

On Worldviews and Philosophy

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This paper is a response to the papers of Professors Wolters and Olthuis.* I shall begin with Professor Olthuis' paper because it deals with the status of worldviews in general. Then I will discuss Professor Wolters' paper, which is directed more specifically to the relation between worldview and philosophy. I will conclude with some systematic reflections of my own regarding worldviews and philosophy.¹

Phenomenology of Worldviews

In his paper "On worldviews" Olthuis makes three important contributions to our subject. First, he gives not so much a psychological or anthropological analysis of worldviews as a broad phenomenological description, presenting all that is essential to worldviews as they function within the framework of human existence in today's world.

Nowhere does Olthuis give a definition of "worldview" but he should not be blamed for that. On the contrary, the omission may be significant. If it is true that the worldview of a modern Christian community (or an Islamic sect, or a primitive tribe) is an ultimate vision of life, in which people integrate all their daily experience —or, to put it more philosophically, if a worldview is something which is always presupposed,

* [A.M. Wolters 'On the idea of worldview and its relation to philosophy' and J.H. Olthuis 'On worldviews'. In P.A. Marshall, S. Griffioen and R.J. Mouw (eds.), *Stained Glass: Worldviews and Social Science* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989).]

¹ I wish to thank Anthony Tol for translating numerous passages and improving the final expression of the text. [In the original text the footnotes were endnotes, on pp. 54-55.]

being a *transcendentale* to our daily life and even to philosophical rationality—then it is indeed impossible to present a closed, rationally adequate definition of it.

In short, a worldview is presented as a global *Vorverständnis*, or pre-understanding, which all people (including scholars and scientists) [42] hold to and live by. Assuming that worldviews in this sense do exist, then the claim that we are in a position fully to understand them would be a contradictory pretention. Dr. J. Verhoogt has warned us: if you try to grasp a worldview, you may kill it. I think this is a crucial point. The fact that we cannot conceptualize all that is involved in having a worldview does not necessarily mean worldviews do not exist or have no validity. It rather testifies to the fact that worldviews are antecedent even to our reflections and discussions of them.

As long as we are not caught up in and biased by the rationalist dogma of a self-sufficient, autonomous reason, we may have—and probably always do have—a certain awareness of the impact of worldviews on our life and thought. But we will never be able to give a full account of this state of affairs. In a phenomenological description, the only thing we can and should do is give indications of what is involved in having a worldview, much as has been done by Olthuis.

My second comment on Olthuis’ paper begins with a reference to Wilhelm Dilthey. Dilthey took the term “worldview” or “lifeview” quite literally. *Weltanschauung* (worldview) or *Lebensanschauung* (lifeview) means “having a look at,” “having a view of,” or, as Olthuis puts it, “having a vision of” the world. And because a *Weltanschauung* is a view, it unavoidably implies a point of view, a certain perspective. Life is all-encompassing; we are in the midst of life; thus, we cannot avoid having the same perspective of life and the world that a fish has of the water.

Dilthey’s idea of worldview, being literally a “view of the world” is marked and somewhat contaminated by the metaphor of seeing. This metaphor contaminates his idea not only with overtones of the medieval notion of a *visio Dei* but also, and more particularly, with notions of German Romantic Idealism. In German Romantic and Idealist philosophy, a worldview is primarily conceived as an idea, a spiritual principle, a contemplation of the world. Since the time of Dilthey, this contemplative and somewhat resigned understanding has often been predominant in the worldview debate.

It seems to me that one of the merits of Olthuis’ paper is that its phenomenological approach corrects this overly contemplative connotation to the word worldview.

Olthuis shows how a worldview functions in concrete human existence simultaneously as a vision *of* life and a vision *for* life. He points very convincingly to the practical and normative implications involved in a worldview. A worldview is not just a view of how the world *is* but also a view of how the world *should be*. It not only a view of the world but also a view of how to shape [43] the world; it is, in short, a deeply rooted, inspiring source of action.

Olthuis’ analysis reminds me of the Dutch philosopher J.P.A. Mekkes, who very deliberately substituted the word *levensovertuiging* (life conviction) for the word *levensbeschouwing* (life view). The Christian view of life (or any other view of life) is not a speculative contemplation but an active conviction. It is not just a framework for a set of beliefs. Rather, it is a fundamental awareness of the meaning of life, of our calling in the world, and of my own personal responsibility. It is important, it seems to me, to stress this active element. I shall return to this later.

Olthuis’ third contribution is his emphasis on the contemporary crisis of worldviews. I sense in his paper a pastoral concern over the fact that worldviews today are no longer self-evident. They have been attacked by the secularism of modern science, made suspect by the self-complacency of post-industrial society, or simply undermined by the cynicism and despair of our time. People may suffer either because their inherited worldview is inadequate or because it is disintegrating.

In other words, Olthuis’ paper confronts us with a bitter fact: today, probably more than ever before, people are uprooted and disoriented in regard to their worldviews. Modern man does not see how to shape the world, how to bridge the gap between wavering conviction and reality.

An intact and functioning worldview should be a communal thing. In former eras, that was the case. For instance, we can speak—albeit in a very global sense—of the worldview of medieval man. But what is the worldview of modern man? It has become fragmented. Whatever the reasons, contemporary society confronts us with a great variety of concurrent worldviews. Worse, it confronts us with a lack of any life conviction at all.

One of the themes of this conference is how to *retain* a worldview. This theme might be somewhat out-dated. The real issue for contemporary life might be a more urgent one, namely, how to *regain* a worldview. We should be thankful to Olthuis for confronting us with the worldview crisis in modern society, for this crisis is

contagious. It also threatens the Christian community. The awareness of this worldwide crisis can save us from speaking uncommittedly about worldview, philosophy, and the social sciences.

Mediation or Integration?

There is, however, one point on which I disagree with Olthuis. I [44] am not convinced that worldviews can be identified as “mediators” between faith commitment and “all other modes of human experience.” By speaking of “modes of experience” Olthuis phrases this central thesis in a style and terminology reminiscent of the philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd. However, as far as I can make out, it is not thought through in a Dooyeweerdian spirit.

In philosophical discourse, “mediation” presupposes two opposite poles standing in need of mediation on account of their opposition. Olthuis’s definition of worldview as a mediator implies that faith stands in opposition to all other modes of human experience. However, in Dooyeweerd’s exposition of human experience, the starting point is the unity and unbreakable coherence of human experience in all its different “modes.” According to Dooyeweerd, everyday experience (“naive experience”) and its different acts are concrete, in the sense that in every possible act of experience—be it an act of confessing faith, enjoying a piece of art, making political decisions, or engaging in moral debate—all *modi* are present simultaneously.

A religious confession, such as Christians make at baptism, is not an act of faith alone. Implicitly, it is also a physical, biological, logical, lingual, moral, etc., phenomenon. For to make such a confession not only requires physical energy and bodily strength, but also depends on one’s understanding and linguistic capacities. It also calls for moral courage, especially in countries where people are persecuted for their religious convictions. Thus, even though such a phenomenon is qualified, and is *prima facie* recognizable by everyone, as a religious phenomenon, in a more thorough philosophical analysis its attendant modes or aspects ought not to be ignored.

The same holds *mutatis mutandis* for the enjoyment of an object of art, or the pursuit of a moral issue. At first, these acts may appear to be solely aesthetic or moral. Closer consideration, however, reveals all the other aspects in which we experience reality. In other words, the different modes are merely abstract aspects of any concrete act of

everyday experience; in experience itself, they are structurally intertwined and integrated. My conclusion is that “modes of experience” taken in the Dooyeweerdian sense of the word, can never be interpreted as separate acts of human consciousness, or even as opposed faculties of the human mind which stand in need of “mediation.”

On the other hand, Dooyeweerd does maintain in other parts of his theory of knowledge that modes of experience can be separated, and that is by the power of theoretical abstraction operative in scientific [45] analysis. In theoretical or scientific analysis, so Dooyeweerd holds, the logical mode of experience is opposed to a non-logical *modus*, the latter being its *Gegenstand* (object). Thus, with respect to the status of a confession, a man of science can deliberately ignore all non-religious aspects and merely concentrate on the confession as a religious act or entity, subjecting it to a logical—i.e. theoretical scientific—analysis, as is the practice in theology. Likewise, a biologist can isolate the biotic life aspect of a phenomenon and subject it to a (bio)logical analysis; similarly in the other sciences.

Assuming this theory of scientific analysis to be correct, then we must acknowledge that there is indeed a problem of mediation between the various modes of experience. For in every theoretical science (from physics to biology to theology), a non-logical aspect is subjected to logical analysis. This difference between logical and non-logical calls for mediation: the theoretical analysis must result in a theoretical synthesis, which is realized in the formation of specific physical, bio-logical, or theo-logical concepts. However, this theoretical mediation is quite different from the worldview mediation Olthuis brings forward, if only in the fact that worldviews have—and have primarily—a pre-theoretical validity. Hence, from a Dooyeweerdian perspective, I have to conclude that there is no place for worldviews in the role of mediating within human consciousness between different “modes of experience.”

What Olthuis probably has in mind is a divergence or split not so much within the person but within society; it is not (abstract) modes that collide within the human person but instead (concrete) acts of knowledge and experience that clash within society. In modern society, religious insights and experiences in particular often appear contrary to other concrete experiential complexes, which Olthuis refers to as “our way of life”, “(the rest of) life experience” or “praxis.” This contrariness is something we all recognize; the claims of the gospel and our expectations of faith are difficult to

realize in practice. Worse, the claims of the gospel often appear to conflict with the claims of science, with public morality, and with all kinds of modern ideology.

Almost a hundred years ago, the German theologian and social philosopher Ernst Troeltsch struggled with this split within the modern mind. He saw it as his task to bring the Christian faith into agreement with modern philosophical, scientific, and spiritual insights by means of a *christliche Weltanschauung* (Christian worldview). In seeking to realize this task, Troeltsch adopted a two-kingdom theory, in the spirit of Luther, as his point of departure. For Troeltsch, the program of a [46] Christian worldview is a program of mediation and creative synthesis: *eine neue schöpferische Kultursynthese* (a new creative cultural synthesis) in a Christian sense.²

What should we think of this? It is my conviction that the search for such a societal or worldview synthesis leads to a dead-end. I wonder how far Olthuis would want to pursue this course. This kind of a synthesizing view overlooks one of the main reasons we have difficulties with many modern insights and spiritual developments, despite their seemingly purely scientific or political character (their qualifying modus): namely, that they also have implicit religious connotations, often expressing a secular faith.

Decisive here is the insight of Abraham Kuyper in his *Stone Lectures on Calvinism*. Kuyper argued that the so-called “conflict between faith and science” when closely examined, does not exist. The conflict is in fact one between two kinds of faith.³ Given that we Christians often have great difficulties with “praxis” on account of its being occasioned in large measure by an apostate faith, then no worldview mediation can be of any avail. Mediation via a worldview is in my opinion *not* the way leading to what Olthuis has so fittingly referred to at the end of his paper as “the integration of faith and praxis.”

It seems more appropriate to call a worldview a “medium of integration” than to call it a “medium of mediation” (Olthuis uses both phrases). Because man is a unity, he feels the need to unify all his experiences, including that of faith. In this sense, a worldview may indeed be seen as the unifying framework of man’s experiences: a medium of integration.

² Ernst Troeltsch, “Die christliche Weltanschauung und ihre Gegenströmungen” (1893/94), in *Gesammelte Schriften* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1913), 2:227-327.

³ Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 5th ed. (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1961), chap. 4.

The Transformative Power of Worldviews

Let me work out this idea of worldview a bit more systematically, giving it the active sense I mentioned earlier. Especially in modern society, we are continually confronted with a wide range of concrete life experiences that are new and often embarrassing. Because of the unity of our being, and for the sake of an integral worldview, we urgently need to cope with all these experiences that cross our way. These experiences affect both faith and praxis, if we interpret "faith" as all that is implied in living a Christian life and "praxis" as the outcome of the modern, secularized world in all its practical diversity.

The problems in this area are immense today, especially for Christians. Christians know God and his Word, but are also aware that they live in a world dominated by strongly diverging forces: an expanding [47] scientific enterprise, an aggressive technology, a capitalistic business enterprise, a permissive morality. Moreover, these forces are lead by a great variety of humanistic ideologies and expectations. What diverse and conflicting experiences a Christian has to undergo! I do not see how worldview mediation could help us out of this confusing situation and bring about unification of "faith" and "praxis." Only religious reformation —and in its extension, religious transformation—can return something of an integrated vision of life to a person who lives in such a broken world.

I make a distinction between religious reformation and religious transformation. By "religious reformation" I mean a radical conversion, letting go of the ideologies of our time and surrendering to the Christ of the Scriptures. By "religious transformation" I mean an active renewal of culture and society, bringing all human qualities and the achievements of civilization under the claims of Christ. If Christ is Lord of the world, then the goods of culture are likewise to be claimed for him. Even the unruly structures of a wasteful and exploiting technological society should, where possible, be brought into the humane perspective of his liberating regime.

Transformation is very different from uncritical accommodation of the Christian faith to the present world situation. It is also very different from the creation of a pietistic or ascetic "Christian" subculture. Instead, transformation is a critical confrontation. It implies rejecting *and* sanctifying the existing social, cultural, and intellectual world, in

accordance with Paul’s command to “take every thought captive to obey Christ.”⁴

The Christian worldview itself has such transformative power. It is challenged by pseudo-religious ideologies, the public ideas and scientific theories of modern life. It is called to take a critical stance regarding the cultural goods and societal achievements of our time. Within the all-encompassing framework of a secular worldview, these achievements are often objectionable, or at least ambiguous. In spite of these difficulties, however, the “praxis” of the modern secular world still lends itself to re-evaluation and reintegration within the Christian “vision for life.” That is what I call “religious transformation.”⁵

I conclude that Olthuis’s position is strong insofar as it is a phenomenological description (over against the contemplative mood of the Dilthey school), making transparent all the ultimate beliefs, moral options, and normative and practical tasks involved in that mysterious entity German philosophers have termed *Weltanschauung*. Thus, at the core his view implies an active and transformative idea of [48] worldview. But Olthuis unnecessarily weakens his position as soon as he turns from a phenomenology to an anatomy of worldviews, dissecting faith commitments from other life experiences as though they were *as such* separated, or even opposed, organs in the body of human existence and in need of mediation.

Paradigms of the Worldview-Philosophy Relationship

At this point I want to consider Professor Wolters’ paper, “The Idea of Worldview and its Relation to Philosophy.” If it is true that a worldview is, or at least implies, a practical and even a transformative view of reality, then we are immediately confronted with the problem addressed in this paper, namely, the relationship of worldview and philosophy. Since the time of the Greeks, both worldview and philosophy have implied a vision of totality. For Wolters (and I agree with him), philosophy is a theoretical science, differing from the special sciences, including the social sciences, insofar as it aims to reflect the whole of reality.

⁴ 2 Cor. 10.5. See also, Jacob Klapwijk, “Calvin and Neo-Calvinism on Non-Christian Philosophy” in *Philosophia Reformata* 38 (1973):43-61. This article has also been published separately under the title, *The Idea of a Christian Philosophy: Essays in Honour of D .H .Th. Vollenhoven*, ed. K.A. Bril, H. Hart, and J. Klapwijk (Toronto: Wedge, 1973), same pagination

⁵ I agree with Olthuis that there is a *legitimate* diversity of Christian worldviews, none of which ought to be canonized. This legitimacy is not based, in my opinion, upon the synthesizing structure of a worldview but upon the transformational force characteristic of every viable worldview.

Because of this similarity between worldview and philosophy —both deal with total reality—there is considerable tension and competition between them. Given this intriguing relationship between worldview and philosophy, I consider Wolters’ paper a genuine contribution in clarifying the various ways in which this relationship has been worked out by nineteenth- and twentieth-century philosophers.

Wolters presents a typological scheme of the basic ways the relationship between worldview (W) and philosophy (P) has been construed. He outlines five different paradigms:

W repels P (Kierkegaard, Jaspers)

W crowns P (Windelband, Wundt)

W flanks P (Rickert, Husserl)

W yields P (Dilthey, Mannheim)

W equals P (Gomperz, Engels, etc.)

Although this scheme is attractive, it is also somewhat misleading. Reality, including historical reality, is always more nuanced than our schemes can capture. Hence, the relation in question seems to me more subtle than Wolters’ classification allows. However, I believe Wolters’ typological scheme could be useful if we consider these paradigms as “ideal types” somewhat in the Weberian sense of the word.⁶⁶ Ideal types are not classificatory concepts reached by abstraction from the unique characteristics of actual historical and social phenomena; they [49] are, instead, “ahistorical model constructions.” In themselves, ideal types never give an adequate portrayal of historical reality. However, they are an aid for the social scientist in giving clear descriptions of reality by determining the degree to which a concrete historical phenomenon approaches such an ideal standard.

It is well known that Weber’s use of “ideal types” is related to his particular view of *Verstehen* (understanding) and of causal explanation. But apart from that, his constructive method is also useful for describing philosophical systems. In short, Wolters’ types are quite helpful as long as they are interpreted as typological constructions or ideals. Used this way, a typology does not level off the historical

⁶⁶ Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 3d ed., edited by J. Winckelmann (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1968), p. 560.

uniqueness of philosophical conceptions, but instead helps to determine their distinctive intellectual position.

Philosophical systems, unique as they are, can never be adequately captured in schemes such as Wolters has set up. To make this point clear, I will consider the three continental philosophers who probably have been the most influential with respect to the problem of worldview and philosophy: Dilthey, Jaspers, and Husserl. Wolters’ typology does indeed help to determine their distinctive positions. But at the same time, none of their views accords entirely with Wolters’ scheme.

Consider Wilhelm Dilthey. Dilthey is representative of the “worldview-yields-philosophy” approach, for he says worldviews have their elaboration (*Ausbildung*) in philosophical, metaphysical systems. However, this is only half of the story. The other half is that Dilthey holds that, since the rise of historical consciousness, modern philosophy has been aware of being both conditioned and relativized by worldviews. He calls upon philosophy henceforth to free itself from this predicament by formulating a meta-philosophy, i.e. a comparative typology of worldviews and worldview philosophies. This involves developing a “doctrine of worldviews” (*Weltanschauungslehre*) and a “philosophy of philosophy” (*Philosophie der Philosophie*).⁷

Consider, also, Karl Jaspers. Jaspers is representative of the “worldview-repels-philosophy” type. In his *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (note that he does *not* say, *Philosophie*), Jaspers clearly distances himself from philosophy as an objective, universal, scientific theory. But here, again, there is another half to the story. Throughout his career, Jaspers searched for a philosophy in which science, worldview, reason, and existence could somehow be united, in which existential faith could be accounted for philosophically. To that purpose, Jaspers coined the phrase *philosophische Glaube* (philosophical faith). In such a concept, one could say, he aimed to effectuate a synth-[50]esis of worldview and philosophy.⁸

Finally, consider Edmund Husserl. The roots of the “worldview-flanks-philosophy” approach are to be found not in the work of Heinrich Rickert in his later years but in Husserl’s famous *Logos* article in 1911, “Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft”

⁷ Wilhelm Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 2d ed. (Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner/Göttingen: Van den Hoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), 8:73-118, 167-235. Dilthey did wrestle with the question whether, and to what extent, this meta-philosophy is again dependent upon a worldview position.

⁸ “Der philosophische Glaube...had jederzeit das Merkmal, dass es nur im Bunde mit dem Wissen ist.” Karl Jaspers, *Der philosophische Glaube* (München: R. Piper, 1948), 13.

(philosophy as a strict science). Here again Wolters’ typology expresses only a partial truth. Husserl considered the flanking of worldview and philosophy to be only temporary. The future is not to worldviews, nor even to worldview philosophies, but to a strictly scientific philosophy. Husserl felt that the spiritual needs of the time make worldviews and worldview philosophies indispensable as practical wisdom, but only provisionally. The eschatological reality can only be a strictly scientific philosophy, which will ultimately make worldviews superfluous.⁹

These historical and methodological remarks are, in my opinion, important for a correct assessment of the recent worldview debate. However, I shall not pursue this matter now, for at the end of his paper Wolters also raises an important systematic question that calls for comment. The question at stake is whether the “worldview-yields-philosophy” model can be used in a Christian context. Doesn’t this paradigm inevitably lead to an historicist perspectivism and relativism? Isn’t the idea that everyone (Calvinist, Marxist, etc.) merely works out his own worldview, within his own philosophical theory, contrary to the most basic purpose of philosophical argumentation and discussion—namely, to convince one’s opponent and thus to strive for general validity and inter-subjective consensus?

It is telling that Wolters feels the need to qualify his typology when applied to the position of Herman Dooyeweerd in his later years. Wolters calls Dooyeweerd’s position a “hybrid” between the third and fourth paradigms: between worldview-flanks-philosophy and worldview-yields-philosophy. Personally, I agree with Dooyeweerd when he maintains that a philosopher who merely *expresses* a view of life and is not willing to *account* for it within the academic community thereby forfeits its scientific character. If Christians do that, then we have only ourselves to blame if the academic world no longer takes Christian philosophy seriously.

Dooyeweerd and the Expressivist Vision of Life

It may be fruitful to consider why Dooyeweerd does not fall completely under the worldview-yields-philosophy rubric, which Wolters considers typical of Diltheyan

⁹ “Nur Wissenschaft kann die Not, die von Wissenschaft stammt, endgültig überwinden... Weltanschauungen können streiten, nur Wissenschaft kann entscheiden und ihre Entscheidung trägt den Stempel Ewigkeit.” Edmund Husserl, *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1971), 66-67.

philosophy and also of neo-Calvinism. [51] This paradigm, this “expressivist” vision of life—to use Charles H. Taylor’s terminology¹⁰— was symptomatic of Abraham Kuyper and many of his followers in the Netherlands. However, an expressivist vision has a Romantic background; culture and philosophy are taken as expressive of a *Gemeingeist*: literally, a communal spirit, the spirit of a people or nation or worldview community, such as Calvinism. As a result, the expressivist vision leads to Romantic consequences, namely, to particularism and perspectivism, wherein each community (including the neo-Calvinist community) cherishes and develops its own particular worldview, even in science and philosophy.

As far as Dooyeweerd is concerned, these particularistic consequences of the worldview-yields-philosophy paradigm are contrary to the claim to universality that he takes to be inherent in theoretical thought, including philosophy. To be sure, for Dooyeweerd worldviews have a legitimate function in guiding, as a view of total reality, non-theoretical thought and practical life. But philosophy is different. It cannot permit itself the leisure of merely working out the consequences of the inherited communal spirit of a particular group. This, I take it, is why, in his “new (transcendental) critique of theoretical thought” Dooyeweerd moved away from a Kuyperian, Romanticist presupposition and toward a more or less Kantian one. That is, he rejected an appeal to the self-evident nature of the Calvinist inheritance, to be elaborated in a particular, Calvinist philosophy, and sought instead to deliver a general (transcendental) argument for his philosophical stance.¹¹

In short, the outcome of Dooyeweerd’s critical philosophy is different from Dilthey’s. Dooyeweerd doesn’t conclude that all philosophy and theory are necessarily preconditioned by the cultural, historical inheritance of some worldview. Instead, he concludes that the only (and necessary) precondition of philosophy and theory is the ultimate conditions and commitments of the human heart, which is fallen into sin, and is either still in that condition or reborn and restored by God’s spirit. Thus, at the basis of philosophy and theory, there is no historical pluralism of worldviews but only two “religious” ground-motives in antithetical opposition. This “religious” antithesis, i.e., of man converted to God *versus* man averted from God, is decisive for all life and thought. (“Religion” and “religious” are used here not in the sense of

¹⁰ Charles H. Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 2-3. See also Nicholas Wolterstorff’s paper [“On Christian Learning”] in this volume.

¹¹ Herman Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, 4 vols. (Amsterdam: H.J. Paris/Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1953-58.) See 1: 22-112.

religious experience or religious acts but in the sense of ultimate commitment, a commitment underlying all experiences and acts.) Worldview and philosophy both depend upon this antithesis, but each has its own place, the former in practical life, the latter in theoretical [52] life.

Dooyeweerd is not entirely consistent and convincing in his view. And I must admit that I am happy about that because I believe, together with Wolters, that worldviews play a more decisive role in philosophy than Dooyeweerd is willing to admit.

Wolters is right when he says Dooyeweerd's position is to some extent a hybrid. At times, Dooyeweerd is very principled, as when he posits that philosophy is based on only two "religious ground-motives" the one apostate religion, the other the Christian religion. But I have the impression Dooyeweerd has difficulty making this ultimate antithesis relevant for philosophy without the shaping power of historical worldviews. One consequence of Dooyeweerd's happy inconsistency is that he surreptitiously brings the notion of worldview into his idea of "religious ground-motive." For normally he does not distinguish between only two "religious ground-motives" within Western culture but four: that of ancient Greek culture, that of medieval Scholasticism, that of modern Humanism, and that of biblical, Christian religion. Moreover, these four "religious ground-motives" parallel the four worldviews which were the starting points for Kuyper's reflections in his Stone lectures: Paganism, Romanism, Modernism, and Calvinism.

Worldview and the Transcendental Hermeneutical Idea of Philosophy

Why do I mention this problem in Dooyeweerd? I end my contribution by mentioning three lessons we can draw from Dooyeweerd's so-called hybrid position.

(1) An *expressivist idea of philosophy*, or the "worldview-yields-philosophy" approach, such as we find in Kuyper and Vollenhoven, as well as in Professor Wolters himself, is not to be recommended for various reasons. Probably the most important is that it leads to Romantic particularism and Christian isolationism. Such isolationism would amount to a resignation even greater than Dilthey's, for Dilthey at least sought to vindicate a theoretical philosophy in a meta-position, i.e. a position elevated above the historical diversity of worldviews (as noted above).

(2) A *transcendental critical idea of philosophy*, as we find in Dooyeweerd, is a

stronger position than an expressivist one because it seeks to rescue philosophy’s claim to universality, a claim analogous [53] to that of all the other sciences. This position emphasizes, as a result, the possibility of contact and communication between philosophical opponents. It is still weak, however, because it can do no more than acknowledge (I deliberately avoid terms such as “prove”) the presence of ultimate “religious ground-motives” in philosophy, without being able itself to concretize their driving power—that is, it cannot allow for the formative presence of historical worldviews. Unless, of course, they are secretly smuggled in.

(3) In order to safeguard both the claim to universality (Dooyeweerd’s concern) and the impact of worldview (Kuyper’s concern)—because each has an authentic role in philosophical argumentation and discussion—we require what I call a *transcendental hermeneutical idea of philosophy*. It is “transcendental” because philosophy—in particular, Christian philosophy—should always take into account the ultimate, transcendental presuppositions of theoretical thought, doing so in reference to ground-motives and worldviews. At the same time, it is “hermeneutical” because only in a hermeneutical analysis can a rational account be given of the impact of a worldview on philosophy.

There are two forms of hermeneutics. *Linguistic* hermeneutics lays down rules governing the way a text ought to be interpreted. It correlates a text to its context, in terms of which it ought to be interpreted. *Philosophical* hermeneutics lays down rules governing the way philosophical terms and theses ought to be interpreted, correlating these to a broader cultural or ideological context. Philosophies require for their interpretation a general *Vorverständnis* (pre-understanding) that forms the context in which they can be understood. This context includes worldviews. The worldview that counts is not only that of the philosophical author, but also that of the reader or listener. Worldview is an indispensable *Vorverständnis* that guides the person who wants to communicate with the author or who wants to interpret current philosophical debates. Because the worldview of the author and of the interpreter are not by definition the same, we have to conclude that, depending on the spiritual distance between author and interpreter, acts of interpretation are at the same time acts of transformation.¹²

At this point we see the nexus between the two papers by Olthuis and Wolters. My

¹² See Jacob Klapwijk, “Antithesis, Synthesis and the Idea of Transformational Philosophy” in *Philosophia Reformata* 51, no. 1 (1986). See also, “Epilogue: The Idea of Transformational Philosophy,” in *Christian Assessment of Secular Thought*, ed. J. Klapwijk, S. Griffioen, and G. Groenewoud (forthcoming).

conclusion, that a worldview is capable of both integrating and transforming the world, is also applicable to the world of scholars and scientists. Every worldview is challenged to bring forward a critical reinterpretation and appreciation of existing theories and arguments from the vantage point of its own pre-understanding. This is how secularized worldviews and ideologies in the modern age have always dealt, and still deal, with the Christian intellectual heritage, using that heritage for its own sake. This is also how Christian scholars have to work with the intellectual heritage of our age. It strikes me that Wolters himself, although not wholly consistent with the “worldview-yields-philosophy” paradigm, has such a transformation in mind when at the end of his paper he pleads in favor of retaining secular terms but rejecting their secular connotations, and redefining them in the context of a Christian categorial framework.

I shall break off my contribution at this point. It would require a separate article to explore systematically the idea of a transcendental hermeneutical philosophy, and to explain how such an idea can allow both worldview commitments and well-founded claims to universality.