

Jan Woltjer's Logos theory and its legacy

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Jan Woltjer (1849-1917) was Vollenhoven's first mentor when he was preparing his dissertation (1918), before Geesink adopted this role. Tol (2010, *Philosophy in the Making*) gives a detailed account of way Vollenhoven is choosing his own course in epistemology, anthropology and cosmology, starting from the scholastic background that Woltjer provided 'in agreement with a widely supported Christian-intellectual understanding' (218).

Without chauvinism I hold Dutch neo-Calvinism to be a relevant intellectual contribution *within* and *to* this 'Christian-intellectual' world – already from its start with (Groen van Prinsterer and) Kuiper. Studying the move toward the (specific) 'Amsterdam School of Calvinistic Philosophy' can result in clues to regain some lost connections and sense of continuity between this 'Christian-intellectual' world and the 'Amsterdam School'. Too antithetically, in my view, Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd approached ('synthetic') scholasticism.

Fundamental for scholasticism is, Tol (221, cf. 8, 13, 220, 383/7 and *passim*) suggests: 'the harmony between subjective and objective rationality'. For Woltjer, underlying, explaining and warranting this harmony is the divine Logos. Through Him God created, upholds, develops and 'finalizes' this world and all its beings according to His ideas, and within this world a human being, a *mankind*, that images even this creative and ideational 'logos' at his own level as created being. Fundamental for Woltjer is this Logos *theory* (speculation Woltjer tries to avoid, as JHKok observes (2007: 47-48; *Woltjer on Classical Antiquity*, in BSweetman (ed.) *In the Phrygian Mode*, 41-64). Woltjes distinguishes divine knowledge and human knowledge (even in perfection).

In several steps Vollenhoven changes his view on the role of the Logos. Leaving historical precision to Tol, here is a formalised, sketchy overview of a number of steps that Tol (and JHKok 1992) discerned and described:

- a. Knowledge requires both the Logos-warranted 'harmony' *and* concrete intuition at the subjective side.
- b. The 'given' World is given by the Logos, still warranting the knowledge ideal – its *ideas* –; but the Self needs 'metalogical' intuition as an additional warrant that his conceptual knowledge of the given progresses.
- c. Above both knower and knowables God posited a *Law* (including ideas as 'thing-laws': the 'constancy' that rules 'change and variability'; Tol 144). To its normative 'hold' all being (knowing included) is subject.
- d. This Law (ideas, ideals, norms), having a divine origin, is not divine itself, but correlates with the Cosmos.
- e. This Law contains *types* of laws holding for e.g. the physical domain, the psychological, – and for knowing.
- f. The *domains* (regions) in the '*created logos*' ('sphere of the content of knowledge'; Tol 222; Dooyeweerd: *Gegenstand*-sphere) – still warranted by the Logos – correspond with a plurality of *modes*: 'modal viewing'.

This list of steps (focussing on the epistemic role of the divine Logos, including the ideas contained in God's Council) does not annul or exhaust the – re-formed – legacy of Woltjer's Logos theory. The notion that both cosmos and mankind are created by one Creator (and so interact) is still operative. And 'thing-laws' became 'individuality structures' (Dooyeweerd). In order to mention a few other lines of Logos-related thought:

- As Second Person of the Trinity, Christ/the Logos is mentioned by Dooyeweerd as the 'Root' (Origin and Upholder) of creation and of renewed mankind. Vollenhoven, too, mentions the office of the Second Adam (2010 *Isagôgè*, section 117).

- As the Word of biblical revelation ('Logosopenbaring' (2010 *Isagôgè*, section 118) culminating in the Incarnated Word), and in a certain 'revelatory' character of the kosmos (the Word in his 'general' revelation), the Logos is acknowledged, too.

- the *Gegenstand*-sphere is not (transcendental) logical, but – as metalogical – still *ideational* (Tol 292-293).

Concluding: typically, the expression 'foreign to thought' ('*denkvreemd*') for the 'cosmic sphere' (Dooyeweerd 1922d:45; Tol 292 cf. 8-9) echoes the reaction to the traditional Logos theory that Woltjer still accepted. This reaction and its verbal expression have been too strong to do justice to the continuity in development and heritage of the efforts of neocalvinists and their common goal 'to save Calvinistic metaphysics' (Tol 278-279).