosophy those ideas of van Eeden which so powerfully attracted him, and yet to develop those ideas within a fully Christian context. What is also interesting is that van Eeden's movement towards Christianity seems to have moved along somewhat similar lines, with an interest in theosophy and in Boehme. The convergence of ideas between Dooyeweerd and this hero from his youth, Frederik van Eeden, is something that demands further exploration.

J. Glenn Friesen

[Part I]

Mentis amor intellectualis erga Deum est ipse
Dei amor quo Deus se ipsum amat (Spinoza)³

Dreaming and waking are the circumstances of the soul wherein the two-sided character of our human consciousness appears most sharply.⁴

Whenever day breaks upon the earth, the gaudy glitter of colours breaking out from the morning mist, showing all things in their sharp outlines before our eyes, then we

³ Note by JGF: The quotation is from Spinoza's *Ethics* V, Proposition xxxvi. It is remarkable that Dooyeweerd prefaces his article with this quotation. See footnote 20, where Dooyeweerd refers to this as "pantheistic." The reference to Spinoza may perhaps be explained by the significance of Spinoza for van Eeden, as set out in van Eeden's *Redekunstige grondslag van verstandhouding* (Utrecht: Spectrum). The quotation means that the intellectual love of God with respect to God is the same love by which God loves Himself. Spinoza's entire proposition reads:

The intellectual love of the mind towards God is that very love of God whereby God loves himself, not insofar as he is infinite, but in so far as he can be explained through the essence of the human mind regarded under the form of eternity; in other words, the intellectual love of the mind towards God is part of the infinite love wherewith God loves himself. Translation by R.H. M. Elwes (1883), available online at <http://www.mtsu.edu/~rbombard/RB/Spinoza/ethica-front.html>

⁴ Note by JGF: Hindu philosophy has explored in detail the four states of consciousness waking, dreaming, deep sleep and the fourth state, the *turiya*, which transcends and includes the other three states of consciousness.

are being ruled by *reason*. Reason [het verstand] distinguishes and orders the representations that present themselves in such rich variety to our view [beschouwing], and reason builds these up into thoughts. But when the light no longer shines in our windows, and the tumult of the world subsides, then we close our tired eyes, and our soul turns back into itself.⁵ There is then an unnoticeable gliding over into our unconscious [ongeweten], a second life, which is of an entirely different nature than our waking life.

The things of the senses then lose their outlines, colours merge together into a vague twilight and, like a great mystery, the dream world rises up. In those hours, all powers seem to be forced together into one power of feeling. Our happiness, our pain, our love, our compassion, everything is full of intensity, and this often unconsciously expresses itself in cries, which make us anxiously start up from out of our sleep. Without any explanation, we can become so terribly frightened, without being able to give an account of the grounds for this fear, assuming that we could know these positively and for certain.

If for a moment we assume psychology's idea of a double-self, then it is our second self that acts in this [dream] life, and its character is *intuitive*.⁶ The completely different disposition of human existence during these two stages of consciousness is most sharply seen when night breaks into dawn, when the dream world slowly sinks away and our vast real life again rises before our eyes in the bright light of day. Even then for hours afterwards, a dark unfixed melancholy can still oppress our soul, regarding something unspeakably sad that came over us during our sleep. But when the analyzing searchlight of our reason beams upon it, the cause appears to us to be laughably small,

⁵ Note by JGF: This idea of our "soul" turning back into itself should be compared with Dooyeweerd's view of the importance of religious self-reflection. This religious self-reflection is however done while we are awake. It is an *enstasis*, a turning inwards in order to recover the relation of our temporal functions to our supratemporal center.

⁶ Note by JGF: Dooyeweerd continued to distinguish between a double selfhood the temporal ego and the supratemporal selfhood. One wonders whether his idea of the supratemporal selfhood corresponds in some way to the unconscious selfhood, which acts in dreams. That is of course the Jungian psychological view. Vollenhoven in his "Divergentierapport" later alludes to possible correspondences between Jung's ideas and Dooyeweerd's philosophy. In any event, Dooyeweerd continues to link intuition with the supratemporal selfhood.

and we become angry at our self, that we could have been brought into such disorder by something of such insignificance.

Therefore, the intuitive dream life of the second self stands over against the life of reason of the first self.⁷ In general, the intellectual person, whom as Plato says, “has been carried by reason into a high fortress,”⁸ apparently wants nothing to do with this mysterious dream life. “Dreams are lies” is our proverb in Holland, and saying that, the sober Dutchman will good-naturedly light up his pipe.

But even such a person, who does not mention the word [dream life], except to give an ironic laugh at every chance to discredit it, remains “human,” and the purely human inclines towards the mysterious and the supernatural, or rather towards the “suprarational.”

In this way we can understand the immense influence that the Romantics had during the last century with their cult of Novalis and Wagner, notwithstanding Goethe’s view that all such romanticism deserved to be called “sick.” They speculated on just this reviled tendency of the human mind. Romanticism’s elfish poetry and its preference for the unreal and the mysterious had as its only goal to lead humanity into the realm of dreams with its moody twilight images and its sweet sounding musical words, and validity was given only to the intuitive life, with its strongly pronounced feeling tone.

In the “thinking world,” the romantic Schopenhauer brought our attention to this life of wonders by his metaphysical theory of dreams. And it is neo-mysticism that still

⁷ This distinction is also clearly seen in situations of suggestion or hypnotism. See Wundt: *Vorlesungen über die Menschen- und Tierseele*, 5th ed., p. 395ff, who rejects the image of a double-selfhood as mystical *Schwärmerei*. In contrast, others like W. James take it as a certain truth. A monograph about this appeared by Dr. Max Dessoir, 1889, Berlin. See also van Eeden, *Studies*, page 173 ff. [Note by JGF: The reference is to van Eeden’s *Studies*, first series (Amsterdam: W. Versluys, 1905. The page reference is to the chapter entitled “Ons Dubbel-Ik” [Our Double Self], first published in 1888. Page 173 refers to experiments of the Society for Psychical Research regarding telepathy, spiritism and hypnotism and of French research regarding suggestion. Van Eeden objects to the term ‘unconscious’ and prefers rather to speak of a second selfhood that is more powerful than our waking selfhood].

⁸ Note by JGF: The source of this quotation is unclear.

gives this living importance.⁹ Dream life is first of all intuitive, and in the mysticism of all ages, intuition is the enlightening way to God.

We learn that Mohammed withdrew for days into the quiet of the desert, and that through long contemplation he sank into the intuitive dream life, in which he communicated with Allah. Buddha, in deep meditation, realized himself to be one with all that exists, and so must all of us who seek a mystical union with God, dying to the sensory world of daily life in order by means of introspection to glide over to that life in which the soul loses itself in God.

These thoughts were first put in systematic form by Plotinus, the great philosopher of Neo-Platonism. His writings give high praise for mysticism, and we can understand with what devotion Maeterlinck looked up to these works, and honoured the Neo-Platonist as

...the only guide that men still meet on the lonely, high peaks of contemplation and ecstasy, the only one who can give a last pointer to the secret islands of fire and the islands of abstraction and love.¹⁰

In order to understand the newer mysticism, as it also reveals itself in van Eeden, we must therefore return to Plotinus' philosophy. But this in turn cannot be understood except in relation to Hellenistic culture, which died with Plotinus in his old age. We can devote only a few words to this connection.

In ancient Greece, the intuitive element was especially embodied in the dark, mystery cult of Dionysius, with its deeply pessimistic life- and worldview.¹¹ In full view of the stately temples with their rows of white columns, and upon which the inner golden light of the evening sun still lingered, the Bacchanalians sang their dithyrambic songs, The motions of the faster and faster rhythm led their lithe, muscled limbs in an ever more wild and passionate dance, until in a climax of ecstasy, they were able to look into the depths of the pain of the world, and they screamed out their emotion in savage cries.

⁹ See lengthy discussion of this dream theory regarding Richard Wagner and Beethoven: *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichten*, Vol. IX, p. 86 ff (Leipzig, 1873).

¹⁰ In his *Trésor des humbles*, the golden book of modern mysticism.

¹¹ The following is of course not complete. We want to give only the outline. Therefore we will not refer to the different mysteries like the mysteries of Eleusis.

Nietzsche has shown in his *Geburt der Tragödie* [*the Birth of Tragedy*] how foreign this ecstatic phenomenon was in comparison to the cultured Greek with his Apollonian religion of beauty. And yet such a Greek, deep in his soul, still felt a dim echo of this barbaric Dionysian song. That was the pessimistic undercurrent of his character, which spoke so strongly in the sayings of Silenus¹² and which also lay at the basis of the great structure of tragedy. In order to suppress that pessimism, the Greek had to extend the veil of a beautiful dream, and therefore Mount Olympus had to be populated with all the glittering idealized human-gods. For this purpose, the luminous worship of Apollo made it's appearance. But the pessimism, the Dionysian basic characteristic, remained preserved in the dark background of tragedy, where what is universally human sinks away into suffering.¹³

It is not to be wondered at that Socrates, that stubbornly matter-of-fact “immer grübelnde” [ever-brooding] intellectual, did not know what to do with Attic art. Under the glaring light of his dialectic he showed the people of Athens the unreality of the world of tragedy, and the foolishness of their poets, “who wrote about things that they did not know.”

Their heroes were always punished, because they had acted wrongly—to that point everything was all right. The problem was that they got back more than they deserved, and so they totally sank in their grief, and that was a mystery that could not be explained by the Socratic dialectic. So we see the struggle begin where art went through its time of revolution, and Greek tragedy died away in the optimism and intellectualism that Euripides brought into the arts. And above all, reason became in philosophy the sole means of salvation.

In Plato's philosophy, intuition still played an important role in connection with his teaching of the pre-existence of the soul, which had beheld the Ideas in unclouded

¹² Note by JGF: Silenus was the teacher and companion of the wine-god Dionysus. Nietzsche refers to Aristotle's *Eudemus*, fragment 6 (W.D. Ross).

¹³ Cf. Nietzsche: *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, Nietzsche's *Werke*, Vol. I, (Leipzig, 1899), p. 97 ff.

beauty. These Ideas then vaguely appeared again in remembrance, by the perception of their shadows: the world of appearance.¹⁴

Through this intuitive remembrance, the *anamnesis*, there awoke in humans the *eros*, the Platonic love of the Idea.¹⁵ But then Plato gave the lion's share [of his philosophy] to reason, which in a dialectical way was supposed to be able to reconstruct the whole world of Ideas, culminating in the Idea of the Good, the beaming sun in the crystal heaven of concepts. And after Plato we find that intuition has been more and more forced back from out of life and thought. Expelled by art and put to silence by philosophy, it seemed that the light of intuition would be forever withheld from the Western world. The consequences of this rationalism revealed themselves in the separation of subject and object, which began to work its way more and more through post-Aristotelian philosophy, first merely in principle with the Stoics, who through a subjective criterion sought to create order in the chaos of true and false representations, and finally in its full consequences in the skepticism of the New Academy, whose principal representative, Arcesilaus, sealed the absolute break with the objective world.

In light of this history we must look at Neo-Platonism, “the Hellenistic parallel appearance of Christian patristics.” It is, as Schwegler says, “the last despairing attempt of the ancient spirit to come to a monistic worldview that would sublimate the split between subjectivity and objectivity.”¹⁶

This monistic tendency stood in an immediate connection with the religious ideas of Neo-Platonism. As Rudolf Eucken says of Plotinus in his *Lebensanschauungen der grossen Denker*,

Einen festen Zusammenhang der Wirklichkeit hatte die Griechische Philosophie von jeher gelehrt und dem Menschen in das All sich ein zu fügen geboten. Aber das teilhaben an der Welt war noch kein Besitzen der

¹⁴ For the intuitive character of Plato's knowledge of Ideas see Windelband: *Geschichte der alten Philosophie in Handbuch der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft* (Munich, 1894), p. 188, as well as Dr. v. d. Hoek: *Plato, de Staat*, in *Groote denkers der Eeuwen*, p. 39 ff, published by Cohen.

¹⁵ Developed in Plato's *Symposium*.

¹⁶ Schwegler: *Geschichte der Philosophie*, p. 84 ff (1848).

Welt; im innersten Gründe führte der Einzelne ein gesondertes Leben, jetzt aber wird eine allumfassende, alldurchdringende Einheit zur Quelle des gesamten Lebens, jeder Punkt wird innerlich damit verbunden, alles Einzelne hat sich damit zu erfüllen, sich davon absondern heisst einem volligen Leere verfallen.¹⁷

[Greek philosophy had taught a stable coherence of reality, and had advised humans to become a part of the All. But a sharing in the world was still no possession of the world; in his most inner ground, an individual led a separated life. Now however there was an all-encompassing, all-penetrating Unity at the source of common life; each point was innerly bound with it, and each individual had to fulfill itself with regard to this Unity. To separate oneself from it would amount to a fall into complete emptiness.]

Plotinus is therefore the philosopher of pantheism. One must imagine how with both hands he tore open the woven veil of beauty of the Apollonian world and how he again dared to look into the dark mystery, with which—in the deepest part of his soul—he knew he was one, just as the Bacchanalians before him had known. The divine being, elevated above thought and desire, could be approached in two ways. There was the way of hierarchy; everything existing was a radiating out (emanation) from God, the eternal being. Each thing had its own fixed allocated place, and received life by the following stage, which in its turn had received life from a still higher stage. In this hierarchical path, each stage of the hierarchical path participates in the light of absolute being. There is an “ascent” of the heavenly powers. They “climb up and ascend, passing the golden pails from hand to hand.”¹⁸

¹⁷ R. Eucken, *Die Lebensanschauungen*...p. 84 ff. See also Schwegler, *op. cit.* 85 ff, Windelband, *op. cit.* p. 218 ff and especially Zeller: *Die Philosophie der Griechen V*, p. 461 ff.

¹⁸ Note by JGF: The quotation is not identified by Dooyeweerd. One might think that it is from Plotinus, whom he is discussing in this paragraph, but the quotation is from Goethe's *Faust*, Part I lines 447 to 450. The lines are spoken by Faust:

Wie alles sich zum Ganzen webt,
eins in dem andern wirkt und lebt!
Wie Himmelskräfte auf und nieder steigen
Und sich die goldnen Eimer reichen.

[How everything weaves itself into the whole,
One in the other works and lives!
How heaven's powers climb up and down

Next to this was another way to God. For it, humans had to ascend to a sphere where all rays (all images) ceased and only the sun of the Godhead itself burned in an intense glow. The Godhead carries various names in Plotinus, when he tries to approach its essence. Sometimes he calls it *To Proton* [The First], then again *To Agathon* [The

Passing the golden pails from hand to hand]

In this article, Dooyeweerd is critical of Plotinus, whom he says is the philosopher of pantheism. There is no indication that he is using Goethe in any positive sense. Yet that is exactly what Dooyeweerd does in the *Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee* (I, 6) and the *New Critique* (NC I, 4) where this same passage from Goethe is quoted in a positive sense, referring to how everything moves towards Totality! Dooyeweerd says that it is the task of philosophy to explain this movement towards Totality. Again, Dooyeweerd does not identify the source of his quotation.

The “climbing up and down” also echoes the Biblical account of the angels ascending and descending on Jacob’s ladder:

And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. (Gen. 28:12).

The meaning of the "golden pails" seems to be the carrying of the waters of life emanating from God, the Source. This is made clear in the final scene of *Faust*, Part II, lines 12,045 to 12,049:

Bei dem Bronn, zu dem schon weiland
Abram liess die Herde führen
Bei dem Eimer, der dem Heiland
Kühl die Lippe durft berühren;
Bei der reinen, reichen Quelle,
Die nun dorther sich ergiesset,
Überflüssig, ewig helle
Rings durch alle Welten fliesset–

[By the well that benefited
Abram's herds on ancient trips, By the pail that was permitted
Once to cool the Savior's lips;
By the spring that is still streaming
Hence in pure and bounteous glow,
Overflowing, ever gleaming,
Watering worlds with endless flow–
[Translation by Walter Kaufmann]

Good], then again *To En* [The One], but the complete essence is not expressed. He is the Ineffable, the Unthinkable.¹⁹

Therefore we can never know God by the dialectical path of thought; we can fathom the True only when all difference between thinking and being ceases, and only ecstasy can lead us to this. In ecstasy, having died to the impurity of the sensory world, reason beholds itself in complete unconsciousness. For deep in the soul is seated our intuition on the golden tripod,²⁰ and by the welling up of the waves of incense from out of the dark Urgrund [Original Ground] of the heart, her eye is enlightened and she sees the Godhead in herself, and in the beholding [aanschouwing] of that vision, she sinks into great blessedness.

So in Plotinus's teaching of ecstasy, the Greek spirit was itself exceeded, and as already mentioned, Neo-Platonism was the last gasp of that Greek spirit.

But the mysticism of that great philosopher exercised enormous influence on later thinkers, so that the teaching of ecstasy bewitched even Augustine, whom Eucken says was the only independent Christian thinker.

We therefore should not wonder that the widely branching direction of today's neo-mysticism seeks to appropriate the honour of this name [Plotinus], and that this mysticism goes back with joy to its father in order to learn wisdom at his feet.

Ruysbroeck, Thomas à Kempis, Meister Eckhart, Tauler and other mystics²¹ (Christian students of the heathen Neo-Platonist) may all have exercised a great attraction on them [the neo-mystics]. But frequently they acknowledge how Plotinus is the greatest of all, as we have seen from the quotation from Maeterlinck.

¹⁹ See especially the well-known treatise *Peri t'agathon e tou henos*, Plotinus: *Enneades* vol. II, VIII, 21, IX, I, p. 441 (1853), where Plotinus' concept of God is developed the most clearly.

²⁰ Note by JGF: The messages of the oracle at Delphi were spoken by a priestess seated on a golden tripod.

²¹ Spinoza's pantheistic mysticism with its "Amor Dei intellectualis" is also regarded highly by the modern movement.

And yet there is a deep difference between the old Greek and his modern spiritual children. For the former, just as Plato, although of aesthetic temperament, was in the first place a philosopher and it was only by the difficult dialectical way that he came to his teaching of ecstasy (as if reason were a covering up of self-reflection). But the teaching of ecstasy became for him a necessity of life. The newer mystics were first of all artists, whose priority was often not truth but beauty and who often used mysticism as an advertisement for their own thoughts. For many of them, worship was more of the word in its musical sound than of a divine spiritual All, whose light filled the world. And when Huysmans, the man of the “messe noire” [black mass], the previous leader of the Satanist movement turned back from his perverse ways and, as a true son of the Holy Church, made confession of his sins, it was nevertheless striking how little his new mysticism had a Christian essence in it and with what sensory pleasure he experienced the majestic architecture of the Roman Cathedrals, the devotion to its worship-inducing stone sculptures in their sharp contours against the highly polished gold chandeliers, and especially the attraction of the half-lit dark interiors with their sweet-smelling clouds of incense and the murmuring of organ sounds, as he has set out in his broad, highly stylized sentences.²²

Furthermore, there was much in the neo-mystical movement that reminds one of Romanticism. There was often a self-glorification of the selfhood, to which Fichte had given an impetus with his teaching of the absolute self. We must therefore direct our attention to this neo-romanticism, which found its philosophical expression in the system of Henri Bergson.

Bergson,²³ like Brunetière before him, spoke of the “bankruptcy of science.” For science there remained only the “the sediment of the stream of life, the ash blown down from the fire of life.” Only “intuition,” instinct awakened to consciousness, could give

²² See Dr. H.M. van Nes: *De nieuwe mystiek* (Rotterdam, 1901), p. 116, René Doumic: *Les jeunes*. Note by JGF: Why does Dooyeweerd’s criticize the sensory pleasure in Roman Catholicism? This opposition seems to imply an aversion to the sensual. But is that not a dualistic view of spirituality? Perhaps his criticism is that Huysmans’ worship is *only* aesthetic.

²³ Cf. de Boer: “De filosofie van H. Bergson,” *De Beweging* (Sept., 1909).

life to a philosophy that would disclose all the metaphysical riddles. Through intuition we must like Plotinus make a leap into eternally flowing Life, which is the always-changing Godhead itself, in order to find community with it. This stream (“la fleuve vitale”) can be taken in by our reason only in single moments, like the frames of a cinema image; from this Bergson inferred the inferiority of science. In larger Life, the dualism between reason and intuition finds its higher unity; by identifying this unity with his concept of God, Bergson’s system shows the stamp of pantheism.

The new romanticism, which we also find in Dilthey, originated from out of the still continuing struggle for a solution of the dualism between faith and science. Kant had most keenly set out the problem, and he proclaimed the insufficiency of pure Reason [Vernunft] to know the metaphysical “Ding an sich” [thing in itself]. According to transcendental idealism, all certainty concerning the existing world is only relative. As Anema says,

...for us, existence vanished into what was reproduced by the thinking spirit itself, or at least all of our subjective representations were wholly transformed and poured into a logical form, whose universality (i.e. truth) found its basis in the similarly organized nature of perceiving subjects.²⁴

The *Kritik der Urteilkraft* [Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*] must lead to belief, the “praktische Vernunft” [practical reason]. But this power of judgment was like the drawbridge to the Mohammedan Paradise as seen in the feverish fantasies of the great prophet. Only the chosen ones would safely reach the safety of the dwellings of Blessedness; the remainder fell away into the dark, dizzying abyss of skepticism, to which pure reason in the sense of transcendental idealism must unavoidably lead, or into a mysticism, just as we find in the pragmatism of James.

Schopenhauer, the beneficial heir of the great Königsberger [Kant], was the link between Kant and Bergson. In Schopenhauer, the romanticism begun by Fichte and Schelling found its culmination. His influence on the younger writers and certainly also on the newer mystics is hard to underestimate [sic; should be ‘overestimate’?]

In 1875 E. von Hartmann wrote:

²⁴ A. Anema: *Calvinisme en rechtswetenschap*, p. 37.

Die ganze Belletristik und Tagesliteratur der Gegenwart, wenigstens soweit sie von jüngeren Schriftstellern ausgeht, ist von Schopenhauerschen Einfluss berührt, von seiner Schreib- und Denkweise durchdrungen."²⁵

[The whole of today's fiction and literature, at least insofar as it comes from younger authors, is influenced by Schopenhauer, and permeated by his manner of writing and thinking.]

Kuno Fischer characterizes Schopenhauer's system as a temple with four gates [like Thebes], through which the mystical twilight of Buddhism and the Vedas enter. The primacy was given to a hypostatized concept of the will, which in fact is present in the whole world, especially in the Urgrund [Original Ground] of human consciousness and which discloses the dark entrance to knowledge of the "Wesen des Dinges an sich" [Essence of the thing-in-itself], of which the Platonic Idea was the objectification.²⁶ In this voluntaristic solution of the Kantian dualism, with its repression of reason and glorification of intuition in the mysterious concept of the will, we clearly see the line running to Bergson's philosophy. And both of them show their relation with the romantic Schelling.²⁷

The great fascination exercised by Bergson on philosophy and neo-mysticism in the arts demonstrates that the time was ripe for such a movement. For a large part this can be explained by the reaction against the science of numbers and formulas, which was rampant in the materialism of Büchner and Moleschoot and in the positivism of Comte and Renan. It found its artistic ally in the naturalism of Zola and Balzac. But people had had enough of this comfortless materialism, which always sees everything backwards,

²⁵ Eduard von Hartmann: *Gesammelte Studien und Aufsätze*, 3rd ed. Leipzig, p. 569 ff. Schopenhauer: *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, II, p. 415 ff.

²⁶ The remark of v. Hartmann is curious here: that the blind concept of will was innerly empty of content, and that in order to build a system and for completion, Schopenhauer had to take refuge in other systems such as Plato's objective idealism, and then materialism; through both of these he came into flagrant conflict with his own realism of the will and subjective idealism, *Ibid.*

²⁷ See Theob. Ziegler: *Geestelijke en sociale stroomingen der 19e eeuw*, tr. Polak (Wereldbibliotheek) I, p. 449 ff and further p. 424. Understandably nothing is said here about Bergson, since he belonged to the following century.

and with such mighty proverbs as “You are what you eat” forgets the human heart in the balance of its infinite calculations.

Everywhere there was a devaluation of the life of the soul, whether for good or for evil, an infinite longing or *Sehnsucht* for the mystery behind the *maya* of appearance. In this way the great influence of the imposing figures Tolstoy and Ibsen, who showed the inner rottenness of society and who thereby gave new nourishment to pessimism, that Buddhist parasitic plant in the nebulous West.

All these factors explain how the emphasis moved more towards the “Jenseits” [opposite], and how there was a reaching back to Plotinus and the great mystics. We have already referred to the difference between the new mystics and their old teachers. For their reaction [against science] came first not from the philosophical side, but from the artistic side, and they did not deny their origins. The movement of the neo-Christians in France, led by artists like Bourget and de Vogué was described by Paulhan in his *Le Nouveau Mysticisme* as only a seeming Christianity which in fact had nothing in common with Jesus’ teachings except the name. Verlaine, whose poet’s soul was full of dark, Satanic perversity, had with a circle of his friends set up an aesthetically refined worship service of the Evil One. And although he witnessed his repentance before the high altar, Paulhan accuses him that his conversion was “only spice to season the sins he had committed in secret.”

Neo-Mysticism wanted to follow the heavenly naiveté of the middle ages, and using its language it gladly adopted the fervent child-like expressions of the primitives.²⁸ In contrast to this, Ruysbroeck and Thomas à Kempis had a simplicity of soul; they knew that we can best approach God in the white garment of humility. But the newer mystics were pursued by the romantics, and in the glittering atmosphere of that world, bewitchingly sounded out by a Richard Wagner, “humility” and “self-renunciation” were made to feel like shy children in a foreign and luxurious palace. “Mystery” lay behind everything in the new realm of thought, a mystery that vaguely showed itself from out of the darkness, just as hidden drops of dew suddenly sparkle by the stirring of moonlight.

²⁸ We find the same phenomenon in the so-called pre-Raphaelite movement in the fine arts, to which Jan Toorop, Gustav de Walperné and others belong.

This romanticism, declared by Goethe to be “sick,” must also lead to a sick mysticism. And yet we see much that is sympathetic in this movement, and much mysticism is, with all its mistakenness, still of a noble nature. Frederik van Eeden is among the most sympathetic and truly serious modern mystics. Part II of this article concerns his mysticism.

[Part II]

My soul is now like a room that is full of intimacy and rest, and the noise and tumult of the world have been stilled by the desire for contemplation. They come with soft beating wings, with an atmosphere of tender devotion, they wait until I receive them, these wonderful, ascending reflective thoughts. And before I know it, there appears again before my eyes the deep glance of the seer [van Eeden], his face encircled with its black beard, so fitting in this milieu of the meditative lamplight....And I have never felt so much the great trustworthiness of his being, but I also have never felt so much the danger of those hypnotically fascinating depths of his eyes...

The first reflection, which glides in, whispering softly, is the image that Van Eeden loved, the white water-lily, fragile leaves, stretched out widely on a dreamily quiet and resting lake. Like the water lily, his soul, too desired the absolute equilibrium spoken of by Democritus. And O, often when I read his works, I received that impression of the soul's peace that follows after the struggle. Then I wanted to be his child, a child who asks to share in his father's happiness, in his timid yet trusting familiarity. But the next line that I read would break the spell, and showed me his poverty in this appearance of beauty—the pale one dying in his shiny lacy white night-clothes.²⁹ And as he leads me in the city of love, his Marjon-voice says to me:

Take my hand, trust me. I shall lead you to my father. He will not do anything bad to you. Be not afraid. You carry the soft dark humility. He will not reject you...

And then I am for a while bewildered and I gaze in sweet intoxication at the gold roofs of the chapels and the galleries with white marble pillars, rising out of the grey-blue mist of

²⁹ Note by JGF: The reference seems to be to the death of van Eeden's son, as described in *Paul's Ontwaken*.

the earth to the holy light and I ask him timidly, “Is all of this your wonderful kingdom and will you bring me here to your father?”

And as he leads me in the city of sorrows, where so tenderly the songs of the night murmur through the dark, stately trees, there is a mixture of fragile [frêlen] melancholy and powerful longing in the soft-sounding music of words. Then I am moved to shout out from something within me that is ineffable, but which resonates in my soul...

But then, high and commanding, the voice of God comes to me: write “death” above everything that he showed you, for this is nothing more than the appearance and deception of the senses.

And turning my face away from this glittering kingdom of the soul, I feel with all its soft, demonic force the tension of its trembling dream images and delicate melodies, whose forces of attraction unmistakably swirl around me ...

Mysticism, mysticism is a strange word!

It says so little and it says so much.

Everyone grasps it with unclean hands and presses it to his bosom like a cherished toy. But O, the purity, the unspeakable innerness of a knowing that is near to God, to feel his cool hand, the hand of the Father resting on one’s burning head, and to realize His glance sinking in your eyes in immense, world-explaining love...

And to kneel down before Him in the pure white raiment of humility, and to raise the eyes, the eyes, to him with child-like trust.

O, that gliding over, that sinking within, blindly knowing oneself to be blessed in a world of light, a universe of holy devotion. O to know oneself to be carried by the strong, tender and soft arms of one’s God over the dark ground of the world, where the commotion of humanity echoes strangely as from a far, far distance.

All for that One—all, all, all for the One, O smile for those who doubt.
They have not known it.

Ah, must this then all fade away to a *mood*, the hovering thought of a dream, instead of the certain knowledge in the deepest, the truly deepest sanctuary of our soul?

That's what becomes of the holy in the hand of the modern artist: a toy, a colourful fire in order to display his thoughts in a strange, soft red light.

But in Van Eeden there is something higher than love of the Word and a cherishing of mood. I feel that he stands closer to the early mystics than the new artists. I feel a genuine striving in his words, a serious seeking in his life.

And for him the eternal and the timeless are more important than words and beauty, so that they float about in parables:

Whoever does not see these words of mine as living fingers, barely and passionately holding onto what is loved the most, anxiously grasping, which is more than the Mind can think and the Heart can feel, that person does not understand my words.³⁰

And what does he seek?

It is definitely not a sensation, a specially strong, or pleasant sensation, an aesthetic sensation or a sensation of beauty—O no! It is a different life.³¹

No one expected of me a swelling poem of praise for Van Eeden. And I will not make a show of him with the fool's gold of words or hang on him decorations of coarse ideas, like the decorations of a kewpie doll at a fair with clanging cymbals and brass bands: may my language not injure the delicacy of his world and may it speak nothing but the truth in its simplicity!

The mysticism of our poet shows itself clearly in the separation encountered everywhere between two worlds. The one world is that of cool, rigid reason. The other is that of the inner will, where is found the beaming light and the clear, immediate apperception of the only true reality behind all appearance. This distinction is the foundation for the poetic philosophy in *Het Lied van Schijn en Wezen*. It shows again the dualistic background of neo-Kantianism, in whose struggles Van Eeden participated with all the force of his temperament. In the true mystical line, he understandably gave the supremacy to intuition. This is clearly spoken in the words of Johannes Viator, where his

³⁰ *Joh. Viator*, p. 307.

³¹ *Joh. Viator*, p. 341.

soul, which had long been oppressed by dry abstraction, is suddenly opened by the fine intuitive feelings of Marjon's heart [gemoed]:

But each time, and this was many times, that I was ashamed of my greater delusions and failure to understand, I detected that her tender-light, wide-still feelings were purer and higher than my compact reason [Verstand]. For this floating, tender, gleaming misty light encompasses more of the eternal purity and penetrates further into God's essence than my heavier, more fixed thoughts. (*J.V.* p. 316).

Here Van Eeden shows himself in another light, that of a thinker. For he is not only a poet-seer, but also a thinker and he seeks the reconciliation of these two persons with tireless strength. He himself spoke of a certain preference for *scientific mysticism*, and science was for him not—as in the case of Bergson's students—an inferior intrigue of barren spirits, slaves to books toiling away in their stuffy studies. For Van Eeden, science also had value, provided that it did not pretend to be able to reduce the mysterious universe to numerals and mathematical formulas and pretend to thereby lay bare the true essence of things for all to see.³² Science has to adapt itself to the poets and seers, and must come to the same conclusion as the seers long ago, that all of our criteria that are bound to space and time are only relative.³³ From this we can understand Van Eeden's taking up the new foundation of the natural sciences set out by Prof. Lorentz of Utrecht in his teaching of relativity, where science offers the hand of reconciliation to the

³² Compare the words of Johannes Viator: "I did not see Reason in beauty—and in Reason I do not see beauty. I want both, but in humans they can never completely reach each other." Page 365.

³³ Note by JGF: In the *Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee*, Dooyeweerd says,

For what is at stake here is no less than a relativizing of the whole temporal cosmos in both its so-called "natural" sides as well as its so-called "spiritual" sides, as against the religious root of creation in Christ. (WdW I,6)

Although that particular statement is not carried forward into the *New Critique*, the idea of the temporal world of meaning being relative is also found there. For example,

But like all human experience in this earthly dispensation, our knowledge of God, although directed to the absolute Truth is also restricted and relativized by (but not at all to) our temporal cosmic existence. (NC II, 560).

mystics of all centuries.³⁴ In this way the poet-seers will themselves become more and more the radiating center from out of which the world shall become enlightened. And just as science is now transforming itself, so eventually shall the whole world be transformed in the future of God's kingdom of love in this world. Humanity, having been ennobled in its evolution, will no longer choose its kings from out of industry, politicians or landed gentry. Rather, like a luminous gold suspended dome, this earthly temple will enfold and include the kingdom of the poets and seers, the true ministers of the people. There will be no more caste system; no system of private ownership will cause suffering and class hatred. Instead everywhere from out of the mouth of poets the gospel of love will resound, and will unite the bonds of the brotherhood of man. There will no longer be any distinction between love towards God and love towards fellow humans, for His essence is in all of them as the quiet motive towards goodness and mutual love.³⁵ No family bonds will remain, for all will feel themselves to be brothers in an immense love for the world and its great indwelling Light.³⁶

In the third part of the *Kleinen Johannes* Van Eeden views all of this in a prophetic dream, where Windekind has by "the Good Brother" been reconciled with humanity and earthly life. He then as of old he threw his airy blue mantle around Johannes and took him to sunny Italy, where the white temples, with their pillars ringed

³⁴ Compare Van Eeden's article: "Wetenschappelijke mystiek" in *de Samenleving*, May 20, 1911, p. 625 ff.

³⁵ Note by JGF: Van Eeden's view may be linked to the Hindu idea of *tat tvam asi* [That art thou]. The expression is found in the *Upanishads*, and refers to our experience of "identity" with Brahman. We see Brahman in all things, and the basis for our love of others is that they also are one with Brahman. But Dooyeweerd expresses a similar view in his own philosophy:

In its religious fulness of meaning the love of our neighbour is nothing but the love of God in His image, expressed in ourselves as well as in our fellow-men. This is why Christ said that the second commandment is equal to the first. One can also say that it is implied in it. (NC II, 155).

³⁶ The thought as such is not new. It is largely derived from Plato's ideal state, as Van Eeden implicitly acknowledges. It is curious how mysticism has always gone together with a socialistic view of society. In olden times, under the influence of Plotinus's mysticism, the order of the "Brothers of the Free Spirit" and many other socialistic societies were formed. Cf. G. Adler: *Geschichte des Sozialismus und communismus I*, page 93 ff, 1891, Leipzig.

with the red tendrils of vines, shone with flashes of gold in the light of happiness, and the world was one beautiful whole of divine harmony and Love.³⁷

It is a religion that is being preached here to humanity, with all the wonderful attraction of v. Eeden's apostles—his words. The poet-seer Nietzsche had also viewed the future state and he made the world shudder from the emotional affect of the ecstatic sounds of his *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. Nietzsche's error was the ridiculous extent of his individualism, which in the teaching of the *Übermensch* [Superman] culminated in a screaming sacrilegious mercilessness! Van Eeden also wanted an *Übermensch*, but not a tyrant who with the primal power of his selfhood batters down and tramples on his weaker fellow creatures. Rather, he wanted the meek, kingly one, conscious of the holy light of the deity within him, which radiates deep in the soul of all his brothers! This was the pantheistic thought of the All-One, which showed its relation with Buddhism and Brahmanism. But yet we do not find here the absolute illusionism of the Buddha's teaching with its Nirvana of the complete destruction of apparent existence. It was a real thought of the divine that trembled in the subtle voice of Ellen:

Veel-veel-wit madelieven staan,
 Goudene hartjes in 't sneeuwwitgespreide,
 Zien niet elkanderen—elk zich 't benijde
 Zonnekind wanend, zien zij den Vader aan—
 Vader! zeg hun, dat Gij in allen woont,
 Buig den hoogmoedigen; open den dicht-
 nog gewouwenen kelk, dat elk aan allen toont
 Uw licht zongezicht—

[Very-very-white stand the daisies
 Golden hearts in the outspread snow-white
 They do not see each other—each believing itself to be
 The envied Sun-child, beholds the Father—
 Father! Tell them, that You in all of them live,
 Bow the proud-hearted; open the closed
 Yet-welded calyx, so that each displays to all
 The light of your sun-countenance.]
 [my translation]

³⁷ We also find the future religion developed in v. Eeden's article "Koningschap en dichterschap" in *de Gids* 1910, 38e jrg, dl. IV, p. 387-412. Also recently in a lecture in the Hague.

Certainly the thought of Suffering and the law of sacrifice in *Ellen* and *Johannes Viator* was along the lines of Buddhism, and we must also regard the expressions of human sinfulness in this same way.³⁸

This was the disharmony between the impurity of the lower life of the body, sunk in its desires, with the eternal divine law of holy love.

In the fire of this pitiable body we must completely purify our love, our whole earthly sensory life. In this light, Suffering is seen as desirable, and Pain is regarded as a gospel.³⁹

Maar daar is Lijden, schooner dan de Dood,
Want niet om niet wordt 't menschenhart vertreden;
De brand der zielen is het morgenrood,
Waaruit lichtstil zal dagen Hemelvrede.

[But there is Suffering, more beautiful than Death,
For it is not for nothing that the human heart is trampled on;
The fire of our souls is the red of sunrise
From which in quiet light shall dawn the peace of Heaven.]
[my translation]

Our whole life becomes then a sacrifice and a great renunciation. This thought of sacrifice inspired Johannes Viator and Marjon when, free from their own most beloved, they lit up the golden haze of intimacy and sent the wondrous book to humans, in the world “where the merciless laughter of hate is spilled, where the fallen matter without essence is dashed from the black cliffs.”

The thought of sacrifice inspired van Eeden, when he for the second time gave to the world the deepest part of his inner soul in his *Paul's Ontwaken*, in which the Christian-coloured “fontanel-thought”– suffering for the sake of the salvation of humanity–stands so strongly up the foreground. And who can remain unmoved by the words:

O people, who hear the poverty of these words, whatever love is within
you, whatever virtue and whatever trace of holiness, do not deny them in

³⁸ Regarding this Buddhist thought, see: E. v. Hartmann: *Das religiöse Bewusstsein der Menschheit*, Leipzig, 2nd ed., p. 348 ff.

³⁹ In the pure pantheistic line the deity is itself included in this suffering.

your recklessness. Watch over the breath from your lips, take care in the least of your movements, so that nothing shall be violated carelessly!

Attention has not been paid to this prayer of van Eeden. People have criticized his *Johannes Viator*, his *Ellen*, his *Paul's Ontwaken* as just light reading. Verwey reviled it all as rhetoric and lies. He did not feel the tender sublimation of the higher.

Furthermore, whoever regards van Eeden merely as an artist, and who sees each of his work in itself, and not, as H. Borel⁴⁰ wanted to see them, as a golden link in the chain of his life, such a person should not read van Eeden; he will not understand him.

Whoever really wants to know him, must see him in relation to the whole development of his life, as the composition of a great musical composer, beginning with the tender prelude in the *Kleinen Johannes* and continuing to the end with the same theme in soul-stirring intonations. So let's direct our attention for a moment to this development, and look more closely at the *Kleinen Johannes*. The little Johannes!

As I name this name, there rises again for me that world of meditative thoughts, delicate as spun gold, and I tremble again from that pure emotion that only music can awaken in me. Van Eeden is also a musician, a musician of language, with its rhythmic motion and sonorous sound. Especially when it is simple, it moves even the finest parts of the heart, which is attuned to the spontaneity of his saying.

There we are again: Windekind with the blonde elfish little head and the dark dreaming eyes, Robinetta in her little blue dress, the attractive child, who looks so strikingly like Windekind. There is Wistik, the little dwarf with his star-blue light of flame, and yes, Pluizer, the spiteful tormentor with well-known "Death." And finally the most mysterious of all, the serious unknown being in whose eyes lies endless melancholy.

⁴⁰ Note by JGF: Henri Borel (1869-1933) wrote about the Taoist philosopher Lao Tzu. The book is still in print: *Wu-Wei. Laotse als Wegweiser* [Lao-Tzu as Shower of the Way] (Drei Eichen Verlag, 2001). Borel also wrote about Hinduism and Buddhism. See *Wijshheid en Schoonheid uit Indië* (Amsterdam, P.A. v. Kampen & Zn). Borel was part of a circle of academics formed by van Eeden in 1914, which included Henri Borel, Gustav Landauer, Poul C. Bjerre and Erich Gutkind. Some of Borel's letters to van Eeden have been collected in *Brieven van Frederik van Eeden aan Henri Borel* (Den Haag: Uitgeverij Pax).

Now we will let a clearer light fall on two of these symbolic figures:

Windekind and Pluizer! Naïve idealism with its egotistical, human-avoiding, glorification of nature. Although basically good, it must be clarified with many tears, to become the highest, conscious altruism, so that it can be reconciled with the great, dark city, where humanity lives in its misery. Over against the cold, mathematizing materialism—his dark shadow, which attended him his whole life—there is this continued spirit of martyrdom by the person of good will, who is not yet fully prepared for the life of suffering.

At Windekind's side, little Johannes was happy, in the middle of the trusting flowers and birds under the blue sky and the golden sun, in his naïve, but egotistical glorification of nature. And the air was so clear and the sun was so warm, until Wistik the dwarf came. O, the little destroyer of rest, with his little blue light and the Golden Book, which sets out why everything must be and where happiness is to be found!

Slowly and unnoticed, a grey mystery rose between Johannes and his brother Windekind, until in its imposing greatness it blurred his vision and clouded over the glad sunlight. Then Windekind did not satisfy him any more, and the ground was ready for Pluizer, who did not keep him waiting.

Over there on the bleached dunes, where little Johannes that first summer night had been so happy with Windekind and where, wrapped in his little blue jacket, he had slumbered on his brother's breast, there—cruel play of fate—he also meets Pluizer. Two white butterflies fly in frivolous, airy play above each other, like messengers from his lost friend. They avoid Johannes as if they do not know him, and flutter further to the highlighted West, where the sun sinks back in the great, mighty grotto of blocks of stone tinged with fiery red. No need! He will soon find them back in Pluizer's hand, dying and with torn, quivering wings—the first gift of his tormentor. The last farewell from Windekind. And now begins the powerful, hopeless domination by the demon with his gruesome journey through the graves, where in the twilight the little Johannes sees the little boy lying in the black coffin, his hands folded on his breast, his eyes closed. And when he anxiously asks Pluizer whether this is all reality, Pluizer adds with a demonic

smirk that everything really is that way, except for the belief that Johannes himself exists—for the dead little boy who lies there is the little Johannes!

Now everything would be seen from the other side, and Dr. Cipher, the personification of the stuffy science where all higher principles remain hidden, would make the little wanderer into a “man.” The highest glory of the scholars was nothing more than numerals and ciphers and still more ciphers! To unravel and to analyze: the lancet and the dissecting-knife took the place of the golden magic key, the gift of Oberon.

Here we really have a temporal domination by the worst materialism in van Eeden’s life. But it was only a period of purification. In all of his thought, egoism—the wrong side of the Windekind figure—must be put to death. That became the task for the serious, melancholic unknown person who will show him again the far, dark city of suffering.

The figures mentioned here must be understood as symbols of the spiritual powers in Van Eeden’s own self. This book, just like *Johannes Viator* and *Ellen* are songs of the soul with all their ascending and renunciation. And the end of everything is purified altruistic idealism, the divine music of intuition, which is the driving force to the heights from out of the chaos of conflicting sounds. But Pluizer is not dead! As long as Johannes sees him—that spiteful little man with the flickering in his grey mocking eyes and the eternal smirk on his mouth—so long as he warmly lives through the emotions of horror and disgust, Pluizer is not at his most dangerous. But when in the shocking penultimate chapter the demon approaches, the dissecting-knife in his hand, to the deathbed where lies Johannes’ beloved and just-deceased father, then with his whole soul, Johannes wants to revolt against the heart rending sacrilege that Pluizer wants to commit. In a blind fury he grasps the wrists of the devil, and struggles, wrestles, until he sees red before his eyes, and the demon evaporates and penetrates deep into the soul of Johannes, and living there in dark unconsciousness, he suddenly shoots up again in the highest ecstasy of the poet and appears as a ruddy flash of lightning, hitting the delicate-blue palace of ideals that had been built by Windekind.⁴¹

⁴¹ The demonic sarcasm in “de Tragedie van ‘t Recht” also testifies to the Satanic power.

That is the enemy, which for van Eeden is contained within science and within the cool mathematizing intellect. This is the same science, with which he, by the power of thought, continually wanted to make compromises. It is in this light that we must regard van Eeden's works. He is a mystic with a pronounced intuitive disposition, but Pluizer remains his fate. In this way we must also explain the contradictory quotations in *Paul's Ontwaken*, to which Ds. Meyer in *Omhoog*⁴² has correctly drawn attention. Thinking itself had brought van Eeden to doubting the one certainty in his life, the inner light of intuition. It was again Pluizer's power, which caused him to call out, "Give me a sign!" so that he might believe in the reality of the eternal, that which is not of the world. But as he, disheartened, sits at the deathbed [of his son Paul], by the white flowers that have no scent, and he sees his beloved son with folded hands, in devoted prayer, glide over from out of the temporal into the timeless⁴³ then he sees again clearly in inner intuition [aanschouwing], or rather he *feels* the reality of the higher suprasensory world, in which now Paul's soul is light and rarefied, free from the impurity of life in the body.

⁴² *Omhoog*, Onafh. Godsd. Tijdschrift, 1e jrg, April 1914, p. 113 ff.

⁴³ This is the same expression that Dooyeweerd used many years later in 1952 to describe the death of his friend Dr. Kohnstamm, a "gliding over from the temporal to the eternal":

Midden in zijn arbeid nam God hem op 76 jarigen leeftijd weg, zonder ziekbed, zonder doodstrijd in een haast onmerkbare overgliding uit het tijdelijk naar het eeuwig leven. (cited Steen, 130).

[In the middle of his work, God took him away at the age of 76, without sickbed, without a struggle, in an almost unnoticeable gliding over from out of the temporal towards eternal life]

Van Eeden also uses the expression "gliding" to refer to death in *Het Lied van Schijn en Wezen*:

vergleden slechts is 't Leven
van stof tot stof, waaruit zijn schoonheid blonk
als licht uit vensters. (Lied, II, V, 50)

[Life has merely glided over,
dust to dust, from out of which its beauty shone
like light out from out of windows]
[my translation]

With strong intuitive power, van Eeden can often say very tender, very wise and very beautiful things. But without another, higher light no one can give guidance, no one can give peace to the soul.

Characteristic here is a quotation from Kloos, the pantheistic hater of Christ, in his judgment of Frederik v. Eeden's *Kleine Johannes*⁴⁴

But because of this, this book shall also be enjoyed by all those who find themselves in a mess, by those with emotional natures, whose passion rises to their brains and who then throw themselves against life with all the wildness of their temperament.....*“through all finally, who never can come to clarity with themselves regarding the place that they take in this world full of mysteries.”*

That's what Kloos said, he who himself could find no peace—the isolated, degenerate artist with his large, melancholy eyes, who once had sung:

God is in eenvoud van spontane woorden,
 In zelfgenoegzame muziekakkoorden,
 In 't hart, dat in zich zelf zijn glorie vindt,
 God is in zonneschijn en mededoogen,
 In klaren azuurglans van onwetende oogen,
 In 't luid uitlachen van het schuld'loos kind.

[God is in the simplicity of spontaneous words,
 In self-sufficient chords of music,
 In the heart, which finds its glory in itself,
 God is in sunshine and compassion,
 In the clear azure glance of unknowing eyes,
 In the loud laughter of the innocent child.]
 [my translation]

It is just through this restless, this continual seeking of van Eeden's temperament that we can understand for ourselves his high estimation of the Indian religion, typified in its perfect equilibrium, in the pure calm squat stone images of the Buddha. And now the next image that appears to my eye is the beloved image of van Eeden, the Lotus flower, the Buddhist symbol of the emanation from the absolute and the return to it of the human life, which can only drink peace and eternal rest in the cool waters of death.

⁴⁴ 14 Jaren literatuurgeschiedenis

A sad [morne] twilight hangs over van Eeden's life, a cloud of tragedy; he is always seeking, but a world harmony always evades him. This, too is found in the new mystics, the reaching out of their hands towards an eternal Being, a self-sufficient God.

Maeterlinck spoke of Him in stammering words, dark and symbolic, the Mystery in the great vagueness of his longing. He said that his figures could suddenly weep from *angst*, just like the blind figures in his work *les Aveugles* [the Blind] when they feel the approach of the Invisible Dead.

And yet Van Eeden gave us more than Maeterlinck. Maeterlinck gave mystical affectations of beauty; he was, as Dr. Van Nes⁴⁵ has remarked, "the poet of Fear." Van Eeden gave us his whole life, his most intimate movements and most powerful struggles and the admonishing voice of Johannes Viator must strike us as that of a high, however completely erring soul:

The appearance of these things is desire, but this is base deception; the true essence is sacrifice and great renunciation. All their blessedness the blessedness of sacrifice, all their happiness devotion.

And each supposes his little God to be worth serving above all others, and the worshippers of science and of art are proud and name their God the Only One.

But I say—and I would gladly die after saying this, if only it might roll out over all people and fall again on their heads and become firmly attached in the hearts of all humanity—there is One above all of these, which are only apparent gods and idols. I feel His Being [Wezen] in me. But I do not ask for what goal ahead, or what cause behind, which are thoughts of humans and are not from Him.

These words are reminiscent of the *Gitanjali* [Wij-zangen] of Rabindranath Tagore⁴⁶ the great poet from the Indian coast.

Tagore, the sympathetic, serious old man, the minister of the people. Tagore, of wide and tranquil visage, the kingly.

Tagore, the priest-artist, giving to all his words a religious sound.

⁴⁵ Dr. v. Nes, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

⁴⁶ Note by JGF: Van Eeden was instrumental in introducing Tagore to the Dutch public. Van Eeden translated some of Tagore's works into Dutch, especially Tagore's *Gitanjali*, which was translated under the title *Wij-Zangen*.

Already the religious sonority of his songs has rolled far over the world,⁴⁷ and we feel it, also for us here at home, where van Eeden has made his *Gitanjali* known. Tagore's mysticism, which finds its purest echo in van Eeden, seizes hold on the human soul.

The cold glitter of the artist [van Eeden] with his velvet jacket and eccentric long hair, his unnatural motions of speech and his egocentric worldview, all fade in the light of the poet-seer.

And a voice comes to Christians, who view all of this in a cold and unmoved way, leaving art for others to do: For whom shall the future be? For Christ or the spirit of error? And if Christianity now remains silent, now when the time seems ripe for true religious art, then its enemy shall come with the noise of wings and great power and draw away the world from her King. And that shall be the just punishment of heaven for our inert, most Christian indifference.

Amsterdam, November 27, 1914.

H.D.

⁴⁷ Note by JGF: Tagore made a great impact on the Dutch public, including neo-calvinists. For example, K. Schilder wrote several articles criticizing Tagore. See Schilder: "Tagore in Nederland" [Tagore in the Netherlands] <http://www.neocalvinisme.nl/ks/gkg/ksgkg080201.html>, "Tagore en Dr. Veltenaar," <http://www.neocalvinisme.nl/ks/gkg/ksgkg080300.html>, "De Wijzen van het Oosten en het Woord van God" [The Wisdom of the East and the Word of God] <http://www.neocalvinisme.nl/ks/prk/ksmg1035.html> and "De Boeddhistische Christus" [The Buddhist Christ]. This last article also criticizes Henri Borel. It is found at <http://www.neocalvinisme.nl/ks/dichters/ksdichters04.html>.