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The World as Whodunit: Jan Woltjer and His Logo-Centric Philosophy in the Early Years of the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam

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Introduction

If a Christian philosopher nowadays would be asked to name a twentieth-century Calvinist philosopher at the *Vrije Universiteit* (VU) in Amsterdam,[1] the answer probably would be Herman Dooyeweerd (1894–1977).[2] However, Dooyeweerd did not belong to the generation of Abraham Kuyper, who founded the VU in 1880. Was the first generation of Dutch neo-Calvinists at the VU active in constructing a Christian philosophy? The answer is yes. The classicist Jan Woltjer, appointed at the VU in 1881, was the first professor to work vigorously to develop such a philosophy, over the course of more than thirty years—a coherent philosophy fitting both his neo-Calvinist views and the broader cultural context.[3] Dooyeweerd mentions, and

[1] Translated "Free University Amsterdam," now known as: VU University Amsterdam.

[2] On Dooyeweerd, see J. Chaplin, *Herman Dooyeweerd: Christian Philosopher of State and Civil Society* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011); M. E. Verburg, *Herman Dooyeweerd: The Life and Work of a Christian Philosopher*, trans. and ed. H. D. Morton and H. Van Dyke (Jordan Station, ON: Paideia Press, 2015).

[3] Nathan D. Shannon mentions "the theological and the cultural" as aspects or emphases of neo-Calvinism, a "dual interest" still recognizable in its heirs, e.g., in the thought of Nicholas Wolterstorff. See his *Shalom and the Ethics of Belief: Nicholas Wolterstorff's Theory of Situated Rationality* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2015), 5n13.

criticizes, *three* foundational thinkers of the VU: Abraham Kuyper, Herman Bavinck—and Woltjer.[4] In the twenty-first century, interest in the theologians Kuyper and Bavinck is still flourishing. Nicholas Wolterstorff, for example, acknowledges the formative influence of Kuyper during his personal and intellectual development.[5] Thus, a first reason to pay attention to Woltjer is, quite straightforwardly, his forgotten role as the philosopher who most explicitly hammered out a Christian philosophy in the early years of the VU.

After Woltjer's death it took almost ten years before Herman Dooyeweerd and Dirk H. Th. Vollenhoven, appointed at the same university in 1926, began working systematically to flesh out their own version of a Christian philosophy. The brothers-in-law[6] are rightly credited as being the originators of the "Cosmonomic Philosophy" (*Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee*), also known as Calvinist or Reformational Philosophy, or the "Amsterdam School." Both men began their studies at the VU, Vollenhoven in theology *and* in the humanities (1911), and Dooyeweerd in law (1912).

Although Vollenhoven prepared himself for the pulpit, he was the first to commit himself to contributing to philosophy as a systematic academic discipline. According to him, Christians had a calling to find a way to develop their own positions in all academic disciplines, philosophy included. The first step for him was his doctoral thesis on the philosophical foundations of mathematics "from a theistic

[4] See, for example, his *Reformation and Scholasticism in Philosophy*, vol. 2, *The Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea and the Scholastic Tradition in Christian Thought*, ed. Lyn Boliek, Ralph Vunderink, and Harry Van Dyke, trans. Magnus Verbrugge (Grand Rapids: Paideia Press, 2013), 83 ("The Reformed thinkers Kuyper, Woltjer, and Bavinck, ..."). Cf. note 47 below.

[5] Nicholas Wolterstorff, "The Grace That Shaped My Life," in his *Hearing the Call: Liturgy, Justice, Church, and World*, ed. Mark R. Gornik and Gregory Thompson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 1–19, esp. 10–11 ("a fascinatingly 'postmodern' perspective"; 11). For other recent work explicitly referring to Kuyper and Bavinck, see notes 8 and 50, and James K. Smith, *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), xiii ("my confreres in the Reformed tradition").

[6] Vollenhoven married one of Dooyeweerd's sisters in 1918.

point of view."[7] Of course, Vollenhoven did not start his philosophical career in a vacuum. His mentor during this doctoral research was Jan Woltjer, who was already sixty-five years old. After Woltjer's death, the final stage of this tutelage was taken over by the theologian Willem Geesink, who focused on ethics but had lectured in philosophy for some years. There were other theologians as well who contributed to the philosophical developments during the first decades of the VU, as shown in the *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology* by founder Abraham Kuyper, lectures by Philippus Hoedemaker, and several publications by Herman Bavinck, who moved to Amsterdam in 1902.[8]

Who is this little-known Jan Woltjer? By which philosophical ideas did he shape the VU as a learning environment, and how did his views interact with those of Kuyper himself? How did his successors at the VU react to his perspective, and why do his views matter for twenty-first-century readers?

I shall first describe the life of Woltjer (sections 2 and 3). I will then outline his philosophical thought by summarizing his ontology (4), his anthropology (5, 6) and his epistemology (7, 8). Finally, I will focus on the reception of his *Logos*-philosophy, looking to his colleague and contemporary Kuyper, to his philosophical heirs Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd and finally to his readership in the twenty-first century (9, 10, 11). In this last (11th) section I return to the reasons why studying Woltjer's works is relevant for today. I have already alluded to the importance of his historical role. A second reason is the quality of Woltjer's intellectual work. One example, explained in section 11, is his use of the metaphor of the machine in order to illustrate the

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[7] "De Wijsbegeerte der Wiskunde van Theïstisch Standpunt" (Amsterdam: Van Soest, 1918), accessed July 17, 2018, http://dare.ubvu.vu.nl/handle/1871/15427. Vollenhoven uses the label "theism" to denote a philosophy that can be called a Christian philosophy ("een wijsbegeerte die God wil dat we hebben zullen").

[8] For Kuyper and Bavinck, see James D. Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013). For Kuyper, Bavinck, Geesink, and Hoedemaker, see Henk E. S. Woldring, *Een Handvol Filosofen: Geschiedenis van de Filosofiebeoefening aan de Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam van 1880–2012* [A bunch of philosophers: History of the philosophical practice at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, 1880–2012] (Hilversum: Verloren, 2013; not yet translated into English).

combination of a mechanical and a teleological view of the world. The contemporary relevance of this combination is revealed in the controversy when Thomas Nagel published his *Mind and Cosmos* in 2012.[9]

Jan Woltjer (1849–1917): His Early Years

Jan Woltjer grew up in Groningen, a university city in the northern Netherlands. His father (a baker) and mother had five children, Jan Woltjer being the second. Employed as teaching assistant in a primary school, Woltjer used his evenings to study German, French, mathematics, and so on—until he was finally admitted to the University of Groningen for classical studies in 1872. During this period, he was in touch with the "Ethical" theologians D. Chantepie de la Saussaye and J. J. P. Valeton Sr. "Ethical" theologians usually accepted the challenge of modernity, but instead of answering it with a theoretical and antithetical orthodoxy, they mixed a modest dose of historical-critical scriptural awareness with both a more-or-less traditional Christ-centered theology and a strong emphasis on practical living as Christians (hence: "Ethical"). When the neo-Calvinists and the Ethical movement in the Dutch context subsequently took different paths on both the theological and political planes, it became clear that Woltjer identified himself with Kuyper's neo-Calvinism. However, Woltjer's faithful personal life and Christ-oriented professional work retained elements and emphases that echoed his acquaintance with these Ethical theologians. Nevertheless, he consciously kept clear of a literary criticism that, in his view, approached biblical and also classical sources with an unreasonably distrusting attitude resulting in a tendency to produce unwarranted textual emendations.

Woltjer completed his classical studies in 1877 with the defense of a doctoral thesis in which he compared the philosophical thought of the Latin poet Lucretius to that of the Greek philosopher Epicurus.[10] Lucretius in particular counts as one of the fathers of (modern)

[9] See note 55. For its reception see, e.g., https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2013/jan/04/most-despised-science-book-2012 (accessed July 19, 2018).

[10] Lucretius (99–c. 55 BC); Epicurus (341–270 BC).

materialism.[11] Thanks to this thesis[12] and other publications in classics, Woltjer gained international fame as a classicist during his lifetime.[13] Investigating philosophical sources for his thesis helped him to sharpen his own philosophical tools and insights, particularly as he approached the question of materialism versus idealism, one of the major worldview issues of his time.

Immediately after defending his doctoral thesis, Woltjer married Marchien Janssonius (1851–1919), a merchant's daughter who grew up in Groningen.[14] They had eight children, four of whom died in childhood (one daughter three months old, two daughters aged five and seven, and a son almost fourteen). Three sons and a daughter reached adulthood. All three sons had academic careers and became professors (one in classical studies, one in physics, and one in astronomy).

Jan Woltjer in Amsterdam: Neo-Calvinist Pioneer

While working as a secondary school teacher in Groningen, Woltjer was invited to accept a professorial post, teaching philosophy at the VU in the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy. He accepted this appointment. One year after this university opened its doors, Woltjer delivered his inaugural address (1881). He moved to Amsterdam, where he was also cofounder and rector of the *Gereformeerd Gymnasium*[15] and member of the board of the institution that trained primary

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[11] See for instance Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* (New York: Norton, 2011).

[12] Jan Woltjer, *Lucretii philosophia cum fontibus comparata* (Groningen: Noordhoff, 1877). In 1987 this thesis was selected for republication in the United States as one of fifty-two works on Greek and Roman philosophy published from 1600 onward: Jan Woltjer, *Lucretii philosophia cum fontibus comparata*, vol. 45 of *Greek and Roman Philosophy: A Fifty-Two Volume Reprint Set*, ed. Leonardo Tarán (New York: Garland, 1987).

[13] A positive review of his thesis was written by Lucretius scholar Hugo Purmann, "Woltjer, J., Lucretii philosophia cum fontibus comparata. Groningen 1877," *Jenaer Literaturzeitung* 30 (1879): 413–15.

[14] For her genealogical information, see http://www.pondes.nl/detail/i_o.php?inum=780371972 (accessed November 13, 2017).

[15] An academically oriented secondary school in Woltjer's denomination (the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*).

education teachers of the *Christelijk Nationaal Onderwijs* (Christian National Education). Over and above all this he became senator for the Anti-Revolutionary Party in 1902 until his death in 1917. Kuyper had already left the VU in 1901, moving to The Hague when he had become prime minister.

For more than twenty years Woltjer was the only professor in the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy. His son Rob Woltjer came to assist him, teaching Greek language and culture from 1904 onward. However, Jan Woltjer would remain the face of the faculty until his death, just as in the theological faculty Herman Bavinck was the towering figure from 1902 onward.

Woltjer devoted most of his academic orations and one of his lecture series, *Encyclopaedia Philologiae*, to philosophy. In these speeches and lectures he sought to build bridges between the human endeavor of philosophy and his Christian faith. Linking Calvinist convictions to cultural activities was typical for the neo-Calvinist setting in which he worked at the VU.[16] He digested classical, medieval, and modern philosophical traditions and also became acquainted with the way of thinking in Eastern worldviews and literature such as the Vedas. He began his philosophical work at the end of a century that fluctuated between idealism and materialism.

Woltjer responds to issues that he derives from developments both in his lifetime and at the nascent VU. He seeks to warrant the Christian contents of his philosophy by incorporating from the start the New Testament passages about Jesus Christ as the divine *Logos*. This *Logos* is actively involved in the creation and sustaining of the world: "In the beginning was the *Logos*." This point of departure guides his thinking about the relation between God, the *Logos* and the world (ontology), about human beings as *imago dei* (anthropology), and about the fact that the world is knowable to human beings (epistemology).

The *Logos*-related main lines in Woltjer's ontology, anthropology, and epistemology cohere. The sum total of these main lines functions as a framework that carries his philosophy as a whole. Because this *Logos*-orientation is distinctive in Woltjer's philosophical thought, one can characterize his philosophy as a "*Logos*-philosophy." In fact, this *Logos*-oriented framework can be considered as characteristic for the *Logo-centric* start of the VU itself, especially for its epistemological

[16] See note 3.

stance. Although Woltjer gave this *Logos*-orientation its most elaborate philosophical clothing, both Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck built on this philosophical framework.

The World: Woltjer's Ontology

As far as his metaphysics or ontology is concerned, Woltjer describes himself as both realist and idealist. His ontology can be categorized under the umbrella of *ontic* or *metaphysical realism.* Someone who adheres to realism acknowledges the existence of objects, independent of our experience (or knowledge) of them, these objects having properties and entering into relations "independently of the concepts with which we understand them or of the language with which we describe them."[17] Woltjer bases his realist view on the givenness of a created world—a world endowed with properties by the Creator before human beings could ever perceive them.

Properties are influences that things exert on one another or on an observing subject.[18] By this position

(a) Woltjer acknowledges the active role of a perceiver during the process of the *perception* of properties;

(b) he nevertheless considers the external things as bearers of these properties, as things that *are* as we perceive them; and,

(c) because Kant imagines a thing to exist *as it is* without any relation to a knowing person, Woltjer declares this Kantian "Ding an sich" to be a misleading illusion, nonsense ("onzin").[19]

More specifically, this relatedness of the properties perceived and the perceiver has interesting consequences for Woltjer's view of the

[17] Panayot Butchvarov, "metaphysical realism," in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy,* ed. Robert Audi, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), s.v.

[18] Jan Woltjer, *Encyclopaedia der Philologie* (unpublished MS by student J. J. Koopmans), 370.

[19] Jan Woltjer, "Ideëel en Reëel" [Ideal and Real], in *Verzamelde Redevoeringen en Verhandelingen* [*Collected Discourses and Treatises*] (Amsterdam: De Standaard, 1931), 178–235; "onzin": 199.

order of reality. In the mutual relationships among external things, that is, in their more-or-less fixed connections and processes, a person can perceive patterns and regularities, which strike his or her mind as ordered.[20] These patterns are an extramental reality, that is, external to the mind of the perceiver—a reality that can be called "order" by a human being. Even reality as a whole, as we know it, can be called "ordered" because of these patterns. Woltjer would probably agree with a further explanation here, namely that this label, "ordered," for our universe does not exclude its being structured in part by chaotic events or pattern formation or by chaotic (random) processes. Even in *evil* behavior, patterns or order can be detected.

At the same time, Woltjer can be called an *ontic idealist.* In his view, "reality as we understand it reflects the workings of mind."[21] So primacy is given to the immaterial over the material. For Woltjer this immateriality and its primacy adhere, more specifically, to ideas residing in the divine *Logos.* By this *Logos* (the Word) God created the world. Woltjer uses the term *Logos* to refer primarily to the personal divine being that is mentioned in the Prologue of the Gospel of John—Jesus Christ. Interpreting what is meant by this divine *Logos,* Woltjer distinguishes between God's *inner* thought or ideas and his *outward* speech (as in the pronouncements of creation in Genesis 1). His will is included in the *Logos,* too, hence relating both to God's thought and speech. Thus this will encompasses both the indwelling Counsel (Dutch: *Raad*) of God with its "divine-immanent" decrees, and his external, outward-directed powers by which he created and sustains the world and its diversity.

Woltjer acknowledges a creation by God's *speech.* According to him, this medium of divine speech brings to mind (a) God's sovereign, powerful and effective authority by which the world received its existence, features and dynamics; and (b) a kind of divine self-revelation, the *expression* of the Creator about who he is—the Creator about whom even now the created world speaks (see, for example, Psalm 19, "the heavens declare his glory"). Human beings (see section 5 below) are created to react positively to this ongoing speech of the world by praising the Creator. In that specific way God's speech

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[20] See Del Ratzsch, *Nature, Design, and Science: The Status of Design in Natural Science* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 3, 14–15.

[21] Nicholas Rescher, "idealism," *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy.*

returns to himself, the world echoing the creative divine speech by means of human voices.

By his emphasis on the expression of ideas in *matter,* Woltjer distances himself from an absolute idealism that spiritualizes matter[22] and from different kinds of pantheism. Woltjer does distinguish between matter and (divine) mind. According to him, the Creator has expressed in *material* things *archetypal* ideas originally residing in his *inner Logos*—as if these things are words or sculptures in which human beings perceive immanent principles or *ectypal* ideas. For Woltjer this is the case for both inorganic things, even basic constituents of matter, and organic things, both individual ones and their kinds. So the archetypal ideas in the divine mind are not restricted to ideas of kinds, species, or *genera. Everything* originally occurred in the mind of God. Woltjer cites Luther who said, "What is the world but speech by God?"[23]

Physical entities such as stone, metals, or sand do not have individuality but they can be distinguished from each other; they do have properties designed by the Creator. According to Woltjer, even the *prima materia,* considered to be formless matter by ancient philosophers, does have properties—properties specially chosen by God to make the whole material world out of it. The more complex kingdoms—the plant kingdom, the animal kingdom, and finally the kingdom of humankind—incrementally show a rise in the importance of individuality. Already in case of the kingdom of plants, one can appreciate a single deep red tulip as a special exemplar of its species. In the animal kingdom, each individual dog has its own character, for example, by having moods that flowers do not have. But in the "top kingdom" of human beings, a person has his or her own characteristic personality that makes that person recognizable as an individual.

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[22] As George Berkeley does. See for instance *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge,* ed. Jonathan Dancy, Oxford Philosophical Texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 32. (The Principles of Human Knowledge, section 9: "[T]he very notion of what is called MATTER or CORPOREAL SUBSTANCE, involves a contradiction in it"; capitalization original.)

[23] The words "*verbum Dei a Deo prolatum*" (252) are cited via Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology,* vol. 1 (London: Nelson, 1871), 559 [sec. iv.x.iii]. Jan Woltjer, "Het Wezen der Materie" [The Essence of Matter], in *Verzamelde Redevoeringen en Verhandelingen* (Amsterdam: De Standaard, 1931), 236–57.

Luther's simile of the world as speech of course echoes the Gospel of John's Prologue, "In the beginning was the Word"—God's *Logos* by which everything was made. By this speech God gave a material, visible, sensible form to his ideas about all these kingdoms, about "the earth and everything in it." If this is indeed the case, the obvious question is: What about evil events or even evil *beings* in the world? Are these ideas of God that have come to expression, too? We will return to this topic at the end of section 7, but first will follow Woltjer's train of thought. For him the first consequence of a creation by speech is a created universe-*as*-speech. Musing about the meaning of that "framing" of our universe precedes any inquiry into the nature and origin of evil. Interpreting the cosmos as somehow speaking to humankind recasts our world into a kind of novel—a world-novel, not only created *by* God, but at the same time a novel *about* him: a "whodunit" with a *positive* act at the beginning instead of a crime.

Within this conception of the world, one of Woltjer's primary questions is: *Who* is listening to this created world-as-speech, to this kind of "whodunit"? Who is "reading" the world? Or better: Who is its *intended* addressee? Woltjer answers: human beings. This answer triggers a subsequent question: *How* are human beings enabled to decipher this speech?

Humankind (I): Woltjer's Anthropology

In his anthropology, too, the human *logos* (not capitalized) is a central idea for Woltjer. The human *logos* resembles the divine *Logos*. Like the divine *Logos* it consists of an *inner logos* (capable of having [clear] thoughts and making [ethically sound] decisions) and an *outward logos* (capable of human discourse, primarily speech; and secondarily, written texts). This human inward and outward *logos*, however, is *not* divine.

With the *inner logos* Woltjer refers to the deepest levels of human spiritual, that is, for him, immaterial life. Referring to these deepest levels he can equate *logos* with *heart* or *spirit* or the deepest "I." He is dualistic in the sense that he distinguishes a material body and a nonmaterial soul (spirit). However, he is primarily monistic; monistic in the sense that the *heart* or *logos* (or the deepest "I") is the center of human spiritual life, which in turn is made visible, sensible, to the world outside by the body. Not condescendingly, he calls the human body the instrument of the human spirit. The soul interacts with

the body in a two-directional, inner-outer interaction. They belong together; although a human soul can live without its body (as it does, at least temporarily, after death, according to Woltjer). For two reasons Woltjer's anthropological monism can be considered as more fundamental than his anthropological dualism: (1) body and soul have their unity and their center in the *heart*, the "I"; and (2) a unified, embodied existence is the ultimate destiny for human beings.

The body is the part by which the human being connects to the material world. The spirit or soul is the part that human beings have in common with spiritual, immaterial, beings—including God. According to Woltjer the human soul is a specific type of soul, a soul in which a *logos* functions, unlike in animal souls. Because of this *logos*-containing and *logos*-controlled human soul, a human being is able to function as God's image. Notice that Woltjer is not saying that the human soul, spirit, mind—let alone the faculty of reason—*is* God's image, or that this image is "in" that part or side of a human being. Woltjer would agree that, because human beings are meant to image God, the human *logos* may be called the image of the *Logos* of his Creator. At the same time, he is aware that the divine *Logos*, identified with Jesus Christ, is God himself at the same time. Furthermore, according to Woltjer it is the whole of a human being, or even the human race altogether, that images God. So the human image of God should not be restricted to some part or faculty of a human being, or its functioning.

Human beings are *enabled* to display the divine image *by* the special endowment of the human soul with an intellectual faculty. This faculty, the *logos*, which obviously exceeds animal instincts and limited forms of reasoning, is a prerequisite for intelligence and decision-making, ethical decision-making included. As reason and heart, the *logos* is a rational *and* moral faculty. The human body makes visible how the human *logos* functions. This visibility enables fellow human beings (or even animals) to observe the behavior of human beings who are created as God's image. Although Woltjer has a wider view of the human *logos*, *logos* in its most restricted but characteristic sense (according to Woltjer) is the *intellect*, that is, the type of thinking that has an integrating, synthesizing function; it combines elements within consciousness into "ideas." This intellect is typical of the *inner logos* of a human being, in contradistinction to the limited spiritual capacities of animals. Insofar as the will has its source in the *(inner) logos*, he can speak about a *reasonable will*. At times, Woltjer uses *(inner) logos*

to refer to the sum total of the higher human spiritual faculties, too: intellect, reason, imagination, and intuition all together. Sometimes he uses *logos* to refer to the human soul as a whole, in contradistinction to the soul of animals: the soul of human beings is typically a *logos*, endowed with these higher spiritual or mental functions. Animals do have souls, but the soul of an animal is not a *logos*.

To human faculties or functions Woltjer applies a terminology of *higher* and *lower*, for example, a higher or lower faculty of feeling. Reason should have preeminence over the other spiritual faculties, (here is that autonomy of reason again) and over the corporeal faculties of human beings. However, compared to a classical view of humankind (comprising *logos*, *thumos*, and *pathos*[24]) it is striking that Woltjer does not restrict himself to this scheme of *higher* and *lower*, for at the same time he utilizes the distinction of *inner* and *outer*. The heart as the innermost center of a human being has the highest status as "wellspring of life" (Prov. 4:23); it is the source of the expressions of life. The human body is the *outward* expression of the spirit or soul. Within the conscious levels of the human spirit, intellect and reason are the highest functions, meant to produce clarity and coherence of thought. However, the human *logos* or spirit also consists of layers deeper than consciousness—that is, more *inward* and less conscious—and those layers influence conscious thinking, outward behavior, and so on. Woltjer speaks appreciatively about the influence of a *higher* faculty of feeling located in the innermost part of the human being, in the heart. This faculty is a source of intuitions, for example.

In this conception, Woltjer's anthropology shows affinities with a Romantic, *expressivist* view of humanity.[25] An analogous scheme of

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[24] Reason, will (life's energy) and feeling (emotional life); corresponding to head, heart, and belly.

[25] For example, see Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (Darmstadt: Joseph Melzer, 1966), 139: "Sie [die Seele] ruft aus dem Chaos der Dinge, die sie umgeben, eine Gestalt hervor, (...) und so schafft sie durch innere Macht aus dem Vielen ein Eins, das ihr allein zugehöret." [The soul summons a form out of the chaos of things around her, (...) and so she creates by inner power out of the many a one that belongs to her alone.] For a discussion of the expressivism of Herder (1744–1803), German philosopher, theologian, man of letters, and exponent of German Romanticism, see Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The*

inner and *outer* is played out in the distinction between the *inner* and the *outward logos*. He describes corporeal and spiritual faculties as functions of the material body and as functions of the soul respectively. The body is outward and visible, the soul inward and invisible, having the "I" (the heart) as its center.

Humankind (2): Interconnected, albeit Fractured

Woltjer describes the human *logos* primarily as the *logos* common to humankind. Although the faculty of the *logos* for each human being is individually unique because each person is gifted differently, all human beings are characterized by the display of a *similar logos*. Furthermore, by this shared *logos* they are not only able to communicate with each other, but even with posterity, leaving to us, as Woltjer often says, *monuments* and *documents* (artifacts and records). For this reason, Woltjer considers the *logos of humanity*, rather than the individual *logos*, to be the subject of scientific investigation and discussion.

Nevertheless, this *logos* is not an independent entity (adding one to the total number of human *logoi*). Human beings exert influences on one another in several ways, not the least by their *outward logos* (speech and text). By these influences on each other, human beings possess the ability to understand each other and to build up a spiritual unity. Humankind, according to Woltjer, is united by its common corporeal descent, but is meant to form a spiritual unity as well. Corporeally the human "tree" is expanding more and more, and spiritually, by mutual communicative interaction, human beings aspire to integrate their knowledge of the world in which they coexist.

That being said, Woltjer is aware of the fact that this spiritual unity is still fractured because of evil and such impediments as enmities, differing languages, and so forth. In his account of this fractured spiritual unity of humanity, Woltjer distinguishes the *logos* of one

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Making of the Modern Identity (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 368–69, 374–76, 378. Woltjer is unique neither in his conscious or unconscious adoption of this expressivism nor in his combination of the inner-outer scheme together with higher and lower functions of the soul. I thank John Bolt for pointing me to Herman Bavinck's use of similar categories in his *Beginselen der Psychologie* [Principles of Psychology] (Kampen: Kok, 1923), e.g., 37–43.

people or language area from that of other peoples or language areas. Each *logos* develops itself and has distinctive characteristics in specific periods. This being the case for each people or nation, or for a more encompassing cultural sphere (e.g., "the West"), Woltjer can speak of a *tijdgeest,* the "spirit of an age." On the one hand, such a "spirit" is not an additional spirit or *logos,* differing from and added to the total number of all the individual human *logoi* that share a specific cultural type in a specific period. On the other hand, the *logos* of a people or the "spirit of an age" is not just a shorthand or metaphor for the sum total of what "in fact" are individual *logoi.* They genuinely work together in their cultural and intellectual efforts. This collective exchange and collaboration results in cultural expressions that differ for different collectivities (peoples, races, cultural spheres). An example of this collaboration is the Greek political and philosophical culture, which reached its apex with Plato (also highly regarded by Woltjer) and Aristotle. The community of thought that was thus established, either through dialoguing between philosophers or through indirect influences (fragments, testimonies, pupils), resulted in a cultural realm in which reasoning and rhetorical skills flourished. New generations of intellectuals or politicians were raised within this sphere, which was without parallel in Susa or Carthage. Of course, this cultural sphere kept influencing world history, primarily the Hellenistic era beginning with Alexander the Great, and the Roman Empire, but its typical Greek setting with its emphases on virtue, citizenship, and (corporeal) beauty gradually was supplanted by other developments.[26]

Just as individuals each have a similar human *logos* but are uniquely gifted, so different cultural spheres each have a set of shared traits in their cultural expressions. These traits are characteristic for each culture (people, race). They can change over time and can be seen and read especially in the artifacts and records that this specific culture produced in a certain period.

Woltjer stresses that within a certain period of world history different cultural spheres do not influence each other to the same extent. In a given period a specific people, race, or polity can have a leading position, as for example the Roman Empire in its time. Afterward

[26] For a view emphasizing continuity, see Pierre Hadot, *What Is Ancient Philosophy?* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002 [orig. fr. 1995]), 92–95.

this leading position can be taken over by another empire with its own cultural vision.

So, human beings individually and collectively "read" the speech of their world, including the artifacts and records of their predecessors. By their (bodily) senses and (spiritual) intelligence they have been provided with the capability to decipher this speech of the world, which reveals the minds of their contemporaries, their forbears—and the divine mind to which the natural world can be ascribed. But how does Woltjer describe the development of our knowledge of the world and, by that, our knowledge of "other minds," in more detail?

Knowing the World (I): Woltjer's Epistemology

Woltjer aims at a "Christian epistemology." In his epistemology he is a realist: no naïve or "direct" realist[27] who considers the human mind as a "mirror" in which the external world is reflected, but who ignores the role of the knowing subjects in their knowledge construction. However, he is an *epistemic realist* in the sense that he does acknowledge a relationship between human knowledge (intra-mental) and the real world (extra-mental). Within this type of realism he even emphasizes that this relationship is a relationship of *correspondence*: there is some kind of similarity between what is intra-mental and what is extra-mental. Ultimately, this correspondence is founded on the confession that God is the Creator of both the world and of the human beings who are enabled to know this world. At the same time, within this *epistemic realism* he accepts the Kantian insight that the knowing subject by his or her specific constitution and activity has a role in the construction of his or her knowledge of the object to be known. Human beings have to use their senses to perceive the world. These senses differ from senses of animals, or from X-rays.[28] Human individuals differ from each other in their perceptive abilities.

In his epistemology Woltjer calls himself an *idealist*, too, tracing reality back to workings of mind, and so assigning those workings a primacy above the material world. *Divine ideas* are ontologically prior

[27] For more on "direct realism" (and "representative realism," another type of what I call *epistemic realism*—as distinct from *metaphysical realism*, mentioned in section 4 above), see Fred Dretske, "perception," *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*.

[28] Discovered in 1895/1896 by Röntgen as mentioned by Woltjer himself.

to their material expression, and often this holds for human ideas, too. But Woltjer's position can be described in more detail. On the one hand, he calls his epistemology a kind of *transcendental idealism*, because, according to him, knowledge of objects is made possible because something precedes it—that is, ideas. These ideas reside in the mind of God—a view in which Woltjer follows St. Augustine. So these ideas are not only a transcendental condition for the knowing process, but they also have a transcendent nature. These divine ideas have an immaterial reality, but then are materialized in the things of this world: a material reality is added to them. Human beings can know these things, that is, form true ideas about them in their own minds, by observing them and then processing the sense data by abstraction and other mental activities. This mental activity is directed toward getting an "idea" of the individual thing being observed, or about some class of them. This human idea, according to Woltjer, corresponds to the original divine idea. To be sure, this correspondence does not imply that there is no difference between divine ideas within the mind of the Creator himself and human ideas which reside within the created minds of created human beings.

On the other hand, Woltjer characterizes his epistemology, in opposition to Kantian idealism, as a type of realism, *transcendental realism*. Knowledge of things is dependent not only on the nature of the human faculty of knowing, but also on the nature of the *real*, extra-mental things themselves.[29] Woltjer does not exclude the knowability of the world *as it is*, as Kant does when he denies that we are able to know the "things in themselves."[30] Woltjer interprets Kant as denying the real, extra-mental existence of time and space as well. Woltjer suggests that Kant should have restricted himself to the assertion that we cannot be *sure* about this.[31]

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[29] Woltjer, "Ideëel en Reëel" [Ideal and Real], in *Verzamelde Redevoeringen en Verhandelingen*, 178–235; "hun eigen aard, onafhankelijk van onze waarneming": 202n1.

[30] Like his contemporaries, Woltjer considers *The Critique of Pure Reason* as Kant's most important work.

[31] Woltjer, "Ideëel en Reëel" [Ideal and Real], in *Verzamelde Redevoeringen en Verhandelingen*, 178–235; "Van het niet *kunnen kennen* ... besluit hij tot het niet *zijn*": 203 (italics original). In Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant argues that we can have knowledge (certainty) about a number of things that we cannot know (for sure) on the basis of our theoretical reason.

The knowability of material things, Woltjer argues, is based on both (a) the *distinction* between the human mind (spirit) and the material world, and (b) the *similarity* of the ideas discernable in things and those formed in the human mind. By means of the body, humanity is connected to the material world. However, this connection does not imply that things are able to *cause* representations or knowledge in the mind via a causal sequence of impressions on the senses, transferred to the brain by nerves. Impressions, representations, and concepts are either contents of the human consciousness or they remain or descend into the subconscious layers of the mind. In comparison to the material world, impressions belong to a different, spiritual order, essentially independent of the material world. The human mind is not a *tabula rasa*, a blank tablet, on which the world writes its impressions. Woltjer does not presuppose innate ideas (the *tabula* is blank in this respect), but he does acknowledge innate "forms of consciousness" in the human mind, by which the human mind is actively—according to Woltjer re-actively, in reaction to sense experience—involved in the formation of knowledge.[32]

The formation of knowledge is possible because the human faculty of knowing is able to construct representations, concepts, ideas on the basis of sense impressions, and knowledge in the form of judgments consisting of concepts and ideas. Resulting ideas, if correctly formed, are similar to the ideas that the Creator had *pre-thought* when he made things. So a human being is thinking God's thoughts *after* him ("after-thought"). Human beings do not have direct access to God's thoughts, but when they observe for example planetary movements or organic growth, they can "think after" these processes.[33]

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[32] Here Woltjer is using Kant's work with appreciation, but not without adding corrections.

[33] Woltjer, "Ideëel en Reëel" [Ideal and Real], in *Verzamelde Redevoeringen en Verhandelingen*, 178–235; "nadenken": 210–11. For the relation between observation and thought Woltjer refers to the German physicist Heinrich Hertz (1857–1894), esp. the introduction of his *Prinzipien der Mechanik* [Principles of Mechanics; 1894–1895]. Recently John Bolt (accessed June 5, 2018, http://henrycenter.tiu.edu/2018/01/herman-bavinck-as-a-man-of-science) pointed to similar views in Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003–2008), 2:245 ("The whole world is thus the realization of an idea of God"), 1:233 ("the intellect, which, itself originating in the Logos, discovers and recognizes the Logos in things").

By this "thinking after" (Dutch: *na-denken*), human beings are even able to make predictions about situations in the future, for example about these planetary movements. This "thinking after" is a kind of human reasoning, but the results do correspond to situations that result from natural, extra-mental processes.

Woltjer's Christian epistemology, however, is interested not only in an explanation of the possibility of human knowledge of the world but also in its purpose. Because of the depth of his discussion of purpose, its description requires another section.

Knowing the World (2): Knowing Its Author

Woltjer is not surprised that a human being is apt to suppose that behind the material things lies a mind that in a way is similar to that person's own—not unlike the way that language experts deciphering a cuneiform cylinder perceive its author as possessing a similar mind to their own. Woltjer compares the world and even every single thing to a book. Its letters are the sense impressions of the world. Human beings readily spell and combine them in a meaningful way, because the human *logos* has a *desire* or longing that always reaches out, ultimately, to the divine *Logos*. This deep desire is an aspect of what Calvin called a *sensus divinitatis*. This longing in human beings can and will be suppressed to a certain extent—this suppression can be called sin—but still manifests itself as a desire to know and to understand the world that we human beings encounter. This explains, Woltjer suggests, why human beings are curious by nature, as children usually are, and why they try to "read" their world. Indeed, spelling the letters, the sense impressions, may lead to ideas about the world in which human beings live. However, these ideas do not automatically lead human beings to muse on them and to conclude there is some specific *Author* of this *book* of the world, let alone to acknowledge such an Author. Why not? Woltjer acknowledges the aptness of the human mind for the investigation of natural things, but then he asks: "How much do the sparks of light that remain in the darkened *logos* of human beings shed their light on 'spiritual affairs'?"[34] Woltjer then starts to answer his own question.

[34] Jan Woltjer, "De Wetenschap van den Logos" [The Science of the *Logos* (of mankind)]," in *Verzamelde Redevoeringen en Verhandelingen* (Amsterdam: De Standaard, 1931), 1–46, esp. 31.

In this discussion Woltjer takes two steps that closely follow those of John Calvin. First he agrees with Calvin that in the human soul there are remnants left of the original purpose of human life, that is, to serve God. For example, human beings have not lost completely the awareness that our ultimate happiness lies in fellowship with God, and this awareness affects the use of our intelligence. Woltjer sees a remnant of this drive toward fellowship with God in a push he detects among researchers, to reach in their investigation and interpretation of data *beyond* "natural things" to some Author of these things. After all, some "natural things" *do* look ingenious.[35] Woltjer compares this drive to the unrest of our heart, mentioned by Augustine at the beginning of his *Confessions*. However, Woltjer takes a second step, following Calvin, when he adds that such remnants of the original purpose of human life are limited in their functioning. An important limitation is related to the discernment of reason in "spiritual affairs"—in contradistinction to "natural things." To clarify this limitation of the discernment of reason, Calvin introduces a further distinction within the discernment of reason when it comes to "spiritual affairs": the use of reason with respect to (1) knowledge of God and (2) knowledge of his redemptive grace toward us, and its use (3) to manage the affairs of life in this world with a certain degree of righteousness and order. So what is the problem with fallen human reason when it comes to "spiritual affairs," according to Calvin and Woltjer? Although human beings in the third area—that is, in handling the affairs of this world—show a certain competence in leading prudent, legally acceptable or even morally virtuous lives, a different situation occurs in the first two areas, the knowledge of God and his "redemptive grace": "With regard to the former two, but more properly the second, men otherwise the most ingenious are blinder than moles."[36] So whatever success human research of "natural things" has, and whatever competence human beings have in considering and leading prudent or even virtuous lives, these

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[35] See also Eugene Wigner, "The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Mathematics in the Natural Sciences," *Communications in Pure and Applied Mathematics* 13, no. 1 (1960): 1–14, esp. 2–3.

[36] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845), II.2.18, cited by Woltjer in Dutch and Latin (alongside, e.g., I.15.6) in the passage that is referred to in note 34.

abilities do not enable human beings to know God truthfully or to know how he restores human beings. The intuition that *points to* the truth does not *direct us toward* the truth, let alone that the truth will touch us, according to Calvin (and Woltjer).

This blindness in important "spiritual affairs" is one of the reasons that human beings need a Savior. Woltjer emphasizes the New Testament testimonies about Jesus Christ as the *Logos*, the Word of God, the source of life and light for human beings. These testimonies are the "foundation" on which Woltjer wants to "build" his "Christian philosophy." The human *logos* enlightens human beings, for example in choosing prudent paths in life and "natural" affairs. Jesus Christ has more enlightenment to offer. He inspired the prophets and other authors of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament. His Spirit inspired the apostles to spread the word from him and about him in the Roman Empire, a history partly told in the New Testament. For human beings not informed by this Word, that is by Jesus Christ himself, the *drive* that impels them to explore their world and to order their lives is a surprise that leaves its secret source unknown. Similarly, the results of this quest and of "life reformation" are surprising, if not awe-inspiring. The knowledge of the world in its most hidden atomic or cosmic recesses is itself awe-inspiring, even apart from the orderliness and (mathematical) beauty of the theoretical descriptions of them. The growing knowledge of the world led to an enormous rise in life expectancy and in the quality of life, especially in the nineteenth century that Woltjer witnessed. But it will not be easy to find an addressee to express this awe to, at least not a personal addressee other than human beings themselves. However, these human beings are living in a world that was there before they were there. So the secret of the surprises remains. What is their source, what is their purpose? What will human beings discover during their interactions with the world? This open-ended mystery resembles a whodunit. It is a *positive Whodunit* with the world itself as the mysterious fact—if I am allowed to use this somewhat un-Woltjerian, seemingly flippant, comparison in order to summarize his view of the epic search of humankind throughout history. No criminal investigation is involved, but a search for happiness, for the truth about being human, for the truth about the world and its Origin, its Author; a search for more

than just a cause.[37] In this way Woltjer understands the purpose of the search of humankind and of the sciences, including the search of philosophy itself.

A positive Whodunit. But what about "the" question of evil mentioned at the end of section 4? What are we to think about evil events or even evil *beings* in the world? Are these God's ideas that have come to expression, too? Woltjer does not ignore evil. He lost his elder brother, who died around the age of twenty-five (in 1872), and he and his wife lost four of their children. He does not interpret these deaths as something that belongs to "the best of all possible worlds" (as Leibniz calls it). Death is a sign of evil forces. However, he emphasizes the primacy of the goodness of creation before he acknowledges the radicality of evil. Beauty, order, and goodness can be experienced in a world in which evil, destruction, and ugliness are ingrained as destructive chemicals in a painting (Woltjer's metaphor). No human being is able to disentangle evil from the goodness of this created world—but one should not deny this enduring goodness. Human beings are created in the image of God, even if they do not live up to the expectations, or even act contrary to them.

Woltjer does not solve "the problem of evil"—as if the occurrence of evil, sin, pain, and death in a good world is an interesting puzzle to be *solved*. However, he wants to glorify the Creator as the Author of this world, the supreme Artist. His goodness, wisdom, and power fill and direct this world to his final aims, whatever has beset it. And whoever has ears and eyes—let him or her use them to read the world and praise its Author. The human drive to know the world, according to Woltjer, has its origin in the love for its Creator, and its destiny in the loving praise of him.

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[37] This last clarification ("Author" differs from "cause") comes not from Woltjer but from Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Philosophical Theology*, trans. A. W. Wood and G. M. Clark (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 131, 133 (2.3.1–2). Woltjer would agree with Kant here.

The Reception of Woltjer's *Logos*-Philosophy (I): Abraham Kuyper

A study of Woltjer's thought can lead to a positive appreciation of his unwavering *Logo-centric* construal of philosophy, that is, *Logo-centric* in a Christ-centered sense. At the same time his *logos* philosophy has given rise to a series of critical questions. However, before paying attention to the points of criticism specifically aimed at Woltjer by his philosophical heirs, Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd, an interesting topic is the relation between Abraham Kuyper and Woltjer.

In Kuyper's *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology* he refers to "my esteemed colleague, Dr. J. Woltjer." Kuyper adds, "Dr. Woltjer rightly perceived that from thinking we must go back to the *Logos* as [the faculty of] reason in man."[38] Furthermore, Woltjer assisted Kuyper as proofreader of most of the text of this encyclopedia.[39] Kuyper undoubtedly accepted corrections from Woltjer, but he did not indicate this in the text. However, Kuyper added a revealing footnote[40] to a section titled "Organic Relation between Subject and Object." In this section, Kuyper describes how Locke distinguishes between "moments" as elements of our perception (sense data), and "relations" between them, constructed by human thinking, and so "logical" by nature. In the long footnote that Kuyper added, this Lockean distinction of "moments" and "relations" is discussed in more detail. Although his name is not mentioned in the note, Woltjer may well have been the one who questioned Kuyper whether the section text was too schematic. Woltjer once wrote that he considers "matter" to be "logical" in a certain sense—not in the sense that matter is able to think, but in the sense that its existence and properties are the result of divine reason.[41] Woltjer would deny that only "relations" are "logical" by

[38] Abraham Kuyper, *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology: Its Principles,* trans. J. Hendrik de Vries (New York: C. Scribner, 1898), 194 [section 53; = rev. ed. 2008, 137] (italics added).

[39] Kuyper thanks Woltjer for this proofreading at the end of his preface to the third volume of the *Encyclopedia* in its Dutch edition, adding that he profited from several of Woltjer's remarks.

[40] Kuyper, *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology*, 75n1 [section 39; = rev. ed. 2008, 53n3].

[41] Woltjer, "Het Wezen der Materie" [The Essence of Matter], in *Verzamelde Redevoeringen en Verhandelingen*, 236–57; "logisch": 256.

nature and that only the "moments," that is, the sense data that we perceive, refer to supposedly *non-logical*, real entities outside our minds. Someone reading Locke's work today can conclude that Locke's use of the word *ideas* provides support for Woltjer's approach: Locke actually uses the term "ideas"—which are formed in human thought—to refer both to perceptible things (entities) and to relations between them.[42] The faculty of human reason is involved in the formation of *both* types of ideas: ideas in the human mind that correspond to external entities, and ideas in the human mind that correspond to relations between those entities. So the word *logical*—in the sense of: functioning within the human mind (*logos*)—not only applies to ideas of what Locke calls "relations" but also to ideas of what he calls "the things that are related." Woltjer would have added that these human ideas reflect divine ideas, expressed in the external, usually material, entities and their relations.

In the footnote, Kuyper rightly observes that at the end of the day, the general thrust of his argument is not fundamentally discredited by this more nuanced interpretation of Locke. With respect to the discernment of relations, Locke *does* give the mind a primary role (in its comparison of two or more things in some respect), while the same mind, in its discernment of ideas of things, should primarily focus on the ideas *in* the "real existence of things."[43]

My conclusion about the professional academic relation between Kuyper and Woltjer is that Kuyper in his train of thought in the realm of philosophy is neither totally independent from nor in great measure dependent on Woltjer. The reverse is also true: on the philosophical plane Woltjer is neither totally independent from nor in great measure dependent on Kuyper. However, there is an asymmetry in their intellectual relation, too. Woltjer has been won over by the *broad vision* of Kuyper, even to the point of joining his academic environment at the VU. In turn, in some of his projects Kuyper does use and acknowledge the *precision* that Woltjer adds to Kuyper's more visionary, usually strategic and sweeping writing style. Because they worked together at the VU for twenty years (from 1881 until 1901), it is difficult to neatly disentangle the way these two minds influenced each other. Broadly speaking, their philosophical positions are very

[42] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1995), 233–35 (II.xxv, esp. II.xxv.4).

[43] Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 234–36 (II.xxv.2, 8).

close with respect to the metaphysical *logos* tradition and in their mixed appreciation of Kant.

Despite this intellectual proximity, some tensions between the two thinkers did arise. This article is not the place to fully explore these tensions, but I do want to mention the instinctive support that Kuyper received as a populist politician. Woltjer, using a more classicist approach, suggested that intuitive feelings should be scrutinized and held in check by a clarifying use of reason, informing the human will.[44]

The Reception of Woltjer's *Logos*-Philosophy (2): Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd

Both Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd acknowledged Woltjer as one of the pioneers in the exploration and construction of a neo-Calvinist world and life view. Both of them were students at the *Gereformeerd Gymnasium*, where they would have been taught by Woltjer. Furthermore, Vollenhoven attended lectures by Woltjer at the VU. Possibly because Woltjer until his death guided Vollenhoven in his doctoral studies, Vollenhoven paid more homage to Woltjer than did Dooyeweerd.[45]

Dooyeweerd certainly showed an interest in many philosophical questions during his student years. However, his more systematic philosophical work, written during his doctoral studies and the early years afterward, was focused on his juridical discipline. When he wanted to broaden his philosophical horizons, he asked Vollenhoven for advice.[46] Together they started to flesh out the contours of a Calvinist philosophy. But at the end of the 1930s Dooyeweerd appeared to be

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[44] Woltjer to Alexander W. F. Idenburg, 19 April 1908, in *Archive-Idenburg*, Historical Documentation Center for Dutch Protestantism, Amsterdam. Idenburg served as Minister for Dutch Colonies (1901–1905) under Prime Ministers Kuyper and (albeit briefly, from May 1908 to August 1909) Th. Heemskerk.

[45] Dooyeweerd, enrolled in law, perhaps occasionally joined others in hearing Woltjer's lectures on philosophy, part of the series *Encyclopedia of Philology*.

[46] Roger D. Henderson, *Illuminating Law* (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 1994), 27. For this relation seen from the perspective of Vollenhoven, see Anthony Tol, *Philosophy in the Making: D. H. Th. Vollenhoven and the*

more critical of Woltjer's philosophical positions than Vollenhoven was. Why?

Dooyeweerd explicitly acknowledged the contributions of Abraham Kuyper, Jan Woltjer, and Herman Bavinck to the rise of neo-Calvinism.[47] However, several theologians of the VU during the 1930s attacked Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd, asking, for example, whether they denied or accepted the existence of the human soul. For this reason, Dooyeweerd wanted to assert that the "Cosmonomic Philosophy" was in line with Kuyper's views, but that it was more refined or elaborated. In my view, Dooyeweerd sought to stress his continuity with Kuyper and needed another scapegoat or victim for his attack on scholastic ideas, for example the ideas about body and soul to which his contemporary VU theologians adhered.

So, yes, Dooyeweerd *did* criticize ideas that functioned within medieval or Reformed versions of scholastic thought—for example a dualism of body and soul. But in describing Kuyper's thought, Dooyeweerd relativized these scholastic ideas as being just a sideline, unhappy inconsistencies within Kuyper's overall Reformed lines of thought. Within Woltjer's thought, however, these scholastic ideas formed a disturbing intrusion into healthy Reformed thinking. After all, according to Dooyeweerd, Woltjer had been a logically consistent thinker of sorts. It was because of this kind of consistency, together with Woltjer's adherence to scholastic ideas, that Dooyeweerd questioned Woltjer's status as a Reformed thinker.

However, Dooyeweerd's criticism fails to do justice to at least two lines of thought within Woltjer's attitude toward the philosophical tradition in which Dooyeweerd took a stand. First, Woltjer himself criticized Platonic or Aristotelian concepts, for example, the supposition of the eternal existence of unformed matter. Woltjer explicitly acknowledged all matter to be created by God, including the "primary" or elementary matter with its specific—we possibly would say: "subatomic"—properties (see section 4). Second, Woltjer developed a nuanced view on the role of reason and the centrality of the human heart. Together with Kuyper and with Dooyeweerd himself, Woltjer

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Emergence of Reformed Philosophy (Sioux Center: Dordt College Press, 2010), 4–5, 9.

[47] See esp. his "Kuyper's Philosophy of Science," in *On Kuyper: A Collection of Readings on the Life, Work and Legacy of Abraham Kuyper*, ed. Steve Bishop and John H. Kok (Sioux Center: Dordt College Press, 2013), 153–78.

shared the view that the human heart can be considered the *religious root* of human life, referring to the heart as "the wellspring of life" (see section 5). The human *logos*-as-intellect is neither separate from this heart nor in a dominating position above it, although Dooyeweerd suggested that this had been Woltjer's point of view.

The differences between Woltjer and Dooyeweerd are emphasized by the latter. Evaluating them, these differences should not be downplayed. However, a careful study of both continuities and discontinuities is needed, and that will add nuance to the assessment of these differences. For now, two examples must suffice. In the first example, I endorse Dooyeweerd's questioning, albeit with some qualifications, while in the second example I credit Woltjer for both the scope and nuanced quality of his work.

For the first example, let us take a look at Dooyeweerd's critique of traditional versions of metaphysics. Dooyeweerd did have fundamental questions, for example, about the dualism of body and soul. These questions apply to Woltjer's thought as well. However, with respect to Woltjer's philosophy the issues prove to be less clear-cut than Dooyeweerd supposed. Woltjer himself, for example, puts into question exactly *when* and *how* the soul is added and connected to the body during human embryonic development.[48] These questions can easily be misunderstood as unimportant sidetracks, but they show a Woltjer wrestling with an Aristotelian and Thomistic legacy. According to Woltjer each human being at conception receives his or her body from the parents. When this body has reached a level of development capable of receiving his or her soul, God somehow inserts this soul into this body.

Here Dooyeweerd's penetrating and unsettling questions about the traditional dualism of body and soul (and his alternative anthropology) deserve more attention than they have received until now, even when someone disagrees with Woltjer's view here and defends, for example, the combination of body and soul from the very moment of conception.

Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd raise some other questions about the body-and-soul dualism. How do biblical source texts about the human *heart* relate to philosophical concepts of soul and body? Would the acknowledgment of some unity within every human being

[48] Woltjer, "Ideëel en Reëel" [Ideal and Real], in *Verzamelde Redevoeringen en Verhandelingen*, 178–235; "mysterie": 216.

not reduce such a dualism to a duality? Woltjer's probable answers to these questions certainly make him a closer companion for both of them than Dooyeweerd suggested. According to Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven we are to assume a central unity in every human being, a central unity called "heart" in several biblical texts. In this assumption, their thought shows a surprising continuity with both Kuyper and Woltjer, whose body-and-soul dualism did not lead them to deny this unity.[49]

The second example refers to Woltjer's description of the way the Creator relates to his created world. Woltjer holds together both the *thought* and *will* of the Creator. God is One, and he has one "counsel" about this world: this counsel contains his thoughts about this world, and these thoughts comprise his will about this world and its course. The Creator's thoughts or ideas have been materialized and are still materializing in the things and events of this world. His will has directed the origin and still directs the development of this world. When Woltjer speaks about the transcendence and immanence of God, he emphasizes that God both *fulfills* and *governs* his creation. Although Kuyper and Woltjer again do not differ substantially in these matters, Kuyper's overall emphasis on the Creator's sovereign *will* appears to have been determinative for Dooyeweerd's and Vollenhoven's thinking, too. Because of his resistance to each and every overestimation of theoretical thought, Dooyeweerd could use an orientation to God's will as a cornerstone within his philosophy. Here, too, a careful comparison is needed between these Christian thinkers of two subsequent generations (Kuyper, Woltjer, and Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd). Such a study can make clear whether the traditional approach of Woltjer may offer a more balanced view of the relations of God and cosmos, of his intentions (reason, will), and of the resulting *being* that is not static but undergoes historical development—more balanced than the law-oriented approach of the "Cosmonomic Philosophy" that Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd did develop.

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[49] The assumption itself, however, shared by all four, can be questioned, too: Is even this assumption of a central unity an undesirable tribute to classical metaphysics?

The Reception of Woltjer's *Logos*-Philosophy (3): The Twenty-First Century

Looking at the possible reception of Woltjer's *logos*-philosophy in the twenty-first century, the academics who would show the most interest in the origins of the neo-Calvinist subculture and thought in the Netherlands can be expected to be Christian. Their interest, at least a century after the consolidation of the neo-Calvinist subculture, may be historical in the first place, but at least some of them will ask the next question: Is the philosophical thought of this Woltjer still relevant in our own time? To answer these questions, both the historical importance and the actual relevance of Woltjer's philosophical thought will be assessed in this section, in each case by mentioning a significant example.

The lasting importance of Woltjer's philosophical thought has been referred to in the previous section. We will now comment further on its past and present importance. Historically, Woltjer has had significant effect upon the thought of some successors, in spite of some discontinuities and critical reactions to his thought. Recently, researchers have given new attention to the historical, theological, and philosophical reconstruction of neo-Calvinist thought and its early development.[50] Understanding this historical background and Woltjer's preparatory role—alongside Kuyper—is relevant for anyone who wants to assess the contributions of both Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd. For example, the centrality of the divine *Logos* and the human *logos* in the thought of Woltjer at least in part explains why Vollenhoven gave his inaugural oration the title *Logos en Ratio* [*Logos* and Reason] (1926).[51] Another example of continuity is the Romantic metaphor—or is it the straightforward *reality* as described in the *Logos*-oriented Prologue of John's Gospel?—of the *expressive* character of the world, as mentioned especially by Dooyeweerd:

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[50] Apart from Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper*, mentioned in note 8, see for instance Craig G. Bartholomew, *Contours of the Kuyperian Tradition: A Systematic Introduction* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2017); Bishop and Kok, eds., *On Kuyper*; James P. Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism: Towards a New Reading of Herman Bavinck's Organic Motif* (London: T&T Clark, 2012).

[51] Recently translated by A. Tol (ed. John H. Kok): Vollenhoven, *Reformed Epistemology: The Relation of* Logos *and* Ratio *in the History of Western Epistemology* (Sioux Center: Dordt College Press, 2013).

everything in this world is an expression of its Origin and ultimately points to its Origin.[52]

The enduring significance of Woltjer's philosophical thinking can be found in its actuality in the philosophical thought of the twenty-first century. Among the specific elements of Woltjer's thought that deserve lasting attention is his emphasis on teleology. Although Woltjer, like Kuyper, sometimes contrasts a teleological with a mechanical or atomistic view of the world, he uses the metaphor of a machine (a watch—to use the example of William Paley—or a printing press[53]) to show the possibility of combining the two views.[54] The order of its parts presupposes an organizing reason and, Woltjer would add, we only know of such an organizing reason in *persons*. It is this last addition that marks his specific contribution to the new intellectual openness recently created by Thomas Nagel,[55] to take seriously not merely a mechanical but also a teleological account of the development of consciousness, cognition, and values. Nagel defends a naturalist approach that includes teleology. However, he does not

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[52] See, for example, Herman Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, vol. 2, *The General Theory of the Modal Spheres*, trans. David H. Freeman and William S. Young (Philadelphia: P&R Publishing, 1955), 307 ["He gave expression to His Divine fullness of Being in the whole of His creation"], esp. 54, 57 ["the modal structure of the temporal modal spheres necessarily points to the religious fullness of meaning (...). It also points (...) to the Divine Origin"]. Cf. Henk G. Geertsema, "Transcendentale Openheid: Over het Zinkarakter van de Werkelijkheid in de Wijsbegeerte van H. Dooyeweerd" [Transcendental Openness: Concerning the Meaning-Character of Reality in the Philosophy of H. Dooyeweerd], *Philosophia Reformata* 35 (1970): 25–56, 132–55.

[53] Woltjer, *Encyclopaedia der Philologie* (unpublished), 307–8 ("een horloge, een drukpers, of een ander samengesteld werktuig" ["a watch, a printing press or another complex mechanism"]). Michael Polanyi uses similar examples for a similar purpose in his "Life's Irreducible Structure," *Science* 160 (1968): 1308–12 ("a machine for sewing or printing," 1308).

[54] For the combination of a mechanical and a teleological view of the world, Woltjer probably is indebted to the experimental psychologist Gustav Fechner (1801–1887) and the philosopher Hermann Lotze (1817–1881), who are mentioned by Woltjer in his works.

[55] Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

take the last step to ascribe this role of purpose to an intelligent mind or person.

Another specific element of Woltjer's thought that deserves attention is his divergence from a neo-Calvinist emphasis on God's will and sovereignty. Woltjer is aware of his being a nontheologian. Nevertheless, perhaps even unintentionally, his philosophical thought provides a healthy correction to a theologically one-sided affirmation of divine will, such as we find among neo-Calvinists of Dooyeweerdian stripes. Affirming God's will, they abhor speaking about God's reason or his ideas—because of some anti-rationalist agenda or because of abuse of ideas-talk in the history of philosophical theology. Although as a good Calvinist Woltjer does acknowledge the sovereignty of both the Creator of this world and Jesus Christ as its King, in his philosophizing he does not focus solely on God's sovereign will. He speaks about God as a personal *thinking* and *willing* divine being. Often he mentions the reality of *ideas* in God's counsel. Explicitly he affirms that this reasonable counsel is not opposed to God's will. Probably Woltjer would agree that the congruity in God's counsel of his will and his reason or wisdom can be described with the formula *that* he wants *what* he wants.

Of course, Woltjer is using the philosophical methods and opinions he was aware of in his own time. Nevertheless, both his open mind that shows an integrative way of thinking and the positions he defends can still inspire his readers today.[56]

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