Vollenhoven on Philosophy, Worldview and Religion

Anthony Tol

Summary. This paper is an expanded version of a presentation given in August 2011 during the Vollenhoven Symposium, held at the Free University of Amsterdam. The allotted time restricted the presentation to a bare outline of the current more detailed version.

Following Vollenhoven I distinguish philosophical and meta-philosophical discourse. The latter is the medium in which one discusses the presuppositions of philosophy. Typical for Vollenhoven is that, besides the assumption of truth, he held that also worldview and religion serve as presuppositions. Two questions are central: (i) Why should philosophy be interested in worldview and religion as presuppositions? (ii) Are worldview and religion relevant to philosophy?

The first question is answered by referring to Vollenhoven's externalism. Philosophy is an embodied practice, which means that it necessarily has an actual context. Any occasion of knowing involves an interaction of a *knowing agent* and a *knowable referent*, an interaction warranted by truth. An externalistic context of knowledge also has truck with the presence of the world and the historical passage of this presence. Philosophy cannot ignore these, short of the performative self-contradiction of denying its own embodiment But this is not to allot to philosophical discourse the choice of the favoured worldview. Such a choice needs to be determined in terms of its own worldview discourse. Similarly for history. If, in the heart of history, there is the concern for the meaning of life, we recognize this to be religious. Religion is then also a factor of the world, presupposed by philosophy. But how does this affect philosophy itself? This leads to the second question, about the possible relevance of worldview and religion for philosophy.

This second question is more difficult to answer. We need first to distinguish between genuine and non-genuine forms of worldview and religion. The genuine are characterized by the presence of mutually non-reducible factors, such as "freedom and responsibility" in the case of worldviews and "sovereignty and dependence" in the case of religion. In each case these factors belong together, but this calls for relevant "third factors" to warrant their togetherness. This "third factor" is also characteristic for the *kind of discourse* that fits worldview matters and religious concerns respectively. For worldviews freedom and responsibility are held together by "rule-following". This is expressed in prescriptive discourse, and it involves what Vollenhoven calls "being subject to norms". In the case of religion the duality of sovereignty (God) and dependence (World) are held together in a "fundamental meaning confirmation" (what Vollenhoven specified as "positive response to the love command"). It expresses an attitude to life that advances an ontology of care.

These discourses are important for philosophy in that a worldview discourse confronts philosophy with the presuppositions of a plural normative order of the *ought*., while religious discourse, in turn, involves a choice in the meaning of *being*, as enjoined by a transcendent appeal. There is the complication in the latter that transcendence can be pseudo- or genuine. Transcendence in pagan religion is basically pseudo, that in the Jewish-Christian tradition genuine.

Though I (in the main) expound Vollenhoven, I have also been, where relevant, somewhat latitudinarian by drawing upon kindred ideas of other twentieth century thinkers. My aim is to advance the discussion of Vollenhoven's understanding of the conditions of philosophy beyond the formulations of the 1930s and 1940s. The latter receive a preliminary review in my *Philosophy in the Making*, chapter 1 on "The reform of philosophy".

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

1. *Introduction*

The three themes mentioned in the title, namely philosophy, worldview and religion, are each too broad to discuss in one presentation, let alone the three together. But they are of central importance for Reformational philosophy, and particularly so in connection with Vollenhoven. For a meaningful discussion we will need to apply restrictions and focus on essentials.

Let me say straightaway that my main object is to discuss *philosophy* in Vollenhoven and that I shall relate worldview and religion to it. But this is *not* to say that religion and worldview will be viewed in terms of philosophy, e.g., as philosophy of religion and philosophy of worldview, though I will need to stop and pause to see what is essential to worldview and religious discourses. I have another relation in mind. I want to discuss essential *conditions* of philosophy. It is Vollenhoven's understanding that one needs to recognize the importance of worldview and religion *in their roles of providing conditions of philosophy*. In focussing on conditions, two problems arise. (i) In what sense is it in the interest of philosophy to acknowledge the relevance of religion and worldview in these roles? Many will say that modern and contemporary philosophy have put the influence of religion and worldview behind it. Is Vollenhoven anachronistic, perhaps reaching back in time to a bygone era? (ii) The second problem is: Are religion and worldview able to fulfil the role of providing conditions of philosophy? Are they sufficiently distinctive and relevant in this regard? Or are we just mixing up our categories and thus in fact creating confusion? In the course of dealing with these two problems we will touch on essential features of Vollenhoven's position.

There are several reasons for raising this topic of the conditions of philosophy. In the first place, Vollenhoven was always rather impatient with introductory or preparatory explanations.[1] He preferred to let the test of the pudding be in the eating: the actual practice

2

of properly conditioned philosophy is its own best evidence. The introductory remarks he does make tend to be rather brief and incomplete. Another reason for our discussion is that, as it turns out, after a thorough and patient study of Vollenhoven, one finds that there is more to say on this topic when considering his work in overview. For example, in the introductory sections of *Isagôgè Philosophiae* there is mention of three methods relevant to that work. But the second of these is stated with so little emphasis that the reader is left somewhat nonplussed if, indeed, the reader notices it at all. But Vollenhoven does need this second method.[2] Finally, there are indications that Vollenhoven became more consequential in the distinctions he drew in light of his basic intentions. This is evidenced by shifts in his position on fundamental points, e.g., the problem of good and evil, and the understanding of divinely imposed law.[3] These issues will surface as the discussion of presuppositions proceeds. My aim is to clarify Vollenhoven's programmatic intentions in connection with the theme of presuppositions, though here and there my terminology will differ a bit from his. I begin by asking which kinds of presuppositions suffice.

2. *What is philosophy's interest?*
Turning to the first problem of philosophy's interest, is it indeed in the interest of philosophy to acknowledge the conditioning roles of religion and worldview? Let us first consider conditions as such. It is hard to deny that it is in the interest of philosophy to be itself clear as to its own conditions and to account for and be explicit about them. There are always questions as to what one takes to be important for philosophy to focus on, what an appropriate method might be, what results one anticipates, and what contribution one expects to make in a broader scientific, societal or cultural context. Such questions are dealt with in a preliminary discussion in which the context is set, the directives and idiom are specified, and in a concluding discussion the results assessed. The actual philosophical discourse itself might be abstruse, be analytically refined, involve long arguments, call for attention to a host of details, point to unsuspected connections, etc., etc. E.g. logical positivism, which subjects philosophy to the rules of formal logic in order to warrant its objectivity, holds that the discussion of context, directives, etc. are a matter of informal logic, subject to the (free) preferences of the thinking agent. Here subject and object are "pulled apart" (so to speak). Philosophy that understands itself is, in fact, double pronged: there is *its topical discourse*, and there is the discourse concerning preliminaries, background and goal. If philosophy is to make "good sense", then philosophical discourse needs to be clear as to its own conditions and limitations, and ought to make these clear in *meta-philosophical* discourse. The philosophical and the meta-philosophical, though distinct, nevertheless *belong together* in the interest of understanding. This is what Vollenhoven means when speaking of "the place and task" of philosophy. The practice of philosophy is checked by meta-philosophical conditions.[4]

But this does not yet specify what kind of conditions apply in determining the "good sense" of philosophy. Certainly one needs methodological stipulations.` But why wouldn't they suffice? Why bring in religion and worldview in this connection?

In reply, we need to refer to another distinction in Vollenhoven. When opening the discussion of philosophy in his *Isagôgè Philosophiae*, he insists that the term "philosophy" has two meanings. Philosophy is both an *activity* and a *result*. In an obvious sense, philosophy as activity is that of *thinking*, or at least involves thought, while philosophy as result pertains to the results of thinking, as expressed in *concepts and judgments*.

One might be inclined to interpret this, Cartesian-wise, as an intra-mental and typically cognitive exercise. But for Vollenhoven this interpretation is too abstract. He maintains that cognition (in the sense of cogitation: distinguishing or analysing) is an operating function, and that it *actually* takes place, not as something primarily intra-mental but as a function of an *embodied human being*. This says that thought is not merely intra-mental, involved only with discovering or forming the content of concepts and judgments in adequate categories. No, concepts and judgments are actually arrived at *knowingly*. But this says that thought presupposes a referent on which the thought is spent, being that which is thought about, in order to *come to* concepts and judgments as results. Say: in the presence of an actual tree, I think about it, i.e., I analyse it and by making the requisite distinctions I identify it and form concepts and judgments regarding it (like: its species and genus; its being impressive or in the way, etc.). Accordingly, philosophy, taken as result, presupposes a prior connection or interaction between the *knowing agent* and the *knowable referent*.[5] Vollenhoven claims that this connection between agent and referent is a direct one. But it is not a static standing side-by-side; it is interactive. The connection is one in which the agent gets to know or becomes acquainted with the referent. In other words, the connection has an epistemic character.

Now if one is to preserve or guard this character one needs to specify a warrant. For Vollenhoven that warrant is *truth*. After all, if there is to be any knowledge outcome due to the interaction between knowing agent and knowable referent, however elementary, then the agent must, when thinking or analysing, at least *get something right* regarding the referent. In other words, not just any interaction will do. It must be epistemically relevant. The most primary judgments are, according to Vollenhoven, judgments of assessment, which express the modal characterization of anything given as grasped by the intuition. (The modal qualification is the most direct and general characterization of anything, since it indicates its "mode of being".)[6] Given the plurality of possible modal qualifications, a judgment of assessment can be erroneous when it indicates the wrong mode, and thus one needs in any case to get this assessment right. Let's call this connection between agent and referent that truth warrants a "synthetic a priori" (meaning that the connection is *necessary*, i.e., "prior to experience" or the most primary qualification of the connection as assessed when reflecting on experience). Then one cannot speak of knowing without implying truth (or at least truth-value). When truth is absent as independent factor, then the epistemic connection of agent and referent threatens to devolve into a mere *accident of association*, whereby knowledge loses its own importance in being *either* a mere construal of the agent (as something conceived) *or* only a copy of the referent (as something represented, as in empiricism). To gain knowledge as over against error one needs to be explicit about truth.

Thus the practice of philosophy, its discursive practice in *coming-to-know* as formulated in concepts and judgments, needs at least to presuppose truth. This is not to take

truth as an abstract concept but as an operating *factor*, linked to the intuition, that is determinative in bringing the knowing agent and the knowable referent *in rapport with* each other. Truth *obligates* the agent to get the referent right. One may of course subsequently inquire into the *concept* of truth. But that enquiry then takes place within the context of philosophical discourse, which in any case presupposes truth in the meta-philosophical sense, as meant in the above discussion.

Vollenhoven's view of knowing agent and knowable referent is a species of what nowadays is called *externalism*. The externalism of agent and referent, the fact that the knowing agent and the knowable referent are embodied, ineluctably draws attention to their context. This is in marked contrast to the internalism of, say, Descartes.[7] According to him, the cognitive agent needs to be safeguarded in its cognition from any possible contamination by, say, the emotions and passions, the secondary qualities of sense-perception, the tempestuous will, social prejudice, etc. The clarity and distinctness Descartes seeks are very rarefied and abstract. Externalism, on the contrary, though it too wishes to be clear and distinct, cannot abstract the context from the embodiment of agent and referent—one tries to be "clear enough" and "distinct enough". For the embodiment *is* the participation in the context. That means that the context also has a conditioning effect on the knowing agent who tries to get the knowable referent right. Two prominent conditions are evident and undeniable: on the one hand there is the *world* that is *present* for both the agent and the referent, and on the other hand there is the *passage of history* that changes the presence of the world.

The world is in the background of all of our thoughts, though, I think, seldom in a fixed sense. Sometimes it is a mere synonym for "context", or it might mean the material world, or the living world of nature. Then again we might take it to be our environment, or more specifically the world of culture or the network of societal relationships. In this context the term "worldview" occurs, though we see at once that it is rather ambiguous. Someone with an internalist outlook will attempt to avoid this term, doing so in the process of avoiding any appeal to a given context. But for an externalist, it is undeniable that the world cannot be cancelled—"you can't take a holiday from reality," Whitehead once said. Some view or assessment of the world is always operative. Our life and our functioning are geared to the world, in fact, to the *life-world* which, even in its most elementary sense, is the habitat of our life-experience.[8] This makes it relevant, ineluctably so, to speak of a worldview, though we will need to face the problem of the choice of the adequate content of a worldview.

History too is relevant to any context. It brings a new element into our presuppositions. This new element hangs together with the factor of unreality that haunts the present, *viz.* the "not yet" of the future and the "no longer" of the past. The present is a occurring presence. There is possibility, realization and completion. Life-experience participates in this dimension of occurrence, influencing directly our hopes and fears, novelty and boredom, expectation and remembrance—in short, human beings cannot be conscious without the factor of the passing efficacy of things and persons that touch us deeply. The very activity of philosophy itself participates in the actualization of achievement, for its seeking after results itself arises through activity.

But also with respect to history, as with a worldview, there is no fixed formula that fits it indisputably, capable of rationalizing the efficacy of temporal experience. Of course there are multiple traditions that emphasize and consolidate distinctly valued experience. In its most explicit and encompassing form, the dimension of history hosts *religious* traditions in their codified life-meaning. The very identity, and hence the consciousness, of a people in its deepest sense is inextricably interwoven with religion as historically embodied. Philosophy, however critical it ought to be of any system of historical tradition, cannot deny the historical passage of the changing world in the background of its own seeking after wisdom.[9] (Again, this is to speak externalistically, for an internalist, of modernistic mind-set, will approach religion primarily as a mental product—aesthetic or moral, as the case may be—of, say, humanistic meaning conferment, perhaps on the basis of deeply felt values.)

Hence, philosophy, when practiced self-consciously, i.e., in the awareness of its meta-philosophical conditions, and when truth is pursued in an externalistic context, is concerned with the immediacy of the life-world. This puts the efficacy of its practice in touch with the world and its historically governing traditions. For Vollenhoven this means that philosophy is, minimally, undeniably in touch with the conditions of worldview and of religion. We need to see what this "being in touch with" involves. How do worldview and religion actually operate as conditions of philosophy?

3. Are *worldview and religion relevant to philosophy?*

It may be all well and good to insist that philosophy, being itself a practice, cannot divorce itself from the context of the life-world, and thus one ought to recognize worldview and religious relevance as preconditions. But maybe this is like raising a ladder without its top having anything steady to lean on. In other words, do worldview and religion lend themselves to meta-philosophical roles in support of philosophy, and if so, what are these roles? Aren't worldview and religion necessarily subjective, personal, changing, and (all too often) so lacking in substance that expecting support is somewhat ridiculous? Yet Vollenhoven insists that, in relation to philosophy, every philosophy *presupposes* something of a worldview position, though this may not always be acknowledged.[10]

What needs emphasizing in the first place is that the discourses of worldview and of religion are, in any case, of a *different kind* than that of the discourse of philosophy. In Vollenhoven's terminology (cf. note 4 below), the former are of a "non-scientific" (or non-academic) nature, while philosophy's discourse is in the strict sense academic. Not only are they of a different order of discourse, their formulations are many and varied.[11] The worldview and religious orientations one is privy to are usually not chosen for explicit "academic" reasons. Most often they are already part of one's world. In time, one will generally make more conscious choices in light of maturing insight and experienced relevance. In Vollenhoven's case, he was raised in a neo-Calvinistic context, which influenced his adherence to Abraham Kuyper's practical development of this context as a worldview of "sphere sovereignty" (though Vollenhoven didn't appreciate this term). Sphere sovereignty is a way of organizing societal practice. It emphasizes *differentiated power deployment*, as relevant to different spheres of the life-world, that is practiced in concomitant

distinct offices of human responsibility. Vollenhoven wished to emphasize the factor of human responsibility within a sphere, and thereby to de-emphasize (which is not to negate!) the factor of (delegated) sovereignty.[12] In connection with religion there is a broadly similar situation. Vollenhoven was himself a committed Christian, as informed by his covenant understanding of religion in the Calvinistic tradition of the 16th century Reformation. The ideal of a "Christian or Scriptural philosophy" set for him the task, in philosophy, of *reckoning with* the content of the writings of the Christian tradition, especially the Bible. But he did not mean this in the sense of treating biblical content as philosophical statements. So, in Vollenhoven's use, the terms "presupposing" and "reckoning with" hint that worldview and religion respectively are not themselves extensions of nor do they overlap with (systematic) philosophy as such.[13] They are meta-philosophical, not philosophical.

It is important to underscore this. For it says that we ought not to take statements out of the meta-philosophical context—certainly those of worldview and religion of whatever signature—and treat them as premises or propositions of philosophical discourse. That overlooks (as we will see) the difference in the kinds of discourse involved. The only justification for treating worldview and religious beliefs in that way would be the fact that they are believed and so taken to be true (at least to the extent that their formulation allows attributing truth-value to them). But then an adherent of a different worldview could equally philosophically privilege his chosen premises, and someone with other religious beliefs her preferred statements. It brings an undesired havoc into philosophy.

What calls for clarification is what the nature of worldview discourse is, and similarly for religious discourse. Only then can we subsequently ask how the meta-philosophical roles of their being "presuppositions" are effective. This is of course too large a topic to fully discuss here, but we can at least aim to get at the essentials.

3.1. *Worldview discourse*

With respect to worldviews, the *beliefs* of a worldview are no doubt indicative of the *view* or outlook that is represented by the worldview. But a worldview is more than just a view expressed in beliefs! A worldview is something that in an important sense is also acted upon. It is "set to work", as it were, in the practice of life, in the *life-world*. In that practice, views merge with patterns of action and with expectations. Our engagement in the life-world leads to the experience of satisfaction or disappointment. Such experiences, when insistent, will also react upon a worldview, either to confirm it or to induce change in it. A worldview, however personally cherished, has *communitarian* features that also engage fellow human beings of the life-world. With the help of a worldview, we *orientate* ourselves in our world. A worldview is more than merely chosen personal meaning.

So if we reckon with the broader context of the life-world, what is it that we look for in a worldview? For Vollenhoven life-world practice cannot be divorced from acting with a sense of *responsibility*. In the life-world we are confronted with tasks and obligations that need to be met and regulated. In shaping and changing the life-world, an attendant worldview helps the human being in confronting the challenge of life. In this connection human beings are held to account for what they do or fail to do. Now responsibility, in turn, presupposes the

freedom to act. One cannot, in fairness, be held to account for something if there is no reality of choice, or if the scope within which to act is severely restricted. But the converse also holds. Action freely taken cannot be divorced from accepting responsibility for what actions effect, at least if activity is to have substance and purpose. Often there are both intended and unintended consequences of our actions. This means that we need to be constantly alert as to what activity is set in motion. We must not let unintended consequences thwart the freedom required in being responsible. So the two notions of freedom and responsibility, though they form a contrast, still *belong together*. Were one to uphold freedom without responsibility, i.e., hold to an *absolute freedom*, then activity turns into wanton conduct. The latter could well pose a threat to the very cherished freedom one proceeds from. On the other hand, the other extreme of responsibility without freedom, i.e., *absolute duty*, predestines results in a way that cancels the (moral) choice for the better option. In other words, it threatens to "de-moralize" duty. Freedom and responsibility need to be taken together in a way that does *not* reduce one to the other, nor cancels one in favour of the other, but rather coordinates the two in a partnership. This invites a substantive analysis of a worldview, in the sense of asking how freedom and responsibility actually function in any proposed worldview. One needs to analyse the mutual relevance. Such an analysis calls for, and thus should reveal, a "third factor", the factor that accounts for freedom and responsibility being taken together. This factor should be especially relevant in connection with the kind of discourse, or practical consciousness, worldview understanding involves. It would *warrant* the practical reality of freedom and responsibility being taken together in terms of a "synthetic a priori". This warrant will be elucidated presently.

This would be the moment—if one had the available time—to pause to discuss various examples of worldview. One could then see how freedom and/or responsibility function in actual worldviews, and whether the views are satisfactory in terms of what they abet. I believe that when freedom and responsibility are not respected in their own distinctive importance by a worldview, then the outlook it recommends is skewed and calls for substantive criticism. Two examples come readily to mind: the scientific outlook and existentialism. In a minimal description: the *scientific outlook* tends to underscore determinism (within some line of defence, such as physicalistic determinism, behavioural determinism, social determinism or whatever) in consequence of which the significance of freedom is undercut. The basic message is to abide by and accept the facts as spelled out by the scientific wisdom of the moment, often presented as an unfailing duty.[14] On the other hand, *existentialism* favours the opposite extreme, at least as defended by Jean-Paul Sartre.[15] For him freedom, in a practical sense, is virtually absolute, for every act involves a choice of will, in such a way that the choice is honoured so long as a new choice does not supplant it, with or without good reason. Though Sartre maintains that each choice posits a creative possibility for mankind, and in that sense bears responsibility for mankind, the unrestricted freedom of choice in fact makes a responsibility on which one might expect to be able to depend vacuous. Both worldviews, the scientific outlook and existentialism, endorse a reduction, which in fact attests to each not being a fully viable, and certainly not a satisfactory, worldview. This holds all the more in their lacking an explicit warrant or

justification in a "third factor", for there really is no "togetherness" of freedom and responsibility to account for. Also, the lack of the "third factor" makes it virtually impossible to conduct a *critical* worldview discourse in the way that is distinctly relevant to it, as over against insisting dictatorially on its believed worth.

3.1.1. *Norms as "third factor"*

For Vollenhoven the factor that links freedom and responsibility consists of norms (or rules, ordinances, directives). Now norms don't just fall out of the blue. Activity (in the life-world) is geared to achieving results. Human living involves (i) free choices as to what one wished to achieve as the purpose or goal of an activity, and (ii) the conscious application of means whereby the purpose or goal is to be achieved. The freedom is integral to the choice of what one wants to achieve, though a responsibility may well be present in that choice too; the responsibility lies particularly in the application of means, though here too there are often degrees of freedom. One can always be called to account for any particular application; e.g., lets presume one chooses freely to go out to dinner with invited friends, but depending on the available means, going through with it might be irresponsible in light of the state of one's bank account.

We see at once that if the means applied are not adequate to realizing the chosen goal, the activity will fail in realizing its purpose. Likewise, the goal might be too demanding as to be capable of being achieved by the present means, whereby the activity also ends in failure. The chosen goal and the applied means of achieving the goal must be capable of "being together"—one need not exclude a *novel* goal that would call for *creative* means of achievement. Goals and means are not necessarily given beforehand to choose from. The token of "being together" is evident in that the application of means can be converted into steps taken to achieve the goal. These steps then trace a path, and the path taken can be expressed as a *sequential rule*. The latter is the warrant for the "belonging together" of freedom and responsibility. It is in following a rule that one actually achieves the goal one has chosen for in freedom—there is no contradiction between rule and freedom here. Likewise the application of means, for which one bears responsibility in realizing the goal, is not thwarted by the rule—on the contrary, the rule highlights the responsibility (or irresponsibility) involved. Often there may be more ways than one to achieve a chosen goal. This says that there may be different rules relevant to the goal in question. But this multiplicity of rules does not negate the rule's warranting the practical togetherness of freedom and responsibility. *Rule-following* is really the crucial notion here, particularly in its relevance towards understanding the *practical consciousness* of worldview discourse.

The term "rule-following" was given prominence by Wittgenstein in the context of his later philosophy of language-games and its characteristic "meaning in language use". A language-game is a contextualized use of words according to a pattern or grammar that is suited to the context of activity. The pattern or grammar is a complex of rules regulating language use in the relevant context. In this approach it becomes clear that the practical consciousness that implements "language-games" is deeply pluralist. Different contexts of activity call for distinctive grammars. The context of a language-game being practical, each

language-game is in fact a "form of life".[16] Wittgenstein put great effort into demonstrating the differences in language use between different language-games. It hardly stretches the imagination to see that this "meaning in language use" analysis takes place at the level of worldview thought. Wittgenstein's confirming the intrinsic pluralist feature of rule-following makes good sense given a worldview's practical orientation.

But, *prima facie* at least, there seems to be little that is relevant here to our discussion of Vollenhoven, until we realize that the crucial appeal to *rules and rule-following* is analogous to Vollenhoven's stressing *ordinances and subjection to ordinances*. Where practical activity respects both freedom and responsibility, there the practical consciousness, which carries out this activity, presupposes rules or ordinances that are followed in realizing the activity's goal. Without the acceptance of rules or ordinances, one can also not account for freedom and responsibility as "belonging together". There is a *practical necessity* in practical consciousness' acceptance of rules. Thus here too there is a "synthetic a priori", relevant to worldview practice, and this is what enables *genuine*, as over against reductionist, worldviews to "stand on their own feet", for in accepting rules a worldview contains criteria for critical discourse.

But there is an important difference between Wittgenstein and Vollenhoven.[17] Wittgenstein applied his linguistic analysis solely to "the particular case", and quite adamantly rejected any attempt at generalization. He wanted to avoid associating meaning with essentialism, whereby a meaning is an essence.[18] Vollenhoven has no such qualms. In fact, he hardly addresses particular cases at all, certainly not linguistically particular cases, though we can readily appreciate their significance. Very much of practical life—take education for example—is a matter of learning how to do or to execute something, whereby language is important. But, contra Wittgenstein, language is not always uniquely essential. After all, imitation of behaviour (mimesis) is also an important factor in learning, and learning to wield a language is itself grasped through imitation. But whether we are learning arithmetic or learning to repair a bicycle tire, the learning involves distinguishing and applying relevant rules—whether overtly expressed or only covertly assumed. More often than not, learning involves a whole set of rules, which can be taken together in a method of procedure.

Now in the larger context of the life-world, the required rules need to be of a more general import. They are then more commonly referred to as *norms*, say, norms of justice, norms of ethical conduct, norms for economical exchange, social norms, norms of education, even norms of logic (if you think of the rules of systems of natural deduction), etc. Such norms are principles that guide societal or community activity in a more general sense. At the same time there is pluralist factor involved. Norms differentiate activity according to the kinds of norms that are relevant in the life-world. Thus, again, a worldview is not so much a (mere) "view" as a confirmation of the accepted *diversity of practice* in the life-world— Wittgenstein's expression "forms of life" is apt—and of the different norms required to provide meaning to the diversity of practices taking place.[19] A viable or genuine worldview is an expression of *practical-pluralist consciousness*, whereby norms exist as directives and thereby sustain the interaction of freedom and responsibility.

One can readily see why Kuyper's "sphere sovereignty" was relevant to Vollenhoven. Its pluralist feature entails that freedom and responsibility are both relevant non-reductively, and that its application calls for activity in the practical consciousness of ordinances (norms) and our subjection to them.[20] Would-be worldviews that don't emphasize norms and their practical obtainment are, more often than not, intent on defending their redundancy of either freedom or responsibility (as the case may be). From our point of view, when this occurs such worldviews or outlooks demonstrate their own inadequacy in being non-genuine.

We can now be more explicit about a worldview being a presupposition of philosophy. In Vollenhoven's approach, philosophy is first and foremost an activity of knowing and coming-to-know by way of critically understanding: one grasps meaning in *concepts*, while in *judgments* one asserts meaning with respect to something.[21] In Vollenhoven's externalistic understanding and practice of philosophy, the world is always there as sounding-board. Philosophy, being a practice of understanding, has itself an affinity with the world in terms of the practical consciousness of grasping what the world presents. But grasping calls for interpretation of what is grasped, for the details of the world are, more often than not, capable of multiple interpretation. So cognition needs "rules of understanding" in terms of which we account for the things and events of the world as present. These rules are not laid up a priori in the mind, as Kantian idealism would have it,[22] but they emerge through our prior practice in the world. We interpret what we understand of the world through the rules that guide our practice, which is what a worldview affords, whether well-developed or only vaguely adumbrated. So one can say that the worldview effect is to bring home the *normative feature* in the interaction of thought with the world. This says that for philosophy proper the "ought" of a "normative order" is *presupposed* by the "is" of understanding; it is not derived from it nor entailed by it. It is presupposed as being part and parcel of the practical consciousness applied in dealing with the world.

We can take this a step farther. If there were no truck with the world, philosophy's activity could never conjure up the "ought", except the logical norms that guide its own activity. This is generally stated as: "an 'ought' cannot be derived from an 'is'", i.e., the normative factor is *sui generis*. A little reflection brings this home. In philosophy we may *know* all that there is to know about norms and assert truths about them. Indeed, such knowing is an important part of what philosophy pursues. But that is no guarantee that a norm will be respected when known to obtain *as* an "ought". I *know* very well that I shouldn't steal, but that is no guarantee that I won't in fact ever steal. I need to make it my actual life practice not to steal. If I'm asked about this, my reply should include more than just stating that I know I should respect other people's property. My reply should include something about a *desire* to steal being inconsistent with the "ought" that enjoins me to respect other people's property. It should be in my life stance not to steal, as integral part of my practical worldview. The attestation of a stance is, I believe, more persuasive than expressing what I know. It is within a viable worldview that the "ought" of obtaining norms finds its acceptance and reflective formulation. So, in being presupposed in the context of the practice of philosophy, a viable worldview has a conditioning role in connection with the "ought" that philosophy subsequently seeks to know. Philosophy cannot turn it back to the

assumption of the normative order (practical synthetic a priori). Naturally, this does not fully prescribe nor require one particular worldview, but it does indicate an essential factor of the worldview one accepts as conditioning philosophy. Worldviews—at least the genuine ones— need to be capable of being articulated in terms of how freedom and responsibility work together, but also argued for in terms of their own merit as *pluralist rule-following practice*, a merit that philosophy may translate into its own knowing when articulating the normative order.

3.1.2. *Vollenhoven and sphere sovereignty*
From this worldview presupposition of a normative order Vollenhoven was able to defend his acceptance of a multiplicity of "law-spheres" (rule/rule-following complexes) that matched the presupposed norms. This is not to accept the whole of Kuyper's teaching of sphere-sovereignty; it is to accept its principle. Vollenhoven gave the teaching his own touch when making it more operational. For him the normative order is at once the order of reality as lived and experienced, i.e. a diversity of ordinances that hold for reality, along with the main qualifications of reality in terms of domains or "spheres of subjection" of these ordinances in which things and human beings function. This is relevant for the whole or reality, not just human reality. (His preferred terminology was, besides "ordinances", to speak of "laws", to match the notion of "law-sphere".) The ordinances or laws for the lower (not typically human) law-spheres are still "norm-like", in being prescriptive. It is just that the functions involved, being sub- or non-conscious, cannot include the awareness of the relevant ordinances or laws as obtaining norms.[23]

Now when laws/norms are respected as obtaining, that is much like accepting norms as principles. They will then need to be particularized when actually applied in life-practice. The consciousness of being subject to norms, when this actually takes place, will include features of the context and what one ought and ought not to do. Thus the norm-effect translates itself into specific *commands*. One expects commands to be adequate to the situations in which they are required, if they are not in fact to be hindrances thwarting the freedom of normative action in a sphere. When inadequate, that calls for an update or the introduction of new rules. These may in time lose their relevance. Thus, here we have the human agent actively involved in a capacity—an office of responsibility—in which he or she bears the responsibility of applying "commands" more adequately to the concrete situation. These persons in office positivize the commands by formulating specific *directives*.[24] (Generically, this falls under applying the ought of the central "love command".) At this level of directives, freedom and responsibility are both demands and concerns. It is only at this level of positivized directives that we have the full expression of sphere-sovereignty in Vollenhoven.

It is the rule-related or ordinance-subjection factor of a genuine worldview that acts as presupposition of philosophy, as indicative of an obtaining normative order, not the whole worldview as such. The rule-related / ordinance-subjection feature is necessary to any genuine worldview. This makes it a transcendental feature of worldview discourse and the essence of a synthetic a priori in philosophy.

3.2. *Religion*

A broadly similar situation holds with respect to religion, though there are important differences to take into account. However, as with the worldview discussion, we'll need to cut some corners to get to the gist of the matter within our limited space.

3.2.1. *Critical consideration of religion*

When not belligerently fought over, religion is generally taken as a topic of tolerant forbearance. It does not seem possible to conduct a controlled, "rational" discussion on the topic of religion and religious differences. But Vollenhoven has a view of religion that is quite distinct. Thus it calls for critical discussion if we are to understand it. Such discussion is then not a sign of disrespect towards other views, but it is an attempt to expose substantive differences. Our own discussion aim is to get at the unique moment of religious discourse. We want to discover what makes for genuine religious understanding as opposed to derivative construals.

As to the latter, we need to recognize at once that much of what is routinely considered religious is problematic. A first sign of this is the lack of unanimity in the classification of religion in the western mind. Is it to be classed with feelings of experience or with norms of conduct? In the former category, religion is subjective, often linked to aesthetic experience for its motivation. The religious is then sought particularly in what inspires, more so than in what provides a foundation of life. The inspiration, at least when acute enough, can even be counted as having a uniquely numinous effect. Rudolf Otto emphasized the role of the numinous feelings in the idea of the holy. In Otto, numinous feelings are mainly those of *religious dread* and *religious fascination*. He distinguishes these from feelings of love, fear, horror, sublimity, etc., while carefully zeroing in on the holy.[25] But the religious feelings he refers to in this connection remain feelings nonetheless. This is not to deny the importance of feelings, even religious feelings. But for Vollenhoven religion calls for more. Religion signals something essential in connection with the meaning of life and death. Feelings do not adequately bring this to expression. There is too little reckoning with commitment.

There are also examples of religion in the second category of (usually moral) norms of conduct. In such an environment religion then all too easily devolves into a rigid system of conduct, guarded by unyielding authority. The three "religions of the Book" each have, particularly in their conservative wings, a rigidity that seems more intent on maintaining itself than on being a context meant to permit life to flourish. Religious rules tend to become unbending obligations. They seem to be more intent on superstitiously warding off what the religion in question considers to be evil than on providing redemptive reorientations and being a channel for regained hope. Naturally, also the authority necessary to maintain the rules is carefully guarded.

In neither the aesthetic nor the practical understanding of religion does religious discourse have a distinct voice, a voice with uniquely redemptive import. For Vollenhoven, religion addresses the God-given meaning of life and death, an active meaning, sometimes also referred to as a "walking with God". It includes a "moral"[26] emphasis on good and evil,

this being intimately relevant to the said "walking", in line with the "covenant contact" as expressed in the Scriptures. This is to be distinguished from the more specific and practical forms of beliefs, i.e., those concerned with religious meaning in terms of worship, veneration, etc., which have a distinctly human-cultic import. These are meant to support the expression of one's faith, which, for Vollenhoven, is situated in its own sphere, *viz.* that of the "pistical law-sphere". But Vollenhoven holds that religion is prior to cultic practice and is also other than an expression of faith. Genuine religion needs to be understood as something that stands on its own feet. Its meaning is *sui generis*. Only on seeing what that involves can religion be honoured for the type of discourse that is proper to it. The latter is needed to pinpoint religion's role of presupposition of philosophy. We need to develop this understanding step by step.

3.2.2. *Religion and history*
First we need to see what the relation is between religion and history in Vollenhoven. The term "religion", when used in the context of life, highlights life's vulnerability, the finitude of its creatures, the non-self-sufficiency of all that life contains. All this hangs together with a central feature: life is taken up in passage, the passage of living and dying, of generation and corruption. This in itself already links religion to the context of history in the background of philosophy. History, as evincing the change of the world, highlights what is vulnerable, finite and passing. Vollenhoven captures this in one word: "concrete". Religion concerns the *most concrete* features of life, and in that capacity it touches the heart of life in being concerned with the meaning of our finite existence. In a note we indicate in more detail how religion relates to history in Vollenhoven's description.[27]

3.2.3. *God and the World*
We can now focus on the religious context head-on. As with worldview, religion also cannot do without two features that are of central importance to it. From the human side we have emphasized the essential feature of vulnerability and finitude within the context of life, from birth to death. For things and persons this says that, in the heart of their concreteness, there is change and dependence. Now in connection with the *functioning* of things and human beings, rules or norms provide the support for this functioning. We spoke of "rule and rule-following", or "law and subjection to law". This presupposes the presence of things and persons regarding the functional order. But, when emphasizing the *concreteness* of things and persons, as involving their very birth and death, and thus their presence as creatures, it is clear that we are at a different level of consideration than the functional order. Creatures are taken as wholes. Here is a fundamental *dependence* of existence that needs to be reckoned with.

This fundamental existential dependence cannot but call up a concomitant feature of *sustaining* what is dependent. This invites the notion of deity. There must be a "sustainer", what we more naturally think of as a creator deity, who made and sustains us. Thus, in light of our dependence, deity has *sovereignty*, and in light of deity, our dependence attests *subservience*. The fundamental contrast of religion is *sovereignty and subservience*. These

are the preferred terms in Vollenhoven when discussing religion, particularly in relation to philosophy.

Our discussion is helped along if we agree to use the terms "God" and "World" to denote the range of sovereignty and of subservience (or dependence) respectively. (We here follow the early Vollenhoven in detail, except that he prefers the term "cosmos" to "world".) We may now, as we did in connection with worldview, inquire how religion is understood. The simplest options are to test how it stands with these terms. Do they sustain an independent meaning, or are they derivatives from the other term?

As first option one might take the sovereignty of God to be so absolute and overwhelming that the World's subservience is a forlorn and entirely derivative state. The World's impotent or illusive state can only be met by its complete submission to divine sovereignty. Something of this is essential to political regimes of religious signature. They secure their legitimacy in being the requisite mediator between the transcendence of God and the affairs of the World, the latter being dependent on that transcendence. This is obviously to abuse religion for purposes of mundane power maintenance. In line with this interpretation, the term "world" can be interpreted as "nothing" or "non-being". The religious meaning of "world" is then completely subsidiary to the dominance of deity.

But one could also consider the contrary option, which has it that it is "subservience" that is the basic reality, and divinity is dependent on it. (In this context the term "subservience" is somewhat strained, "subsistence" would be more suitable.) We can think of the "block universe" of Parmenides, which posits the world as a static being. Everything that there is, including the gods, is linked to this static being, a being that is itself eternal and unchanging, but, unlike deity, muted and fate-ridden. Plato's Ideas follow suit and in the Middle Ages the scholastics' universals are the prime examples of static being of objective control.[28]

Between these reductive extremes, which for Vollenhoven reflect *pantheism* and *cosmism* respectively, he initially distinguished further subsidiary views.[29] There are forms of partial (pan)theism, whereby at least something of the World is acknowledged to exist distinct from divinity, and forms of partial (pan)cosmism, in which something of divinity is acknowledged to be relevant apart from the World. We need not go into details here, for there is a general pattern set to work here. The early Vollenhoven says that his analysis is conducted against the background of a "Scriptural dualism" of God and the World. In this dualism God and the World are understood in a way that is supposed to reflect Scriptural use. He is particularly keen to attribute to God everything that belongs to deity, and to the World everything that is rightly cosmic. E.g., God is understood as existing in the three Persons of Creator-Father, Redeemer-Son and Guide-Holy Spirit. Here, for example, the Spirit should not be interpreted as "world-spirit", for that apportions something that is divine to the World (thus partial (pan)cosmism). At the same time the World contains the whole diversity of the law-spheres, including the more "spiritual" spheres, such as the juridical sphere, the ethical sphere and the pistical sphere of faith. These higher spheres should not be taken as being more attuned to divinity that the other spheres of the world-order. That would tend towards a partial (pan)theism. In this way "Scriptural dualism" is distinguished from non-Scriptural

views in its distinct understanding of the arrangement of God and the World, whereby the non-Scriptural views are judged to be wayward alternatives.

3.2.4. *God and the World "together"*

Now what these views evidence is that, if religion is to be taken seriously, both factors—sovereignty and subservience/dependence—need not only to be respected but also to work together. This calls for a warrant or "third factor", that allows them to be "taken together" in a proper and meaningful way. Vollenhoven did not hesitate to point this out. It is the factor of the divine law that "relates" God and the World. How does "law" fulfil this role of being required to bring God and World together?

The factor of law would appear to warrant taking religion as having a unique status and thus—when properly elucidated—as setting off the religious consciousness in a distinct way, as "standing on its own feet". But there are uncertainties here that should not be overlooked.

In the first place, Vollenhoven explains the appeal to the law as being grounded in the divine will. The law is "in or from God", and its holding for the World follows from an application of the divine will. In being the expression of God's will, we may question whether the law really is a "third factor" besides sovereignty and dependence. The volitional context tends to emphasize divinity's role of imposing law as part of its sovereignty, to which the World must respond in obedience, rather than provide a sustaining condition for the World's obedience. One expects the latter to be more explicit if law is really to be a "third factor" and not so nestled in sovereignty.

Secondly, in speaking of the divine law in the context of religion, we need to know how this relates to the normative order of ordinances that is so essential in the discussion of worldviews, and whether there is a difference here. In 1929 Vollenhoven clarified this matter by making a fundamental distinction. On the one hand there are the modal laws (ordinances) of the normative order that govern the functioning of things and human beings. Vollenhoven now declares this order to be grounded in the divine "will of decision", at least its revealed part. Distinct from this there is, on the other hand, the "law of love", as grounded in the "will of command". This will of command enjoins us to love God, not in a distinct functional sense, but "in the functioning of everything, to the extent that this takes place out of love towards God, according to the will of command."[30] In 1932 Vollenhoven follows this up by placing the theme of good and evil in direct correlation to the love command. The determinant of good and evil thereby becomes a distinct (the third) determinant of cosmic life (the other two being the individual and the modal determinants).[31] So "good and evil" is a determinant of the World that now stands in direct relation to the encompassing love command. (It is the love command that functions as criterion for choosing between good or evil.) This at least distinguishes the worldview context with its ordinances from the religious context with its encompassing "law of love". But "law", whether the modal laws (normative ordinances) or the (more holistic) law of love, is still coupled, exclusively volitionally, to the divine will. So its status as "third factor" between sovereignty and subservience is still not

really clarified. Law continues to be wrapped up in the determination of sovereignty, with an overtone of authoritarianism towards the World.

Thirdly, in 1939 a new opening appeared. Vollenhoven now acknowledges that the law is "knowable in its own right". This is a somewhat covert (if not cryptic) way of saying that the human being is able to recognize the existence of the law as a reality in its own right. The being of the law is *to obtain*. The recognition of the law as holding for the World is now effective through putting the law *in correlation with* the World. This new correlation is the important point here. Formerly Vollenhoven spoke simply of the correlation of God and the World.[32] This agreed with his "dualism of God and World". But as of 1939, he relinquishes this. Law "serves" in its own capacity, rather than "merely" being the expression of the divine will. That capacity entails highlighting the factor of human responsibility, more so than before. Rather than limiting the characterization of world's religious role to obedience, there is now room for interpreting the law and also being critical of its application, as essential to the exercise of human responsibility. The moral link to good and evil also becomes more important. The triplet of "God-Law-World" now captures Vollenhoven's way of *overcoming* the dualism of God and the World without falling into an alternative monism.[33]

Now, when bringing the modal ordinances into the picture, we find that the love command *directs* the distinct (modal) functional ordinances. The newly asserted correlation of law and the World is most pronounced in the human being. The law of love has a direct bearing on the human soul, which is the whole human person seen inwardly; the modal functional laws regulate the functions of the body, the body being the whole human person seen outwardly.[34] Naturally, law is still "from God", since it is God who "posits" it as obtaining for the World. But the point of its obtaining is now linked essentially to the soul's directing role, namely that it leads the human being as a whole to pursue the good direction, meaning that the functioning in the law-spheres are sustained to realize the redeemed "good life" in the context of covenant history. In other words, law is now indeed much more of a "third factor" than before, bringing together God and the World, for God's sovereignty now reckons explicitly with the status of the World as represented in the human being's (covenant) dependent historical need.

3.2.5. *"Reckoning with Scripture"*
The development we have described in Vollenhoven's view leaves little doubt about the duality of sovereignty and dependence, and that the third factor of the "law of love" bridges the contrast in a way that makes the poles of the contrast belong together. In other words, this description of religion makes it out to be both meaningful in its own right and relevant. — *Note*. One cannot of course command or demand love when love is understood to be a feeling or emotion. That is not the meaning of love here, for that is not the biblical meaning either. In the latter "love" is more like "be concerned for", "be responsible for", with redemptive aim. This also distinguishes it from normative rules and rule-following. "Showing concern for" can be requested and considered, but it cannot be captured in a rule. It has more to do with a *fundamental life-attitude*. —

Now one might think that our discussion has focussed on Vollenhoven's own commitment in the context of the Christian religion. That, I believe, would be a hasty conclusion. The duality of God and the world, however defined, counts as a general religious distinction, at least that is what is intended here. In fact, one might be inclined to draw an opposite conclusion, namely that the discussion of God and the World is already in the philosophical mode, rather than a meta-philosophical one. There will be confusion so long as the "binding factor" of the love command is not properly taken into account.

Vollenhoven himself left this matter in a somewhat inchoate state. His favoured expression was to say that philosophy—at least Christian philosophy—ought to "reckon with" Scripture. This is not to say—providing we definitely reject any "Christian scholasticism"— that Scripture is brought into a direct rapport with philosophy. However, Vollenhoven is not entirely consistent here. In the course of many years, the Scripture has been influential in forming a broad historical tradition as to the understanding of life—for example, that the World is created by God, that Christ is its saviour and redeemer, and the Spirit is our comforter and guide, etc.—that conditions our experience of our own lives. It is the Bible in the hands of a *historically conditioned believer*, particularly in the strain of the Reformation, that delineates the "reckoning" that takes place for Vollenhoven. Hence the reckoning for him is accepting biblical information as truths in their own right. It is their religious medium that sets them off from experiential truths, but it is the long witness of history and authoritative religion that helps accept them. This, for Vollenhoven, is enough justification to fit his account of religion into his philosophical discourse (cf. note 26).

But is the role of religion as presupposition of philosophy thereby surpassed? Not if we include the role of religious *authority*. The religious *authority* that is generally taken to be proper in this context is to be found in the acceptance of the authoritative *revelation* of Scripture. This is for Vollenhoven of the essence of religious discourse. But here too there is a problem. This leaves wide open the hermeneutical question as to how that revelation is read and surmised. Vollenhoven fully recognizes that the biblical text was in the making from three to two thousand years ago. However its authoritative revelation is best expressed, according to him, in the interpretation of covenant-theology of the sixteenth century Reformation. This, naturally, is not what everyone would immediately be in agreement with. It calls for substantive discussion. It may be true that in the person of the thinker there is always a factor of (religious) belief, in Vollenhoven's case this being the preference for the Reformation. But this is empirical. If religion has an inner meaning that is unique to its own understanding, we need *to link authority more closely to the love command itself*. We should then at least be able to supplement Vollenhoven's "reckoning with" of the Scriptures, as medium, with an understanding of the essential content of that medium.

3.3. *Transcendence*

If (so we said), in the context of religion, the love command is the binding factor between sovereignty and dependence, then what needs further review is what constitutes *authority* in religious discourse. To say that authority is based on "God speaking" is circular. One then needs to accept the existence, or at least the relevance, of deity. But that itself presupposes

the religious mode of discourse. We need to ask the more primary question: How and why does a human being accept a "command" or "revelation" from without, from that which *transcends* the person and his environment, and gives to it an *immanent* response? The question does not ask about the nature of the source or the medium, but about the "mechanism" in human life that gives authority (transcendence) and response (immanence) a hold. This must be close to the core meaning of religious discourse, for it clearly ties in with the traits of sovereignty and subservience, and ties them together.

3.3.1. *The scapegoat mechanism*

A proper answer to the posed question would requires a volume. But some pointers can be put in place, especially since there are sources that are valuable in this regard. I believe that in this connection the work of René Girard (*1923) is of signal importance and relevance. Religion, in his review, is closely linked to the need for peace, concord, and harmony, as opposed to violence, strife and division, in any human community, these positive qualities being achieved through the expediency of sacrifice.[35]

Girard analyses the practice and realization of religion and discovers what he calls the "scapegoat mechanism". Any society—lets take a primitive society in mind, which is easier to overview—is confronted with a crisis from time to time. There is a dissension between the members of the community over something that is not immediately resolved. The dissension grows, and the group becomes increasingly more agitated through mutual imitation; in fact it becomes mob-like, and as this grows its (factual or real) incentive fades unawares from view. The crisis can engulf the entire community; well, almost the entire community, for there are always marginalized persons—the sick, the handicapped, prisoners, strangers, criminals, etc.—that are less involved. In fact, in the face of the crisis, their very marginalization, which appears to make them less interested, becomes suspect to the over-excited crisis mind. They become suspected of being possible covert agitators, who have a control over the conflict. The mob picks on one, and we get a situation of all against one. The person targeted is "scapegoated" or victimized, i.e., hunted down and spontaneously lynched. This actual elimination of life ends the animosity of the mob—what it took to be the cause is removed—and peace is restored through this process of victimage.

A strange follow-up ensues. The victimized individual brought about peace in the community through his death. Community is again established, and for this effect the victimized individual is now honoured and remembered. As this mechanism is repeated and its consciousness of positive effect grows—through how many thousands of repetitions?—the amassed memory will be punctuated by cases of victims who in life were distinct in terms of their influence or importance. (These might be shaman-like figures.) This, we note, itself makes them vulnerable to victimization in being envied by others. But when, in a case of conflict, they themselves are victimized, their remembrance is likely to be prolonged or their example (as effect) more influential and cherished. In this remembrance the individuals victimized take on, in death, a god-like quality.

The gods are born at about the time that society learns to make the victimage mechanism more operational (in the transition from the Palaeolithic to the Mesolithic

period?). Society came to realize, in time, that it can exercise control over group life through an organized *sacrifice* of a victim at the time of impending crisis, but before the crisis erupts uncontrollably. Such a sacrifice can be explained and justified in linking it to a god's need and honour—probably itself the memory of an influential former victim—who might withhold his blessing when not adequately respected. The deity's effect, in turn, can be seen as making demands, interpreted as community *prohibitions*. These may be no more than taboos prevalent in the society involved, but could also involve the primitive social organization of the group. Besides the sacrificial practice (of substitute victimage) and the institution of prohibitions (taboos), there are also *myths*. They name and explain the roles of the gods and the expected societal response, exercised as worship and proper conduct. Naturally, this "proper conduct" reflects the point of view of the victimizers, not the victims. The myths codify the specific meaning of a deity, in terms of what is relevant in group life, and also delineate the jurisdiction of their activity. As sacrifices, prohibitions and myths become a close-knit tri-unity, one recognizes the delineation of a religious consciousness. It is predicated on life and death, and commands authority in being effective at that fundamental level.[36]

The heart of this religious experience lies in the scapegoat mechanism, in which a sacrificed life effects redemption in and through death. The bestowal of this redemptive effect upon the community takes place from beyond the bounds of life—at least that is the experience. It is an *experience of transcendence* that holds or obtains in life, for the blessings or demands from *beyond* the bounds of life serve to confirm and consolidate, through the sacrificial victim, some features of the community *within* these bounds. In that way authority and obedience are relevant in their role of consolidating community life through sacrifice, prohibitions and myths.[37]

Religion has meaning only within the interplay of the reality of life and death. This comes out clearly in Girard's analysis of religion that reveals the scapegoat mechanism. But Girard's account is not yet complete. A surprising new dimension becomes evident when he claims that the understanding of religion, as summarized above, involves a *false* (or *pseudo*-) transcendence. There is something fundamentally misguided in the use of the scapegoat mechanism. The victims sacrificed, whether they be spontaneous victims or those substituted for the original victims in cultic sacrifice, are considered to be guilty of a disturbance in the community. They somehow triggered a group crisis. The victim is thought to have committed some misdemeanour—usually expressed in very irrational accusations, like poisoning the drinking source, violating taboos, committing incest, disrespecting deities, etc. These accusations are related to features of the community or society that are important to its members. When the victim's death brings the crisis to a halt, this consolidates the group's understanding of the features felt to have been violated by the victim. In other words, victimage confirms the social order. But these features can be generalized so as to exceed the limitations of society. Thus a communal crisis can be interpreted as including the living world (when the patterns of animal life seem to be disrupted) and even the cosmic elements (nature in disarray with storms and floods), evidencing clearly displeasure on the part of the gods that are taken as having say and authority over these specific domains. In other words,

the gods are all *intra-cosmic*, and the processes by which they are venerated and honoured involve mimetically misguided victimization. That is why the "transcendence" of the gods is spurious and a sham.

The scapegoat mechanism essentially reflects the position of the group in crisis. The group is formed through the agitation of its members, who *imitate* one another rather than assess the situation and understand its cause. The group suffers from what nowadays is sometimes referred to as "tunnel vision". Members are caught up in a *mimetic network* that makes them see only what the group asserts—what "men say"—is the case. But the point of view of the victim is clearly different. Being a marginalized individual, he is not entangled in the mimetic network of the group, at least not initially. He knows he is not guilty of the crimes attributed to him. But the mimetic effect on the individual can be so strong that he may actually come to believe in his own so-called "guilt". Who is to say that he hasn't, unbeknown, violated some sacred prescription? Soon he too believes the group's deception. Could he but remain firm in the perception of his own innocence, such as the biblical Job doggedly maintained against the contrary arguments of his three friends. Victimization could then be recognized and asserted to be a gross form of *injustice*. The group does not know what it is doing. The post-mortem respect and divination are also *mimetic effects*, lacking all substance in reality.

3.3.2. *The Jewish-Christian tradition*

Girard holds that the effect of the scapegoat mechanism can only be adequately countered by a source that can call the mechanism's bluff. This takes place, in Girard's view, in the Judaic-Christian tradition. Here, in the biblical text of this tradition, the innocence of the victim is not covered over but fully expressed (e.g., Joseph, Job, Jonah, and, most important, Jesus himself). The biblical text exonerates these victims from all blame, pointing to (or at least strongly suggesting) the injustice of the charges against them. Probably the Jew's own experience of the Babylonian captivity is what helped put this awareness so overtly into their texts, as over against mythological text that generally underscore, or at least assume, the guilt of the victim—the practice of the nations! The captivity gave the opportunity to the Jews to reflect on their status as victims/prisoners of war. The lack of an independent national life raised the memory of having been victimized before in the Egyptian period prior to their own experience as a nation centuries earlier. Their sense of identity made them aware of the injustice of their position. A merge with other nations through a common alternative sacrifice could not be contemplated. Therefore in the Bible there is a distinctly anti-sacrificial strain: there is to be justice, not sacrifice,[38] in particular for the individuals most prone to be marginalized within Jewish society itself, *viz.* widows and orphans, who are least protected by Mosaic law.[39] Christ's death shows-up the injustice of the sacrificial system as based on the scapegoat mechanism. Luke lets (of all persons) the Roman centurion, responsible for execution the crucifixion of Jesus, say: "This surely was a righteous [thus innocent] man" (Luke 23: 47). So there is in any case a clear counterthrust that shows-up the illusion of the scapegoat mechanism.

But one might maintain that the crucifixion is difficult to distinguish from an application of precisely the scapegoat mechanism. Wasn't it a "all against one" situation? Isn't Christ's death usually interpreted as being an atoning sacrifice for the salvation of all mankind? Isn't this the warrant for "peace on earth"? Here careful discrimination is called for. One and the same event can be interpreted in different ways, depending on the point of view. The event of the crucifixion is indeed a case of "all against one", and the words of the high priest, Caiaphas—did he but realize it—bring the scapegoat interpretation explicitly to the fore, when he says: "It is better for you that one man should die for the people than that the whole nation perish" (John 11:50; cf. also John 18: 14). For the high priest this use of the scapegoat mechanism is an "expedient" (cf. John 18:14), not in any way meant to serve justice! But the Gospels are precisely intent on that (in)justice.[40] From Jesus' perspective we are told that, up until the garden of Gethsemane, he had every opportunity to avoid this death. The fact that he, nevertheless, did undergo it is not from any succumbing to the mimetic effect of the crowd, who calls for his crucifixion, but to honour what Jesus felt to be God's will about his having a central calling in Israel and beyond. God's will is focussed on justice, and not on Jesus having to be sacrificed for God's honour or to appease his anger. The latter would be the scapegoat interpretation all over again. It is the satanic character of the scapegoat mechanism that is exposed to the light of day.[41]

3.3.3. *Genuine transcendence*

We cannot, in the context of this paper, review all of Girard's arguments. But we can generalize and understand elemental features of his view that are such as to fall in line with our own line of argument in connection with religion. To grasp the matter (of atonement) at its most intense, consider the following. It makes a world of difference whether *life is taken* so as to save oneself or one's group from (a supposed) danger, or whether *life is given* so that the other gains new opportunities. A *life is taken* essentially to save the *status quo*, while a *life is given* to change it. To *take a life* is to rob the victim of its very being or existence; whereas to *give a life* is to help the other flourish in his existence. When a *life is taken*, the mimetic behaviour in which it takes place stupefies the sense of injustice towards the victim this involves, in fact the perpetrators do not even recognize the victim as victim but as one guilty of a crime; when *life is given*, one chooses to do so from a sense of responsibility or service for the other. Against this background we see a moral principle emerge for society as a whole. It is of essential importance whether society results from the limitation of the principle that *the one is a wolf for the other* (Hobbes), or that it results from the limitation of the principle that *the one is for the other* (Levinas). Does society and its institutions result from the attempt to contain violence through violence, or does it result from the containment of the infinite responsibility that reveals itself in the moral relation of responsibility for the other?[42]

We see quite clearly, if the (schema of the) *taking of life* calls up a pseudo-transcendence, the (schema of the) *giving of life* must involve a different kind of transcendence. The latter requires no sacrifice,[43] commits nothing unjustly, which implies that *everything creaturely can be honoured in its value*.[44] But then "care" is an ubiquitous

quality, and "showing concern for" is a commendable general attitude. Nothing would be more inconsequential than to rob anything of its existence wantonly or completely on the self-serving grounds of the victimizer, as if one bore no *responsibility* for it. (In that sense pagan sacrifice is a sacrilege!) "To be responsible for caringly" is then an—perhaps *the*—essential meaning-giving feature of life. It sets a human being in motion, not from out of him- or herself, but through a call for care that addresses me while being from *beyond* me. It motivates my responsibility for the *other* in connection with his/her/its very existence, a responsibility that has no social of natural boundaries. In the concrete sense it is the "primary universal".

We see too that the "beyond" here is not meant to suggest a "higher domination" but rather a "horizontal source" whose primary aim is to constitute and honour what is good. The responsibility on which it rides can never be abated, for concrete existence ineluctably involves passage and change, need and plenitude, failure and hope. The other gives me, quite unpredictably, a concrete and life-serving reason to think and act in his appeal to me *from beyond my own interest and my own world.*—Were "care for the other" motivated self-servingly, wouldn't that be considered hypocritical, or a clever rationalization?—The universality of this "responsibility as care" makes it determinative for a *fundamental attitude towards life*, an attitude that promotes life, an attitude that is called up by a *horizontal transcendence*. It is this transcendence that we find portrayed in the Jewish-Christian religious tradition,[45] and it is inherent in the biblical meaning of the love command.

3.4. *The religious presupposition*

So, on our view, religious discourse, properly considered, also proceeds from a binding element between religious terms. The binding element is the love command, and it holds together sovereignty and dependence. What is important for religious discourse is not the love command as such but one's response to it. It is in that response that an alternative of a "negative" as over against a "positive" response becomes evident. When the love command's relating *dependence*, interpreted as "obedient duty", to *sovereignty*, taken as "unquestioned authority", we are (still) in the mindset of control and domination, the feeding ground for a pseudo-transcendence. But the love command can also be taken as binding the appeal of the Other (sovereignty as moral appeal), who is always beyond us but at our level, an appeal touching our primary responsibility, prior to our choice, for everything that "comes our way". This primary responsibility, what the love command in fact enjoins, is constitutive for our subjectivity, when taken in the literal sense of "standing in subjection" (or dependence). That brings a more horizontal transcendence, or active "beyond", into the picture. Or, to repeat the main thought differently, it makes all the difference in the world if we (sadly) take our religious duty to be gained through a kind of delegated authority—a divine right to control and dominate—rather than as (positively) sharing in the work of cherishing that wondrous reality we live in, as the work of a Creator, and finding our deepest meaning—as God would have it—in contributing to the other's flourishing as creatures cared for in the context of the historical world. I believe this latter formulation is consistent with Vollenhoven's view of the

covenant relation between God and the World, in particular from the time of the early 1940s, when the "law of love" is defended as "being knowable in its own right".[46]

Now what is the role of the religious consciousness as presupposition of philosophy? We said that, taking the practice of philosophy externalistically, an essential ingredient of *the context of philosophical practice* is the confrontation with the historical change that takes place in the world itself as we survey and deal with it. History itself evinces passage, change, generation and corruption, finite reality, etc. When religion is understood as focussed on the meaning of life and what it can mean for or does with life, in the heart of history, then religious discourse is clearly predicated on historical reality, and philosophy can ignore it only through a dogmatic choice.

But this is not to say that philosophy, in its direct discourse, should usurp a religion. That would again confuse the meta-philosophical with the philosophical. We have seen that religion is complex, and assuming that its consciousness is *sui generis*—proceeding from a unique kind of moral-evaluative or attitude-determining discourse—it needs to be understood *on its own terms* first. But having said that, we realize that the presupposition of change that the religious consciousness brings to bear, and the sense of being called to be engaged in it— i.e. fully reckon with the confrontation of that changing reality—requires us to take a stand regarding the most basic facets of existence. Is the referent that confronts us in our thought an exemplar of being, as an unchanging, rigid, and exact structure? Or is it the world of existence, that "contains all thoughts and feelings, all the data of sense, and all physical objects, everything that can do either good or harm, everything that makes any difference to the value of life and the world"?[47] The religious presupposition confronts us to consider (1) the meaning of our own engagement in philosophy, and (2) the being of reality.

As to our engagement in philosophy, there is no competition with religion. However complex religious experience might be in terms of practises of worship and demands of belief, there is the much more fundamental fact of understanding the bond of love as underscoring God's infinite care for the world and the human being. This motivates our own concern and care, also as relevant for what we try to understand in doing philosophy. We sense that the religious consciousness enjoins that the understanding of the reality of existence entails *doing justice to the richness of what there is*.[48] To put it in a nutshell: religion, in the right sense, directs the use of *power to serve and sustain*; while religion, in the wrong sense, devolves into *power to dominate and control*.

So religious discourse is, in a fundamental sense, attuned to the most basic traits of existence within the context of the passage of history. In fact it calls for a *choice of being*. Religious discourse is much more than ruminating about gods, angels, spirits, and what not, unless subject to critical discourse; rather it is a channel shaping the deepest attitudes of life, for good or evil. No one can be indifferent to that. When this lights up in the presupposition of the historical consciousness of the context of philosophy, something of the nature of being is portrayed in that presupposition. A perennial problem of philosophy is: what is reality? When taking biblical religion into account we are offered to think of reality as being the dynamic effectuation through which things flourish in realizing their potential. As presupposition of philosophy, the religious consciousness calls up in the human being a

mindset that challenges us to activate our deepest capacity to think and to enhance that dynamic effectuation.

4. *To conclude*

Philosophy, Vollenhoven holds, is exercised externalistically. This involves acknowledging that the practice of philosophy takes place in a concrete context. The most encompassing features of context are the presence of the world and the passage of history that changes the world. (This is not to deny constancy, but the latter needs to be (eidetically) discerned in the phenomena, which calls for an active, fully cognitive philosophical discourse.) These features (of context) invite consideration as to what the presence of world involves and how history is to be viewed. It is in philosophy's interest to follow-up on this invitation by considering actual worldviews and religious traditions of history.

Not every worldview or religious tradition is equally important. Only when a discourse calls for the recognition of a distinct focus of consciousness do we have something to analyse. We find in Vollenhoven that a worldview centres on freedom and responsibility. Norms account for the possibility of taking these together. These norms also serve to confirm a diversity of "life forms" (Wittgenstein's term). Our engagement in the life-world is basically pluralistic. Any worldview in which this is realized has relevance in that it helps to orientate the practices of the life-world. Kuyper's "sphere-sovereignty" is one such worldview. The practice of this worldview justifies the acceptance of norms, or, more generally, accepting a normative order. So a viable worldview is relevant to philosophy in justifying the acceptance of a normative order as presupposition. Reckoning with a "Reformed worldview" in philosophy gives one the right to speak of a "Reformed philosophy". This worldview presupposition also delimits philosophy in that it withholds it from taking speculative turns, and contributes to underscoring philosophy's "place and tasks" (Vollenhoven).

Religious discourse can be approached in a largely similar way. The religious consciousness needs to stand on its own feet (as it were), meaning that religious discourse has a *sui generis* relevance. The heart of the matter for Vollenhoven is how God and the World are taken to be together. Religion necessarily includes a way of dealing with the fundamental needs and values of existence in the passage of life and history. But there is a problem here. Religion can be chartered to help control the world-in-passage, in the long history of which many gods have arisen through a "scapegoat mechanism" (Girard), giving rise to a pseudo-transcendence of its gods. Over against this there is the biblical tradition. It deals with the world-in-passage in specifying that the bond between God and the world is that of love as service, *viz.* a response of love that accepts responsibility. This underscores understanding the *being* of life and of the world to be the power that lets things *flourish* in the passage of their finitude, and that this view is justified in terms of a horizontal transcendence. Here, for Vollenhoven, the biblical "love command" has an essential role. Only when respecting this religious command can the attendant philosophy be called "Scriptural". As presupposition of philosophy this horizontal or genuine transcendence stimulates thought to think ontologically in terms of dynamic effectuation.

Philosophy that is delimited by these presuppositions has a "task and place". It is cognitively conditioned in presupposing *truth*. But, as activity, doing philosophy also requires presupposing a *pluralist, normative order* (that itself links it to the question of an adequate worldview), and presupposing an attitude-determining acceptance of the *meaning of being* that is experienced as the world in passage. The latter is addressed in many forms of religion. Philosophy derives its concern from the awareness of a "beyond" (transcendence) that is operative here. But philosophy can bend that beyond to serve its own interest (pseudo-transcendence) of control and construction, or be challenged by the other, who is beyond our expectation, to think what the other requires of us to consider from out of its need. This brings within philosophy itself an ontology of care and responsibility that is supported by a horizontal transcendence.[49]

Philosophy's direct discourse requires that its presuppositions be in place. But philosophy also needs to conduct meta-philosophical inquiry into its own "place and task", i.e., to reflect on the presuppositions themselves. For these presuppositions hem in and determine the cognitive conditions of philosophy. Obviously the philosophical and the meta-philosophical need to be distinguished. But they belong together if philosophy is to be meaningful and also to be able to address its own "good sense" in the light of presuppositions.

Bibliography

Descartes, R. (1931), "Discourse on method of rightly conducting the reason and seeking for truth in the sciences" (1637); in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, trans. by E.S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross, vol. I. Cambridge: University Press; 2nd corrected edition; pp. 79-130.

Ehrman, B.D. (2011), *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 2nd edition. Oxford University Press.

Girard, R. (1986), *The Scapegoat*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Girard, R. (1987), *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, trans. by S. Bann and M. Metteer.   London: Athlone.

Girard, R. (2005), *The Girard Reader*, ed. by J.G. Williams. New York: Crossroad.

Hart, H. (1979), "On the distinction between creator and creature", *Phil. Ref.* 44, 183-193.

Levinas, E. (1987), *Ethisch en oneindig*, trans. by C.J. Huizinga. Kampen: Kok Agora / Kapellen: Pelckmans.

Miller, A. and C. Wright, eds. (2002), *Rule-Following and Meaning*. Chesham: Acumen.

"Otto, Rudolf" (1972), in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, editor in chief Paul Edwards. Macmillan and Free Press; vol. 6.

Plantinga, A. (1980), *Does God have a Nature?* Milwaukee: Marquette University Press.

Russell, B. (1982), *The Problems of Philosophy*. Oxford University Press; first published in 1912.

Russell, B. (2001), *The Scientific Outlook*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001); first published in 1931.

Sartre, J.-P. (1973), *Existentialism and Humanism*; translated from the French. London: Eyre Methuen; originally published in 1946.

Simonse, S. (1990), *Kings of Disaster: Dualism, Centralism and the Scapegoat King in the Southeastern Sudan*. Palembang, 1990, 333pgs. (PhD dissertation VU)

Skinner, B.F. (1948), *Walden Two*. New York: Macmillan.

Skinner, B.F. (1971), *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*. Toronto &: Bantam Books.

Tol, A. (2005), "Wetenschap en zinvragen: een historische terugblik", in *Ongekend nieuwsgierig; zinvragen en wetenschap*, ed. by Bart Voorsluis. Zoetermeer: Meinema.

Tol, A. (2010), *Philosophy in the Making. D.H.Th. Vollenhoven and the Emergence of Reformed Philosophy*. Sioux Center, Iowa: Dordt College Press.

Tol, A. (2011), "Reformational philosophy in the making", *Phil. Ref.* 76, 187-215.

Tol, A. and K.A. Bril (1992), *Vollenhoven als wijsgeer*. Amsterdam: Buijten en Schipperheijn.

Vollenhoven, D.H.Th. (1926), *Logos en Ratio*. Kampen: Kok.

Vollenhoven, D.H.Th. (1930), *De eerste vragen der psychologie*. Loosduinen: Kleywegt; privately published lecture delivered 9 Nov. 1929.

Vollenhoven, D.H.Th. (1950), "De soevereiniteit in eigen kring bij Kuyper en ons", in Tol and Bril (1992), 36-46.

Vollenhoven, D.H.Th. (1953), "Schriftgebruik en wijsbegeerte", in Tol and Bril (1992), 93-106.

Vollenhoven, D.H.Th. (1955), "Levenseenheid", in Tol and Bril (1992), 118-133.

Vollenhoven, D.H.Th. (1959), "Conservatism and progressiveness in philosophy", in *The Problem-Historical Method and the History of Philosophy*. Amstelveen: De Zaak Haes, 2005.

Vollenhoven, D.H.Th. (1963), "Plato's realisme", in Tol and Bril (1992), 155-159.

Vollenhoven, D.H.Th. (2005), *Isagôgè Philosophiae / Introduction to Philosophy*, ed. by J.H. Kok and A. Tol. Sioux Center, Iowa: Dordt College Press (bilingual edition).

Vollenhoven, D.H.Th. (2010), *Isagôgè Philosophiae 1930-1945 Tekstkritische uitgave. Filosofie in de Traditie van de Reformatie*, ed. by A. Tol. Amsterdam: Free University Press (entirely in Dutch).

Wittgenstein, L. (1961), *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; originally published in 1922.

Wittgenstein, L. (1976), *Philosophical Investigations*. Oxford: Blackwell; originally published in 1953.

Wolterstorff, N. (1970), *On Universals: An Essay in Ontology*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Wolterstorff, N. (1981), "Once again, creator/creature", *Phil. Ref.* 46, 60-67.

Endnotes

[1] Cf. in Tol (2010), p. 30, note 25.

[2] I have given an account of Vollenhoven's methodological procedures in chapter 1, section II, of Tol (2010). The three methods in Vollenhoven are: the thetical-critical method, the method of knowledge organization and the method of resolution and composition. The second of these two methods is only vaguely adumbrated in *Isagôgè Philosophiae*, yet is essential to it; cf. note 4 below.

[3] In chapter 4 of Tol (2010) I discuss shifts relevant to *renewing anthropology* (here "good and evil" figures prominently; pp. 473-479) and *overcoming dualism* (which involves a reinterpretation of the status of law; pp. 479-491).

[4] In Vollenhoven (2005/2010), sections 9-10, Vollenhoven distinguishes academic (or "scientific") knowing from everyday knowing. The latter includes worldview knowing, the former philosophical knowing. He asserts that philosophy ought to reflect "on the place and task of both kinds of knowing and must treat these points" explicitly. (This assumes and makes use of the method of knowledge organization; cf. note 2 above.) We add that religion is not specifically mentioned here. Having mentioned "place and task", Vollenhoven then turns to philosophy proper, the main topic being the elucidation of the "intersection principle", which is the ontological and cosmological basis of knowledge; cf. Part II, sections 22-136. (This involves the method of composition.) The topic of religion is also discussed here, in sections 115-136. The fact that it is discussed in philosophy proper calls for its own review. For a summary of the intersection principle, cf. Tol (2010), pp. 454-466.

[5] Cf. Vollenhoven (2005), section 174. I quote:
> This connection [of knowing and the knowable] is a direct one. In other words, it is not the case that things or humans first create impressions in the thinking person and that he then arrives at results by abstracting from the impressions present within him. No, the person thinking focuses his attention in what is knowable, be it thing or human being, and analyzes it, abstractly or not, there where it is and, in so doing, arrives at results.
> For that reason, contrary to what the copy theory [i.e., empiricism] claims, the connection between what is knowable and the result is not direct. In between what is knowable and the related result, there is always the analysis of the person thinking, who analyzes what is knowable correctly or not and, in turn, comes to knowledge or error concerning what is knowable.

Cf. also the discussion in Tol (2010), pp. 72-73, 434-440. I speak here of *agent* and *referent* in order to avoid the terms "subject" and "object", which are ambiguous in this context.

[6] Vollenhoven (1926), pp. 8, 9, 10. One can be more specific as to how Vollenhoven saw intuition, conception and judgment in relation to truth. (i) *Intuition* is the means of "coming to know", whereby the outcome is something consciously grasped. This outcome is "content of consciousness", but always involving the duality of "this/such" (state of affairs), *viz.* a presence ("this") with qualification ("such"). This qualification is "adverbial", being a qualification of being, in the sense of appealing to modal rules. The judgment based on this intuition—so-called "judgments of assessment, such as "A is such and such"—makes explicit whether the intuition has grasped the state of affairs rightly or wrongly. If one objects that "you intuit what you intuit", and that it is the judgment based on the intuition that is right or

wrong—cf. Russell (1982): p. 69—then one fails to appreciate the externalistic context. Something needs to trigger the intuition (a "this") and promote identification ("such-and-such"). The "you intuit what you intuit" is too focussed on only the intra-mental result (a meaning). (ii) *Conception* occurs through concept formation. It involves the duality of "extension and intension". Not only is the concept grasped meaning (the intension, this being dependent on the intuition), it also involves the range of its application over objects. In other words, a concept has a referential moment, which may be indicated by a variable when an actual choice of an object is not relevant. It is in this sense that a concept has "truth-value" *viz.* having the possibility of being true when the extension matches the intension, or being false when the extension does not match the intension. The use of the variable allows one to leave the actual choice undecided. (iii) *Judgment* involves statements that either assert something that is true or false about the subject of the statement. Here a concept has a predicate position, and the subject of the statement is either an object specifically denoted (named or described) or a generalization about the extensional range of relevant objects (statements about *all* or *some*); cf. Vollenhoven (2005), sections 175-176; also sections 28-49 for the basic "this-that" and "thus–so" (or "such and such") distinctions.

[7] The terms "externalism" and "internalism" do not occur in Vollenhoven. But they are very relevant to his meaning. Descartes' internalism is the chief theme of his "Discourse on method"; cf. Descartes (1931). Initially, in his dissertation, Vollenhoven's view of self-consciousness was "Cartesian-like", but it definitely became less so in his shift towards his reformed position in the mid-1920s.

[8] The term "life-world" is a modernist term, referring to the complex psycho-socio-technical context of the practical implementation of reason, aimed at progress in constructively forming the life-world through reason's use. It is popularly referred to as the context of science, morality and art. Each area applies reason in its own way, resulting in a *scientific-technical* use of reason, a *societal-bureaucratic* use and an *aesthetic-hermeneutical* use. Cf. Tol (2005), 16-33. One need not assent to this specific modernist meaning of the term, which has in any case suffered from subsequent post-modernist criticism and also needs to make room for other forms of reason (information theory, technical-medical use, interdisciplinary uses, etc), while still being able to appreciate the term's reminding one of the life-world's complexity of knowing-descriptive, practical-prescriptive and aesthetic-evaluative dimensions.

[9] For textual support in Vollenhoven, cf. *Isagôgè Philosophiae*, as of 1932 (in Vollenhoven 2010). Here he distinguishes explicitly the structure of things and that of kingdoms (cf. Vollenhoven (2010), section 26), this being the main contrast as explicated by the (third) method of resolution and composition (cf. note 2 above). The kingdoms are the context of the change, especially of genesis, of the world. The topic of religion, as covenant history, follows up on this. In the "Algemene inleiding" of Vollenhoven (2010), 49-51, I indicate how Vollenhoven fits epistemology into this context.

[10] In this connection cf. Vollenhoven (1953), 97-106. (The text is in Dutch.)

[11] There need be no difficulty here of mixing things academic and non-academic, so long as one recognizes the difference in the kinds of discourse involved. Also the externalism avoids the problem of the switch from one to the other. The embodied agent *avails* himself of a discourse. Discourse is *performed*. So the knowing agent is never "locked up" (as it were) in a discourse, supposedly at the expense of being able to use other discourse forms.

[12] Cf. Tol (2010), 42-46.

[13] Thus, whereas locutions such as "Aristotelian philosophy", "Kantian philosophy", etc. mean "the philosophy of Aristotle", "the philosophy of Kant", respectively—i.e., the understanding and formulation of philosophy as typical for the thinkers mentioned—Vollenhoven's use of the term "Scriptural philosophy" is *not* meant to say "the philosophy of Scripture". He denies that the Bible has a philosophy and one should not seek a philosophy in it. Thus the term "of" has the more general import of "being in accord or reckoning with". The same holds for Vollenhoven's alternative expression "Calvinistic philosophy". He does *not* mean to refer to "the philosophy of Calvin", should John Calvin have had one, but the term is a synonym for "reformed philosophy" (or "Scriptural philosophy": "philosophy that reckons with Scripture"). Of course, in advancing and defending a "Scriptural or reformed philosophy", Vollenhoven is evincing a preferred understanding of philosophy for which he bears responsibility. The main features of this "Vollenhovenian philosophy" form the topic of this paper.

[14] For a frank discussion of the scientific outlook, one that does not eschew pointing to very negative features of its possible implementation, cf. Russell (2001), first published in 1931. A very explicit application of the scientific outlook, in terms of behavioural determinism, is to be found in Skinner (1971) and his early controversial utopia, Skinner (1948). Communistic socialism (Marxism) is an example of social determinism.

[15] Cf. Sartre (1973).

[16] Cf. Wittgenstein (1976), sections 19, 23, 241; sections 138-242 are on rule-following. For a more recent discussion of Wittgenstein's understanding of "rule-following", a discussion initiated by Saul Kripke, cf. Miller and Wright (2002).

[17] Vollenhoven never addressed "rule-following" or closely related notions. But I see no conflict in allowing language games, as "forms of life", to supplement "sphere sovereignty". This is not to overlook their differences, but to emphasize the *practical consciousness* each expresses. We need to distinguish this from philosophical discourse proper. In fact, Wittgenstein held that his approach via language-games tolled the end of philosophy as traditionally understood. His "language-game" approach is also externalistic, as over against the internalist approach of traditional philosophy.

[18] This was also meant as a self-correction. In Wittgenstein (1961), Wittgenstein defends the "one-word, one meaning" principle, whereby a meaning is taken to be an essence. In the later *Philosophical Investigations* he berates essentialism as signalling a "craving for generality" and a "contempt for the individual case". But inducing such a sharp rift between the general (essence) and the particular (individual case) seems overdone; e.g., an expression such as "this man" combines generality and particularity. The reference to "craving" and "contempt" seems to be somewhat irrational exaggerations, which do not help to understand the desire involved.

[19] A direct application of this discerning role of norms is when gestures, behaviour or events are ambiguous. Was the explosion a terrorist attack or a detonation in connection with road construction? Was the car accident a suicidal act, an attempt to acquire insurance money, or a

result of mechanical failure? We need to take possibly relevant norms into account to come to a correct interpretation and judgment. When events are not directly ambiguous, the relevant norms tend to remain covert. But they are present and relevant nonetheless.

[20] For a discussion of sphere sovereignty in Vollenhoven, see Vollenhoven (1950), (1953) and (1955); also Tol (2010), 42-46. The Vollenhoven texts here mentioned are not yet available in English.

[21] Cf. Vollenhoven (2005)/(2010), section 175.

[22] Cf. Vollenhoven (2005)/(2010), section 170. The analytical law-sphere, which is the context for concept formation and for judgment, is "far from an isolated chamber of consciousness or categorical apparatus."

[23] Cf. A. Tol, *Philosophy in the Making*, 416-422). As stated in the text, Vollenhoven usually spoke of laws when referring to the whole creation order. It is when laws are actually recognized, within a law-sphere as *obtaining* for the states of affairs and functioning in that law-sphere, that laws are called *norms*. I have avoided this somewhat circuitous use in my own discussions above. The term "ordinances", after all, is used to denote the creation order generally, in all of its law-spheres.

[24] Vollenhoven spoke of laws/norms, commands and directives in the first set-up of *Isagôgè Philosophiae*, 1930-1931; cf. Vollenhoven (2010), Appendix 1, §§72-77, pp. 283-285. In 1953 he repeated this, though in the slightly different terminology of "three-fold law"; cf. Vollenhoven (1953), 103-106.

[25] Cf. Otto (1972), vol. 6, p. 14.

[26] I ought to emphasize that Vollenhoven consciously avoided using the term "moral" (in Dutch "zedelijk"). He feared that the term had a cultural overtone that is all too easily confused with "ethics" and "the ethical". Also, the term would appear to have the effect of "downgrading" the meaning of good and evil in its religious sense. All this is possibly true. But to me the term "moral" is first of all a synonym for "good and evil". Rather than give up all use of the term, for the reasons given, I prefer to emphasize the presuppositions of its use. It need not be confused with "ethics" or "the ethical", so long as the latter is primarily associated with the (ethical) law-sphere, and thus geared to (modal) norms. The difference of "good and evil" in Vollenhoven is not a modally specific theme, it is "trans-modal". (Vollenhoven refers to it as the "third determinant" *besides* the individual and the modal determinants.) Also, rather than having a "downplaying" effect, we emphasize, with Vollenhoven, that the distinction of good and evil calls for a criterion to adjudicate in the choice between them, and this is none other than "the (biblical) love command". On these conditions the term "moral" is, I believe, quite useable.

[27] The discussion of religion in Vollenhoven falls within the consideration of earthly life, i.e., Part II of *Isagôgè Philosophiae*. That Part makes a main distinction between "things and human beings" on the one hand and "kingdoms and humankind" on the other. Obviously, things function in kingdoms and human beings are born, live and die within the context of humankind. The latter shares features with nature, but Vollenhoven also includes a discussion of societal connections. The dynamics of societal change are, properly speaking, a facet of

history. Vollenhoven closes Part II with a discussion of religion. Hence this discussion of religion presupposes both the natural world and the human participation in nature and history.

Vollenhoven places religion itself in the context of *covenant history*. Thus religion in Vollenhoven has no truck with anything resembling world flight. For Vollenhoven the human being's (religious) relation to God involves a response to God's revelation to humankind. The response to revelation, itself of redemptive intent, is implemented in the context of history. Thus the religious experience is the redemptive-historical thread that runs through (general) history. Religion and covenant history presuppose both general history and the presence of the world.

Vollenhoven rewrote the account of religion in *Isagôgè Philosophiae* several times. One does best to consult the text-critical edition, Vollenhoven (2010).

[28] A more current example of this position ("cosmism") is to be found in the "Reformed epistemology" of N. Wolterstorff and A. Plantinga. They posit a being to which the creator God is necessarily subject. Cf. Wolterstorff (1970) and the review by H. Hart, Hart (1979) and Wolterstorff's reply, Wolterstorff (1981). Plantinga's "cosmism" can be found in his Plantinga (1980), where he speaks of God as being "the first being of the universe"; Plantinga (1980), 1, also 9, 36, 110.

[29] For a fuller discussion of God and the World, particularly in the early Vollenhoven, cf. Tol (2010), 391-396.

[30] Cf. Vollenhoven (1930), 18. This text is a privately published version of a lecture Vollenhoven gave 9 Nov. 1929. In the first complete version of *Isagôgè Philosophiae*, 1930, Vollenhoven referred to the trinity in such a way that the Father posits laws/law-norms, the Son reveals commands and the Holy Spirit offers guidance. The latter divine Person does not enter the picture in the present context, but the other two secure the distinction between on the one hand modal-functional laws/norms and on the other commands, such as the love command, which, in being directed to his/her heart, is directed to the *whole human person*. The phrase "in the functioning of everything" takes everything together, hence it has holistic, not distinctly functional, implications.   Cf. Vollenhoven 2010, 283 ff.

[31] This is a novelty of the *Isagôgè Philosophiae* version of 1932 and retained in all later editions. Cf. Vollenhoven 2010.

[32] Vollenhoven refers to this in his valedictory address, "Plato's realisme", when he states: "Hence Calvinistic philosophy—contrary to Greek-Hellenic thought and the synthesis thought dependent on it—sees the law as the boundary between God and the cosmos. Whereby at the same time the dualism that is *unacceptable* for a Christian, but still finding acceptance, of the *correlation of God and world* is replaced by the view that is neither dualistic nor monistic, of a *law* posed by God that is *correlate with the world* created by him." Tol and Bril 1992, 155-256 (emphases added), also Tol (2010), 487. Vollenhoven's own early "Biblical dualism" fell within the "correlation of God and World" view. The turning point for Vollenhoven himself was about 1939-1941. Cf. also my "Algemene inleiding" to Vollenhoven (2010), 49-55.

[33] See the reference in note 28; one may also consult Tol (2010), 479-490.

[34] Note the following citation from 1951: "Thus, one readily notices, analogous to the difference between soul and body in connection with the human being—taken in the

Scriptural sense of heart and function mantle—the difference between the principal intent and differentiation in connection with the law. The former summarizes the kernel of the law as the demand of love to God and to the fellow human being, whom he has placed beside us. However, this one law [of love] is differentiated in a diversity of laws for functional life." Tol and Bril (1992), 55; also Tol (2010), 478.

[35] Cf. the bibliography where three works of Girard are mentioned. They give an excellent portrayal of Girard's thought.

[36] This account of religion as arising within the practice of the scapegoat mechanism is not just a "likely tale" relevant to ancient times. Modern life still displays crucial features of this mechanism, particularly in the context of imitation and desire. Among current primitive peoples the scapegoat mechanism is sometimes still so overt as to be capable of being studied empirically. A case in point is south-eastern Sudan`. The group behaviour of the local communities there has been studied by Simon Simonse; cf. S. Simonse (1990). And of course the scapegoat mechanism is essential to racism and genocide.

[37] The tri-unity of sacrifices, prohibitions and myths calls for offices of execution, these being those of priest, king and prophet respectively. These offices are probably a differentiation from a prior and more primitive "shamanism".

[38] Consider texts such as Matthew 12:6; also Matthew 9:13, 1 Samuel 15: 22 and Hosea 6:6.

[39] Consider Jesus' warning against the hypocrisy of the scribes. They love to be esteemed for their (supposed) importance. Meanwhile they "appropriate widows' houses, while they offer long prayers for appearances' sake" (Mark 12: 40). Victimization does not have to actually end in a (violent) death. The widow, as meant by Jesus, is clearly portrayed as a victim. John Kok pointed out to me that "widow and orphan" occurs close to a dozen times in Deuteronomy, with only one other occurrence in Exodus in the whole Torah. It seems to me that this is extra support for confirming the narrow straits of widows and orphans, especially in early Israel. Of the Torah texts, Deuteronomy is the latest. By then widows and orphans are recognized as needing more protection than provided for by the earlier texts of the Torah. Also the fact that, alongside with widow and orphan, mention is made in Deuteronomy of "the stranger and the Levite" is telling. They too were socially displaced individuals and thus were vulnerable.

[40] This doesn't mean that the terminology is always clear. But as to Luke, B.D. Ehrman states: "The death of Jesus in Luke-Acts is not a death that effects an atoning sacrifice. It is the death of a righteous martyr who has suffered from miscarried justice, whose innocence is vindicated by God at the resurrection" (Ehrman 2011: 236). The crucial passage that seems to contradict this, *viz*. Luke 22: 19-20, does not occur in all the known NT manuscripts. Consistency with the whole of Luke would appear to suggest that this passage is a later addition.

[41] We are reminded of what Paul calls God's secret wisdom, "not of this age nor of the rulers of this age", a "wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2: 6, 7-8). In other words, the crucifixion accomplished something that was to the detriment to the current powers of the age, undermining an essential

element of cultural tradition, "hidden since the foundation of the world" (Matth. 13: 35). Girard identifies this wisdom with the revelation of the deceptive working of the scapegoat mechanisms, the mechanism on which, in Girard's showing, all the important institutions of society arose but which was never clearly revealed for its satanic injustice. The mechanism, though shown up in its deceptiveness through the Gospel, can still raise its ugly head. In the holocaust of the 1930s-1940s, reduced to its essentials, the Jews are sacrificed for the greater purity of the (heathen) German race and German society, that Jews are thought to pervert or threaten. But this was no longer an "all (races) against one (race)" situation. No new Germanic gods have arisen, and—most important of all—racisms and genocide are generally rejected as being entirely inhuman and thoroughly condemned as unjust. The scapegoat mechanism can now be recognized (thanks to the Gospel) and on that count rejected.

[42] The last two sentences of the text rely on Levinas (1987), 66-67. I have not been able to consult the English translation.

[43] The use of the word "sacrifice" is primarily to denote *life taken* (human or animal). Girard later acknowledged that the term can also be used as "offer given" to another out of love and faithfulness, as when parents "sacrifice" for their children. Clearly, the two meanings are worlds apart and should not be confused! The reprehensible version is of course the taking of life. Cf. Girard (2005), 70.

[44] This is not just a matter of letting everything be. It involves existence in all of its interconnections. One might ask: May one kill animal life for food? Is that not a "taking of life" for self-serving ends? Animals reproduce not by choice but through instinct and seasonal drive. Conditions of nature may be conducive to reproduction or be a hindrance, hence in favoured circumstances there may be an abundance that can be harvested. It may also be an advantage to the species itself not to be overabundant. The current food industry produces abundance artificially. But one still needs to keep the conditions of the species in mind, including the proper care of the specimens. Thus "care for life" is fully relevant towards animals, also as providing norms for the care of those animals destined for consumption.

[45] It may seem that we have distanced ourselves from Vollenhoven in bringing Girard and Levinas into the discussion. But if "horizontal transcendence" is the technical term that marks the difference with the pseudo-transcendence of the dominating "gods of violence", then we are in fact closer to Vollenhoven than might be suspected, though he nowhere (to my knowledge) uses the term. Consider: Vollenhoven's account of (cosmic) reality gives a prime role to the law-spheres, as modes of being. He always insists that the law-spheres form a vertical order. Now the relevant ordinances of the law-spheres are part of the "boundary" between God and the World. It is essential to Vollenhoven's meaning to understand that each sphere is equally close to (or distant from) God. Thus it won't do to visualize the relation of God and the World along traditional (Neo-platonic) lines as God towering above or capping the World. The highest sphere, the pistical, is then positioned "closest to God" (so to speak), the numerical sphere is the most distant. Instead, the "equal proximity" calls for a horizontal metaphor. It also makes it possible to speak more meaningfully of God's immanence. The human soul too is "horizontally inward" in the full human being. Cf. Tol (2010), 406-410.

[46] In this connection one might also consult my general introduction to Vollenhoven (2010), 49-55. (This text is in Dutch.)

[47] Russell (1982), 57. Bertrand Russell in fact accepts both a world of being that subsists timelessly and a world of existence in time (as quoted). The subsisting world of being "is unchangeable, rigid, exact, delightful to the mathematician, the logician, the builder of metaphysical systems, and *all who love perfection more than life*" (emphasis added). In other words, the world of being is marked by control, and the meaning of being supports this! The world of existence is "without any clear plan or arrangement". Russell does not need to spell out, as indeed he doesn't, that in his view the world of existence requires the control of the subsisting world of being, a control of *dominance*. This is to make the love of perfection over and above that of life relevant.

[48] This is eminently Vollenhovian: "The norm [of philosophy] is that philosophy do justice to any diversity …" Vollenhoven (1959), 13.

[49] The fact that we refer to responsibility in both the context of worldview and religion hangs together with each having to do with *law*: "modal or normative law" in the case of worldview, and the "love command" in the case of religion. The former can be translated into strategies of "rule-following", the latter is more attitude-determining with regard to the status of concrete finite being. Responsibility signals a "response to law", but this does not make the recognition of different kinds of response, in the modal sense, redundant. In fact, the said distinction is also important for distinguishing worldview and religion.