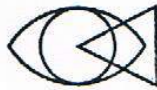


THE IDEA OF A CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY

Essays in Honour of
D. H. Th. Vollenhoven

With an introduction by
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KUYPER'S SEMI-MYSTICAL CONCEPTION

BY

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By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Western academic community was dominated by the thought-results of more than three hundred years of anti-christian thinking. Traditional Christianity became deeply affected by the numerous radical changes that had occurred in the areas of science; industry, politics, art and communications. The prevailing mood in the international christian community became one of pietistic withdrawal from this world of drastic and rapid changes. This systematic retreat on the part of the christian community became especially conspicuous in the non-theological fields of scholarship.

While Protestantism established Theological Schools and Roman Catholicism gave its first official sanction to the normativity of the method and content of the synthesis-philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, Abraham Kuyper founded the Free University in Amsterdam. As a reformed christian leader, Kuyper sought to articulate and apply the significance of the central religious thrust of biblical reformation.

In many ways Kuyper continued three hundred years after Calvin's death what Calvin had begun during the middle of the sixteenth century. John Calvin was not a philosopher. Yet, the work he did as a reformer proved to be of utmost importance for the eventual development of a christian philosophy. Also Kuyper was not a professional philosopher. However, the cultural-historical exigencies of Kuyper's day and age made it necessary for him to discuss more explicitly than Calvin had done various fundamental and crucial philosophical issues. As a christian academician, Kuyper was confronted by the seemingly impossible task of presenting some kind of viable christian alternative to the existing and dominant patterns of thought. Kuyper sought to meet this formidable challenge in a principial way. He wanted an acceptable alternative which would stay clear of the religiously false lifestyles of Anabaptistic world-flight, Roman Catholic world-compromise and Secular world-conformity. Kuyper suggested the approach of a Spirit-driven world-reformation.

In Kuyper's opinion, this world-to-be-reformed included also the study of philosophy. The work in our twentieth century by such men as D. H. Th. Vollenhoven, H. Dooyeweerd, H. G. Stoker and other christian philosophers is historically understandable when we duly recognize Kuyper's formative influence upon the religious thrust and direction of various thinkers in their attempt to arrive at the beginning of an integrally christian way of philosophizing.

What Kuyper wanted to accomplish on this score and what in fact he

did, are, however, not the same. This became evident also in the subsequent historical development within the reformed community in the Netherlands, South Africa and North America. Shortly after his death in 1920, some christian scholars were inclined to accept in an uncritical manner and to pass on as inherently christian also those elements in Kuyper's theoretic work which were essentially not reformational and which even stood in basic conflict with the new evangelical thrust of his approach. A subtle form of epigonism arose. This form of subjectivism eventually gave rise to a new form of scholasticism, to confusion, suspicion and disunity within the reformed community.

To ease and, if possible, remove these and other tensions, H. Dooyeweerd published in 1939 in *Philosophia Reformata* an extensive and penetrating analysis of Kuyper's view of "science". In this article, entitled "Kuyper's Wetenschapsleer", Dooyeweerd clearly indicated that, in order to continue the reformation Kuyper had re-discovered, one would have to reject certain thought-patterns in Kuyper's philosophic conception. The religious continuity between the work and ideas of Kuyper and Dooyeweerd required, according to the latter, a discontinuity between him and Kuyper with respect to the theoretic structure of thought.

In our present article we wish to make a few tentative observations in this connection about the first part of the first two volumes of Kuyper's *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology* (translated from the Dutch by J. Hendrik de Vries, 1898, and published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Comp., Grand Rapids, Mich., 1954).

My brief and initial remarks about Kuyper's philosophical conception have been occasioned by some comments Vollenhoven made in 1962 in Amsterdam during a meeting of the Philology and History Section of the Association of Calvinistic Philosophy. In his exposition of the philosophical background of K. Schilder's scholasticism, Vollenhoven made a few brief and pointed remarks about the scholastic conceptions in the writings of A. Kuyper, V. Hepp and H. Bavinck (cf. J. Stellingwerff's reference to this in his article "Kritiek op K. Schilder als Filosoferend Dogmaticus" in *Philosophia Reformata*, 1962, pp. 124-125, footnote 6).

Lest we obtain a somewhat distorted picture of the role Kuyper has played in the history of reformational thinking and philosophizing, we do well to briefly review the positive contributions of Kuyper's thought, before we go on to indicate the non-christian elements in his thought-constructions.

Kuyper wanted to give due recognition to the scriptural meaning of God as the Creator and to this world as His creation. He stressed the central significance of "religion" and "heart" for our understanding of man, world and man's task in this world. He sensed the presence of an antithetical conflict between the spiritual direction of a christian and of a non-christian science. Kuyper began to see once more something of the scriptural meaning of creational ordinances and of the concomitant principle of sphere-sovereignty, although he tended to reduce the latter to a mere societal principle. He was aware of a qualitative distinction between practical and theoretical knowledge. Kuyper moved in the right direction in his explanation of the

nature and role of philosophy, the special sciences, and the mutual relationships between philosophy and the sciences. The same can be said also about his understanding of the nature and relevance of "pistis" in relationship especially to various anthropological questions.

Without detracting anything from these and other positive features in the ideas of Kuyper, we must admit that there are also a number of negative elements present in his thought-pattern. We have in mind here particularly those elements which have seriously hindered a consistent development of an integrally christian reformulation of basic thought-structures. In his "Kuyper's Wetenschapsleer", Dooyeweerd has discussed mainly three of such unacceptable ideas in Kuyper's thought, namely soul-body dichotomy, idea-realism and logos-doctrine. He has also pointed out how Kuyper sought to relate these three ideas to each other in a particular way.

Dooyeweerd's critical study of Kuyper's conception can and ought to be deepened and complemented. A profitable way to do this is to begin to make serious use of the insights Vollenhoven has provided with his seemingly far-fetched but in reality penetrating account of various problematics and answers in the history of philosophy. Without superimposing improper thought-constructions upon the actual historical unfolding and differentiation in philosophical problems and insights, it has always been, and it still is, Vollenhoven's avowed aim to uncover and describe in the Light of God's Word and against the background of an ever more clearly articulated thetical philosophical position what has really happened in the history of philosophy and why certain conceptions have been advocated, corrected, opposed, ignored and replaced by other ones.

The question that arises is whether it is possible to give a more precise description of the specific structure of Kuyper's philosophical stance. Though such terms as "speculative", "scholastic", "compromising", "modern", etc. are to a certain extent useful, even necessary, to characterize the nature of Kuyper's philosophic work, they are not sufficiently exact to depict the peculiarity or uniqueness of his philosophical position.

Vollenhoven has clearly indicated that any philosophical conception is characterized by a certain combination of a general *Zeitgeist* and a specific type of philosophical problematics. A *Zeitgeist* is religious in nature. It indicates the religious climate within which a thinker develops his philosophy. It has to do with the spiritual direction in which a philosopher moves in his attempt to explain the nature and role of the most basic "Law" in life. Unlike the *Zeitgeist*, a specific type of philosophic problematics is structural in nature. It points out the unique pattern of thought in the philosophical conceptions of different thinkers.

According to Vollenhoven, the *Zeitgeist* in Kuyper's thought is different from the one Aristotle manifested towards the end of his life: whereas Aristotle was anti-realistic, Kuyper was neo-idealistic in his approach. The specific thought-construction in Kuyper, however, is fundamentally the same as the one also Aristotle had advocated for a short while later on in his life: both accepted the intellectualistic conception of semi-mysticism.

Semi-mysticism has certain outstanding features. It stresses the structural

and minimizes the genetic nature of reality. Ontologically, it is dualistic in essence. It must, therefore, find some kind of solution to the problem of the relationship between two fundamentally different things or worlds. The answer of semi-mysticism to this dualistic problematics is partial-universalism without the theme of macro-microcosmos: the two independent substances, i.e. the universal and the individual, do not exist apart from each other in two separate entities, but belong together as two components within each single entity.

The essence of the *higher* world is universal, intellectual, dominant, eternal, etc. At the very top of this world is the divine unity and the single divinity. At the very bottom of this intellectual realm the common, universal world-spirit individualizes itself into a great number of individual human beings. The essence of the latter is, consequently, basically the same as that of the universal world of the intellect. This is supposed to explain the difference and the commonness between each individual or personal ego and the one, universal Spirit or Ego of Mankind.

The *lower* world is comprised of that which is individual only, material, bodily and temporal. This animal-like, non-transcendent world is in essence fundamentally other than the basic meaning of the higher and transcendent world. The mysticism in this conception is not complete or total: the lower world is not mystically taken up into and absolved by the higher world. This possibility does not exist by virtue of the fact that this conception is dualistic in nature.

A. Kuyper tried to answer two mutually related questions, namely What is the academy? and What is science? "The academy", he wrote, "has become an agglomerate of faculty schools, and the university idea in its later interpretation has lost something of its inner truth" (*Encyclopedia*, p. 22). It is in the context of this pressing problem that Kuyper began to search for a principle of unity. He thought to have found such a principle in the idea of "organic". The relationships between the various elements within the higher world and within the lower world, the relationship between these two worlds, and the knowledge one has of this entire world are, in Kuyper's view, all of an *organic* character. This usage of "organic" by Kuyper is intimately connected with his dualistic ontology and dichotomistic anthropology. Also in this case it holds true that the nature of a relationship is determined by the essence of the things to be related.

Kuyper discussed the question of the nature of "science" in connection with the encyclopedic place of theology within an academic institution. He sensed that the function and role of theology could not be understood apart from an investigation into the nature of theory, science, philosophy and the relationship between theology and the non-theological sciences. Kuyper appealed to the term "organic" not only in connection with the question of the nature of reality in general and of the academy in particular, but also in connection with the inseparably related problem of the encyclopedia of the sciences.

As a theoretician Kuyper was a very systematic or consistent thinker. Even and especially when he thought speculatively, his ideas developed and unfolded according to a definite pattern of thought. This is evident already

in the very way in which he introduced the whole matter of "encyclopedia".

... word, the idea, and the conception of *Encyclopedia* are genetically related... From that unconscious substrata of our life generates first of all *impression*. This impression is first defined by the *word* by which it is expressed. The *idea* which impels us springs from it but gradually. And only when this idea inspires us, and has impelled us to act, does the bud set itself and by degrees unfold; till at length as fruit of empirical knowledge our insight becomes possible into the structure of the flower, and our *conception* forms itself. (pp. 24, 25)

Kuyper was not a geneticistic thinker. One should not be misled by his biological metaphors. There is a specific philosophic content and connotation to Kuyper's use and understanding of "organic" and related terms. If one keeps in mind the semi-mystical character of Kuyper's thought, the meaning of the loaded term "organic" becomes less baffling and puzzling. Rejecting any typically empiricistic philosophy, Kuyper opted for a way of thinking which resembles the train of thought that is peculiar of intellectualistic semi-mysticism. This begins to explain why he could write:

There lies a majesty in the human mind by virtue of which it cannot rest until it has acquired full *dominion* in the world of thought. It cannot bear the suggestion that there should still be something in that world of thought that has withdrawn itself from the power of its sceptre. This impels it to scan not merely the whole horizon of phenomena with its knowledge, but the field of knowledge itself with its thought. An atomistical science offends the unity-sense of its own mind, or, by the pulverizing of the cosmos, robs that mind of confidence of step in its walk. And therefore it is bound to presume a relation between the parts of its knowledge also, nor can it rest until it has seen through that relation *organically*, because in this way only can science harmonize with the organic unity of its own *thinking*, as well as with the organic unity of the *Kosmos*. (p. 15)

Within the academic world the question of the nature of "science" is of primary importance and concern. The "science" belongs, in Kuyper's view, essentially to the higher and universal world of the human intellect. This semi-mystical structure of thought compels Kuyper to make use of fundamentally dualistic distinctions in his explanation of the meaning of "organic" and "encyclopedic" knowledge. Kuyper's thought moves on along dualistic lines. This becomes evident when one makes a careful analysis of what he meant by higher and lower, eternal and temporal, unchanging and historical, soul and body, spiritual and material, logical and sensory, universal and individual, necessary and accidental, thought and experience, observation and representation, essential and non-essential, concepts and impressions, relations and elements, subject and object, knower and knowable, active and passive, one and many, human consciousness and nature, invisible and visible, immediate and mediate, intelligere and experience, logic and moments, biblical revelation and natural revelation, spiritual phenomena and material phenomena, organic and atomistic, psychical and physical. The following quotations illustrate quite clearly this semi-mystical conception with its typically dualistic distinctions.

The subject of science cannot be this man or that, but must be *mankind* at large, or, if you please, *the* human consciousness... Consequently you cannot attain unto a conception of "science" in the higher sense, until you take humanity as an organic whole. Science does not work atomistically, as if the grand aggregate of individuals commissioned a few persons to satisfy this general thirst after knowledge, and as if these com-

missioners went to work after a mutually agreed upon plan. No, science works organically, i.e. in the sense that the thirst for knowledge lies in human nature.

... A higher factor must here be at play, which for all time and among all peoples maintains the unity of our race in the interests of the life of our *human* consciousness; which impels people to obtain knowledge; which endows us with the faculties to know; which superintends this entire work; and as far as the results of this labor lead to knowledge builds them up into one whole after a hidden plan. If impersonation were in order, this higher factor, this animating and illumining power, itself might be called "science". ... we may understand by "science" thus far acquired that measure of light which has arisen in the darkness of the *human consciousness* by reason of the inworking of this higher power, — this light, of course, being interpreted not only as a result, but as possessed of the virtue of all light, viz. to rule and to ignite new light. With this interpretation only everything accidental and individual falls away, and science as such obtains a *necessary* and *universal* character. Taken in that sense, science makes the "mind of man" to have knowledge; and everyone receives a share of it according to the measure of his disposition and station in life. Moreover, it is only with this interpretation that science obtains its divine consecration, because that higher factor, which was seen to be the active agent in science, cannot be conceived otherwise than self-conscious; for there can be no science for the human consciousness as such without a God to impel man to pursue science, to give it, and to maintain its organic relation. With the human individuals, therefore, you do not advance a step, and even if the *Gemeingeist* of our human nature should be personified it would not do, since this higher factor must be *self-conscious*, and this *Gemeingeist* is brought to self-consciousness by *science* alone. This higher factor, who is to lead our human consciousness up to *science*, must himself know what he will have us know. (pp. 63-65)

Against this background and within the context of this semi-mysticism, we can begin to sense in a clearer way what Kuyper had in mind when he described or defined the meaning of "science" in the following technical manner:

... science presents itself to us as a *necessary and ever-continued impulse in the human mind to reflect within itself the cosmos, plastically as to its elements, and to think it through logically as to its relations; always with the understanding that the human mind is capable of this by reason of its organic affinity to its object.* (p. 83)

For Kuyper, "organic" and "logical" mean basically the same thing. "Organic" is that which deep down is logical, universally valid, real, essential and objective. Man does not subjectivistically superimpose something organic or orderly upon a supposedly chaotic world. In this world lies embedded an order. Inbuilt in this order is a logical compulsion. It is for this reason that in Kuyper's view there is an inseparable connection between and a common denominator of meaning in such terms as "order", "organic", "encyclopedic" and "logical". Hence, it is possible for Kuyper to write:

... the treasure of knowledge which we obtain by our thinking does not originate first by our thinking, but exists before we think; ... the knowledge to be arranged in order stands in relation to a world of phenomena which is independent of our thought. Since now that world of our knowledge and that world of phenomena are not chaotic but *organic*, our thinking cannot rest till in the treasure of our knowledge it has exhibited such an Encyclopedic order as will harmonize with the organic relation of both of that world of our knowledge and of that world of phenomena. Thus our human spirit is not to invent a certain order for our knowledge, but to seek out and to indicate the order which is already there. (p. 28)

As an intellectualistic thinker, Kuyper was forced to accept the scholastic explanation of the difference between general knowledge and scientific knowledge. The latter is, in contrast to the former, "*systematic*, i.e. it is

knowledge orderly arranged".(p. 29) That which is organic, i.e. the logical order, is, therefore, not merely something out there to be discovered or observed by man in an "objective" way. Because the organic is logical in nature, man as a thinking being also constitutes in a certain sense that order.

... the human mind brings about a certain distinction and order in the chaos of our human knowledge, which is not done arbitrarily, but agreeably to a fixed order assumed to be present there. (p. 27)

An inner contradiction appears implied in this statement of Kuyper. On the one hand, "the human mind brings about a certain distinction and order" and, on the other hand, this must be done according "to a fixed order assumed to be present there". In his article of 1939, Dooyeweerd already indicated that Kuyper had no sympathy for modern epistemological subjectivism. According to Kuyper, man does not create order. However, Kuyper maintained at the same time that there is no order *apart* from the mental activity of the human subject either! The reason Kuyper did not feel the impasse or incongruity at this point is due to his semi-mystical pattern of thought: the higher world of the human consciousness is a universal realm which contains and is made up of the objective intellect. In this manner, Kuyper accepted on the one hand an Aristotelian and scholastic conception and on the other hand rejected the Kantian and modern epistemology.

We can be truly objective and encyclopedia can become scientific only when we begin to see and acknowledge that our human consciousness is basically intellectual and that the world-order is fundamentally logical. It is for this reason that Kuyper can write:

... that which at first made the impression upon us of existing chaotically, appears on closer investigation to exist cosmically and organically. (p. 31)

Entirely independently of our thought a thinking motive is active in every object, and this motive impels the thought that lies in this object to proceed in a fixed track. (p. 35)

The scholastic notion of a certain correspondence between what is in the mind and what is in the world is quite prominent in Kuyper's conception. The world repeats itself, as it were, in science. Our understanding mirrors that which exists organically in the world outside us.

Hence Encyclopedia is not at liberty to deal with anything else save the organic relation in which the parts of the whole of our knowledge stand to each other. Science, in the absolute sense, is the human consciousness. As the parts of all actually existing things lie in their relations, so must the parts of our knowledge be related in our consciousness... The further science advances, the easier it will be to reproduce the cosmos logically, and to make all its parts to be clearly seen, together with their several relations. And thus science divides itself, because in proportion as the logical reproduction becomes more accurate, it will image in a more organic way whatever exists organically. (p. 39)

Another way in which Kuyper tried to explain the nature of that which is objective and that which is subjective and in which he sought to clarify the nature of the correspondence between these two was his use of the typically Aristotelian and scholastic distinction between that which is "active" and that which is "passive". The following rather extensive quotations

describe quite accurately Kuyper's attempt to establish whether "order" is subjective, objective or both. At the same time, these quotations provide us with an excellent summary of what we have seen thusfar of the philosophical semi-mysticism in Kuyper's thought.

Our thinking does not confine itself exclusively to playing the part of the *observer* of relations, which is always more or less passive, but also carries in itself an *active* power. This active power roots in the fact, if we may put it so, that before we become aware of these relations outside us, the setting for them is present in our own consciousness. This would not be so if these relations were accidental and if they were not organically related. But to be organically related is part of their nature. It is for this reason that the object is no chaos, but cosmos; that a universality appears in the special; and that there appear in these relations an order and regularity which warrant their continuity and constancy. There is a system in these relations. These several relations also stand in relation to each other, and our affinity to the object proves itself by the fact that our capacity of thought is so constructed as to enable it to see through these last relations. If correctly understood, we may say that when human thought is completed it shall be like the completed organism of these relations. Our thinking is entirely and exclusively disposed to these relations, and these relations are the objectification of our thinking. And this carries itself so unerringly that it is easily understood why some philosophers have denied the objectivity of these relations and have viewed them as being merely the reproduction of our thinking. (p. 76-77)

All we say is, that nothing exists without relations; that these relations are never accidental, but always organic; and that the cosmos, as cosmos, in its collective elements exists logically, and in this logical existence is susceptible to being taken up into our world of thought. (p. 78)

The relations lie hidden in the cosmos, and they cannot be known in their deeper connection, unless we approach this logically existing cosmos as logical thinkers. The science of the cosmos is only possible for us upon the supposition that in our thinking the logical germ of a world of thought is lodged, which, if properly developed, will cover entirely the logical world of thought lodged in the cosmos. And this provides the possibility of our thinking showing itself actively. As soon as we have learned to know the universal relations that govern the special, or have discovered in these several relations the germ of a self-developing thought, the identity between our subjective and objective world of thought enables us to perform our active part, both by calling the desired relations into being, and by anticipating the relations which must reveal themselves, or shall afterward develop themselves. (p. 79)

Kuyper's conception borders on speculation when he begins to indicate the very close relationship between the central impulse in man's self-consciousness and the activity of (a) God. God is, in a certain sense, the capstone which holds in fact the dome of semi-mysticism. The God Kuyper talks about in this context resembles more a theoretic God which is the object of a speculative conception than it does the biblical God who is the Creator-Redeemer. Although Kuyper mitigated the logical implications of this dualistic semi-mysticism, he did not entirely escape from the clutches of this basically unscriptural conception. It can be said that Kuyper placed a scholastic and semi-mystical frame around a biblical picture and then hung the whole thing up on the hook of "a God". (p. 65)

The identity of our thinking consciousness with the world of relations must be emphasized, however, in so far as these relations have no existence except for an original Subject, who has thought them out, and is able to let this product of his thoughts govern the whole cosmos. Just because these relations have no substance of their own, they cannot work organically unless they are organically thought, i.e. from a first principle. When we study these relations, we merely think the thought over again, by which the Subject defined these relations when he called them into being. (pp. 77-78)

And since the object does not produce the subject, nor the subject the object, the

power that binds the two organically together must of necessity be sought outside of each. And however much we may speculate and ponder, no explanation can ever suggest itself to our sense, of the all-sufficient ground for this admirable correspondence and affinity between object and subject, on which the possibility and development of science wholly rests until at the hand of Holy Scripture we confess that the Author of the cosmos created man in the cosmos "after his image and likeness." (p. 83)

The lifestyle which results from semi-mysticism can hardly be called christian. The implied dualism and dichotomy of this conception must sooner or later come into open conflict with the lifestyle that is demanded by Scripture. Semi-mysticism cannot do justice to the religious heart-direction and unity of life. It is characterized by an inherent tension. It seeks to separate the inseparable and, after that, to establish an artificial unity. It does violence to the unique nature and meaning of that which is creaturely. Semi-mysticism downgrades the importance of temporal existence, bodily concerns, sports, arts, incarnation of Christ, resurrection of the body and the idea of a new earth and a new creation.

In his philosophical understanding of reality, Kuyper was definitely inclined to lean in the wrong direction. As a reformer, he tried desperately to redirect many things in life back to a biblically-normed approach. But he was not always able to escape the force or movement of his own semi-mystical train of thought. Man resembles a mirror. At the same time, he also seems to be something like the reflection in the mirror. Within the perspective of the eschaton, man must try to leave even his own creaturely shadow behind. That Kuyper in his theoretical views veers in this direction is evident from the following:

There is in us a thirst after a knowledge of things which shall be the outcome of immediate sight, even if this sight takes place without the bodily eye. And since we are denied this satisfaction in our present dispensation, God's Word opens the outlook before us in which this immediate seeing of the hearth of things, this *theásthai*, this seeing of face to face, shall be the characteristic of our knowledge in another sphere of reality. The accepted use of the word which holds on to the conception of sight in knowledge agrees entirely with Revelation, which points us to a science that shall consist in *sight*. (p. 62)

This dualistic framework of reference also prevented Kuyper from providing a satisfactory account of a unified idea of encyclopedia, science and organic. "Organic" is not only logical in nature but also dualistic. It stands for a relationship between things which are ontically different. "Science" remained an ambiguous and problematic term in the conception of Kuyper. In a manner reminiscent of the *Zeitgeist* of Neo-Idealism, Kuyper tried to account for the differences between the natural and the spiritual sciences. There is still an implicit tension between nature and culture, world(-view) and life(-view) in Kuyper's treatment of the encyclopedic nature of the sciences. This religiously motivated tension or conflict between the natural and the spiritual is reinforced by the dualism in Kuyper's specific philosophic conception with its distinction between the lower and natural world and the higher and intellectual world.

We emphatically deny that the study of the spiritual sciences can be entirely bound to the method of the natural sciences . . . Since the object of the spiritual sciences is itself spiritual, and therefore, amorphic, our sense not only, but the representation-capacity as well, render here no service. If no other means is substituted, the spiritual

object remains beyond the reach of our scientific research, and the spiritual phenomena must either be interpreted materialistically as the product of material causes, or remains agnostically outside of our science, even as the present English use of the word *science* prescribes . . . There is no other course therefore than to construct the spiritual sciences *from the subject itself*. (pp. 99-100)

Kuyper believed that in both the natural and in the spiritual sciences there resides, microscopically, in the human consciousness an "archetypic receptivity" for the objects.

In the transmission of the object of the spiritual sciences into our consciousness the same process takes place as in the discovery of our consciousness to the object of the natural sciences. In each case we take up into ourselves the element and the relations *differently*. In each case the receptivity must be present in us for the elements and the relations. And in each case it is our *thinking* that makes us know the relations, while the perception of the element comes to us from the object itself. But these two sciences differ, in that the element of the visible world enters into our consciousness by a different way than the element of the spiritual world; the elements of the visible world working upon our powers of representation through the senses, while the entire independence of our senses and of the middle link known to us, the elements of the spiritual world affect our subject spiritually, and thus to our apprehension appear to enter immediately into our consciousness. (pp. 100-101)

According to Kuyper, there are not only *natural* and *spiritual* sciences. There is also a third group or category of sciences, namely the *spiritual-natural* ones. Here, again, it is impossible for Kuyper to escape the dualistic train of his thought-pattern. This third group of sciences is not merely a golden mean between the other two groups of sciences. In reality, this third category of sciences is the result of a subdivision within the group of the spiritual sciences. History, psychology, philology and language belong to this group of the mixed sciences. After his brief discussion of the nature of language (pp. 84-93), Kuyper went on to write:

Distinction, therefore, must be made between pure and mixed spiritual science because everything that pertains to the modulation of sounds, and the influence exerted on them by the general build of the body, and especially by the organs of breathing, articulation and hearing, is *somatic*; and the real psychical study is only begun when in this body of language the logos as its psychic element is reached . . . It is sheer self-deception to think that we can ever succeed in making the spiritual sciences fit the same last as the natural sciences . . . As soon, however, as you venture one step farther in this physical domain, and from these empiric data try to obtain a construction by which to discover among these scattered data a unity of thought, the process of an idea, or the progression from a first phenomenon to a result, you have at once crossed over from the physical into the psychical, the universally compulsory certainty leaves you, and you glide back into subjective knowledge, since you are already within the domain of the spiritual sciences. (pp. 103-104)

It is superfluous to elaborate in detail how Kuyper in his attempt to provide solutions created new and additional problems which remained principally unsolvable. Kuyper was a reformer, despite his leanings towards semi-mysticism. Yet, the latter has greatly curtailed the development of an integrally christian philosophical approach, not only in Kuyper's own life but also in the lives of many reformed scholars, especially theologians, subsequent to his death in 1920. Some of the most important, and also inevitable, problems which arose for Kuyper, and which must arise for all who think structurally along similar lines, are the following:

First. It is impossible to harmonize the biblical understanding of man and an anthropology which is dichotomistic. Implied in semi-mysticism is an immanentistic reduction of the meaning of "subject" and "object" to the epistemological knower and knowable. The subject, i.e. knowing man, is located basically outside the object, i.e. the knowable world. Man's bodily existence becomes essentially unimportant for the intellectualistic identity of man's personality or ego. Semi-mystically, the latter becomes something that is fundamentally similar to the universal Ego of Mankind. All of this can have grave implications for one's understanding of such things as the image of God in man, Adam as the covenant-head of the human race, the relationship between the "universal" and the "individual", etc.

Second. Unless one is inconsistent, as soon as one accepts the conception of semi-mysticism, there is no way of avoiding an intellectualistic explanation of the meaning of "encyclopedic", "organic", "science", "order", "spiritual" and "logical". This approach precludes the possibility of doing justice to the full meaning of all creaturely existence. Though Kuyper was less intellectualistic than J. Woltjer in his estimation of the nature and role of science, he was, nevertheless, still a bit too appreciative of the so-called lofty character of science or the intellectual. Through human science man can "attain unto that high, dominant and prophetic character by which it not only liberates itself from the cosmos, but also understands it, enables its devotees to take and active part in it, and partially to foresee its future development." (p. 79)

Third. In Kuyper's view not only the subject-object relationship but also the subject and object taken by themselves are *organic*, i.e. orderly, in character. At the same time, Kuyper believed phenomena in nature to be individual and even chaotic. The logical makes this chaotic systematic and orderly. By means of a very subtle logicizing of reality — reality is subjectively and objectively logical or organic — Kuyper sought to keep the lower world of nature from sinking away into chaos and disorder. On the one hand, the meaning of creation is denied or suppressed in this conception; on the other hand, be it in a partly distorted, intellectualistic and semi-mystical manner, the religious meaning of creation is incorporated and retained. A certain amount of ambivalence with respect to the significance of the creational is inherent in the conception of semi-mysticism.

Fourth. Kuyper encountered some difficulty in trying to avoid giving a structural explanation of the nature of sin. For a dichotomistic thinker, sin always tends to become some form of disharmony between body and soul, in opposition to love, which is then in some ways conceived of as that which restores the harmony between these two. Redemption loses its scriptural meaning. Restoration begins to obtain the dualistic connotation of a religious reaffirmation of the greater importance of the higher and intellectual world over and above that lower world of the body.

Fifth. Inseparably connected with the previous is the problem Kuyper had in applying the full meaning of the religious antithesis in the world of science. Kuyper still allowed a certain area in the encyclopedia of the

sciences to remain unaffected by sin and redemption, in spite of all the things he had written about the idea of two different kinds of science, i.e. a christian and a non-christian science.

... there is a very broad realm of investigation in which the difference between the two groups [i.e. christian and non-christian science] exerts *no* influence. For in the present dispensation palingenesis works no change in the senses, nor in the plastic conception of visible things... By this we do not mean that the natural sciences as such and in their entirety, fall outside of this difference, but only that in these sciences the difference which separates the two groups exert no influence on the *beginnings* of the investigation. (p. 157) ... it should be gratefully acknowledged that in the elementary parts of these studies there is a *common* realm, in which the difference between view- and starting-points does not enforce itself.

Not only in the natural, but in the spiritual sciences also, a common realm presents itself. The mixed psychic-somatic nature of man accounts for this. Consequently, the object of the spiritual sciences inclines also, to a certain extent, to express itself in the somatic. Only think of the *logos*, which, being psychic in nature, creates a *body* for itself in *language*. Hence in the spiritual sciences the investigation is partly comprised of the statement of outwardly observable facts. (p. 158. What Kuyper says here about language, he applies also to history and psychology!)

Hence all scientific research which has things *seen* only as object, or which is prosecuted simply by those subjective factors which have undergone *no* change, remains the same for both [i.e. for those with and those without palingenesis]. (p. 168)

Sixth. The distinction between "archetype" and "ectype" results in a distortion of the biblical revelation about the incomparable Creator-creature relationship. Semi-mysticism beclouds not only the meaning of God's Word for creation and the nature of the creatures' response to this Law-Word of God, but it also leads to a wrong interpretation of the nature of theology in distinction from the nature of the non-theological sciences.

The structure of the curriculum Kuyper proposed presupposes this semi-mystical view of reality. Whereas the physicist and doctor are interested in the natural and bodily, i.e. the objects of the lower world, the teacher, lawyer and theologian are concerned with the logical, social and spiritual, i.e. the things of the higher world. The study of philology (with literature, history and philosophy as sub-departments) is important for the teacher who concentrates on the psychic or logical. The science of jurisprudence (with sociology and economics as sub-faculties) is pursued by the lawyer who is pre-occupied with matters pertaining man and society. Theology, which has ethics as a sub-department, is important for the minister who wants to study things related to man's soul and God's revelation. Kuyper also maintained the idea that, whereas in the non-theological sciences man is active as the knowing subject and the field of investigation is passive as the known object, in theology the object of investigation, i.e. God in his revelation, is the active Subject or Knower, and the investigating subject, i.e. man as knower, is the passive object of the God who reveals himself. "Thinking man", Kuyper said, "taken as subject over against God as object, is a logical contradiction in terms." (p. 214)

It was principally impossible for Kuyper to ascribe a proper place to the science of theology within the Organism of Science. The basic reason for Kuyper's failure to accomplish what he had set out to do at the beginning of the *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology* with respect to the role

of theology in relationship to the other sciences is due to his semi-mystical anthropology with its implicit dichotomy. Kuyper wrote:

We are Dichotomists . . . the antithesis should be between *body* and *soul*, and within that soul the distinction between the psychical and the pneumatical should be sought. (p. 214)

In Kuyper's pattern of thought, man stands somehow and somewhere between God and cosmos. When man looks up to God and to His revelation and wants to make a study of this divine revelation, he is active as a christian and as a theologian! When man looks down towards the cosmos and himself, he is engaged as a non-theological scientist for whom the religious bearings are determined by the christian-theologian! Kuyper was unable to extricate himself from thought-patterns of semi-mysticism, and, as a result, encountered serious hindrances in coming to a clear and biblical theoretic articulation of the unity of God's revelation, reality, man, life and science.

Seventh. Another problem which results from the conception of semi-mysticism is the question of the meaning of time and eternity. It is rather striking that "Kuyperian" philosophers have over the years been troubled, if not plagued, by "time-eternity" debates. Perhaps also Dooyeweerd and others have not gone far enough in their criticism of the bad and unacceptable elements in the philosophical views of A. Kuyper. A clearer understanding of the views of Kuyper on this score will go a long way, I think, in clearing up some of the confusion and even disagreements in our circles with respect to the meaning of time and eternity.

The problem-historical method which Vollenhoven has over the years developed experimentally in his attempt to obtain a better understanding of the complexity of the history of philosophy is of greatest significance also for our insight into our own tradition of theorizing within the international reformed community. A careful, philosophical analysis of the conceptions of A. Kuyper, H. Bavinck, K. Schilder and other reformed theologians will undoubtedly greatly enhance the communal effort to provide a more accurate theoretic account of created reality, the contours of christian philosophy, the essence of christian theology, the role of anthropology, the meaning of science, etc.

A christian scholar speaks with a certain tentativeness which is born not of scepticism or eclecticism, but of the undaunted conviction that only he who is enslaved to Christ is free to be engaged in a perpetual and dynamic renewal also in his academic activities. If anyone has clearly demonstrated and advocated this mentality in a superlative manner in our century it is Vollenhoven. This has also enabled him to be more critical than others of the scholasticism and semi-mysticism in the views of Abraham Kuyper.