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Self-Responsible Self-Determination: The Educational Theory of Martinus Jan Langeveld (1905–1989), Its Origins and Sources

Marloes Hoencamp ^a, John Exalto ^b, Abraham de Muynck ^c
and Doret de Ruyter ^d

^aDepartment of Educational and Family Studies, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands; ^bDepartment of Education, University of Groningen, Groningen, The Netherlands; ^cDepartment of Practical Theology, Theological University of Apeldoorn, Apeldoorn, The Netherlands; ^dDepartment of Education, University of Humanistic Studies, Utrecht, The Netherlands

ABSTRACT

Martinus Jan Langeveld (1905–1989) was a key figure in Dutch academic educational studies after the Second World War. This article investigates the origins and sources of Langeveld’s theory by examining his prior publications and the main references in conjunction with the intellectual movements of his time. This research shows, first, that Langeveld built his educational theory upon a variety of sources: the German-American psychologist William Stern (1871–1938), the Dutch educationalist Philipp Abraham Kohnstamm (1875–1951), the German philosopher Theodor Litt (1880–1962), and Edmund Husserl’s (1859–1938) philosophy of phenomenology. Further, Langeveld borrowed a phrase from the medieval theology of Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) as the key idea of his theory. Last, Langeveld’s theory incorporates the important topics of the first decades of the twentieth century. In particular, the coinciding philosophies of personalism and phenomenology in the context of anti-positivist movements shed new light on Langeveld’s theory.

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Introduction

Martinus Jan Langeveld (1905–1989) is regarded as a leading figure in the Dutch post-war academic discipline *Pedagogiek* – educational studies – which was at that time a young discipline in the Dutch humanities.¹ Within the academic world, he is considered an influential personality who maintained many international contacts and participated in global contexts. He participated in UNESCO and other international associations, and co-founded several European educational journals, including the *International Review of Education*.² Langeveld is considered one of the most influential Dutch representatives of the phenomenological method, the philosophical paradigm developed by Edmund Husserl (1859–1938).³ Nowadays he is most renowned for his famous alliterative phrase “self-responsible self-determination,” which summarises his educational theory.

CONTACT Marloes Hoencamp  m.l.m.hoencamp@vu.nl  Department of Educational and Family Studies, Faculty of Behavioural and Movement Sciences, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Van der Boerhorststraat 7, Amsterdam 1081 BT, The Netherlands

The existing literature on Langeveld describes his biography, the wealth of his work and his influence, but pays little attention to an analysis of the central concept “self-responsible self-determination” and its sources. This is striking, considering that this theory was well known in the Netherlands and abroad, and many Dutch former students of education or from a teacher-training institute immediately think of these words describing the aim of education upon hearing the name Langeveld. Langeveld’s textbook *Beknopte Theoretische Pedagogiek* (Concise Educational Theory, hereafter BTP), in which he proposed this theory, was prescribed reading in Dutch teacher-training colleges until well into the 1980s.⁴ This publication – also his *magnum opus* – was written during the Second World War. As the title indicates, Langeveld’s intention was to produce a concise book. This was partially due to paper scarcity at the time but also because Langeveld wanted to produce a compact text that summarised his lectures in educational sciences.⁵ He thus chose to limit references to the sources of his thinking and remained limited in elaborating key concepts. BTP contained Langeveld’s thinking up to that point, and at the same time pointed ahead to the core themes of his later works.⁶ It was widely published in Dutch and German, and his theory of self-responsible self-determination was studied as far afield as South Africa, Israel, Egypt, Jamaica and Japan.⁷

This article aims to analyse the development of Langeveld’s theory of self-responsible self-determination by answering the following question: What sources of inspiration did Langeveld draw on for his theory of self-responsible self-determination, and can his theory be better understood through those sources? First, the article briefly presents Langeveld’s biography by mentioning the most important encounters with academic peers and career developments in light of the research question (section 2). Next, the article concisely explicates his theory of self-responsible self-determination as proposed in BTP (section 3). As stated, BTP contains limited references and a concise elaboration of key concepts. Therefore, for an adequate understanding of his theory this research cannot be limited to the 1945 publication. To trace Langeveld’s sources of inspiration for his theory, section 4 examines his prior publications (1934–1945). Section 5 then analyses the main references of all these publications, including BTP. This analysis is done in conjunction with an investigation of the context in which he was working, identifying sources, names and movements of the time even if not always specifically mentioned by Langeveld. The article concludes by discussing whether the earlier publications and newly identified sources can shed new light on Langeveld’s theory of self-responsible self-determination (section 6).

Martinus Jan Langeveld

Langeveld studied Dutch and history at the University of Amsterdam. From the beginning of his studies, Langeveld showed an interest in educational sciences. He continued on this path, and during his student years became a research assistant to the former physicist, philosopher and educationalist Philipp Abraham Kohnstamm (1875–1951), who had a significant influence on the development of Langeveld’s thinking (see also section 5).⁸ Kohnstamm brought Langeveld into contact with the philosopher Hendrik Josephus Pos (1898–1955). Pos introduced Langeveld to phenomenology and encouraged him to study abroad. Between 1925 and 1931, Langeveld attended lectures in Germany, amongst others on psychology by William Stern (1871–1938) in

Hamburg, on philosophy and educational theory by Theodore Litt (1880–1962) in Leipzig, and on philosophy and especially phenomenology by Husserl and Martin Heidegger (1889–1976).⁹ The most important influences of these scholars on Langeveld's theory will be addressed in section 4.

After his studies, and in addition to his job teaching at Baarns Lyceum, Langeveld worked on his doctoral thesis (1930–1934) on the association between mental and linguistic processes in the learning process of teenagers.¹⁰ This was a popular topic at the time, and the choice for this topic shows that Langeveld was aware of the most important European developments in the field. The relationships between language, thinking, logic and rationality were studied by all important developmental psychologists in the 1930s, including German philosopher Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945) and Swiss developmental psychologist Jean Piaget (1896–1980), to whom Langeveld referred in his thesis.¹¹ The similarity between Langeveld's thesis and that of Russian educational and developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) – also influenced by Cassirer – is striking. Without knowing each other's work, they both published their theses in the same year (1934) on the same subject, with almost identical titles.¹²

After completing his thesis and while maintaining his own clinical-psychological and pedagogical practice, Langeveld became a lecturer in child psychology (1935) at the Amsterdam Nutsseminarium and an unpaid lecturer in adolescent psychology at the University of Amsterdam (1937). In 1939, he was appointed endowed professor of educational sciences at Utrecht University and head of the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics in The Hague. During the war, Langeveld took over the professorial duties of Kohnstamm, who had been forced to go into hiding because of his Jewish background. During these years, he wrote his most famous publication: BTP (1945).¹³

After the war, Langeveld was appointed professor of educational sciences, developmental psychology and didactics at Utrecht University. During these years, Langeveld was also a member of the "Utrecht School." This was a loose-knit group of academics consisting of psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, educationalists and criminologists who sought to gain insight into the nature of human beings through phenomenological analysis, in this way contributing to the construction of society. The most important figure in this group was the philosopher-biologist Frederik Buytendijk (1887–1974), who also founded the phenomenological journal *Situation*.¹⁴ By 1945, Langeveld had already declared himself a representative of phenomenology, and after the Second World War he conducted research using the phenomenological method. Although he chose a philosophical method, Langeveld was not an opponent of empirical-analytical research. He was highly critical of the absolute positivist scientific way of thinking, and until his retirement in 1972 continued to oppose the idea that the empirical-analytical method was the only scientific method.¹⁵

Langeveld's oeuvre is extensive; his publications include dozens of books and over 400 articles.¹⁶ Langeveld also maintained many contacts within the German and French academic community, cooperated with universities in Germany, South Africa and Japan, and received two honorary doctorates (from Zurich and Pretoria). However, he exerted no major influence in the English-speaking academic world and had limited contact with American academics. This could be related to Langeveld's above-mentioned critical attitude towards the empirical-analytical method as the only method within science, which was the predominant orientation in those countries.¹⁷

The Theory of Self-Responsible Self-Determination

Self-Responsible Self-Determination

Langeveld's educational theory is primarily concerned with the pedagogical relationship between parents and child.¹⁸ Within this relationship, upbringing is a conscious and intentional influencing of a child by an adult in order "to educate the child to live his life independently as the person he is and to do so in a good, moral way."¹⁹ Langeveld summarised this aim of education with the alliterative phrase "self-responsible self-determination." According to Langeveld, self-responsible self-determination is the criterion of adulthood. This means that the child's upbringing ends when the child knows who they are and why they do things the way they do. This knowing is based on the acquisition of a set of moral values and norms (self-determination) for which the child is taught to take responsibility (self-responsibility). Individuals evaluate their actions by their own inner selves, that is, by their conscience, in accordance with their norms.²⁰

In the education process that culminates in self-responsible self-determination, two concepts are important: responsibility and authority. First, the educator is responsible for living as a moral model or example of a self-responsible person with whom the child can identify and whose moral standards the child can follow. At the same time, the educator bears responsibility on behalf of and for the child yet must also understand the art of handing this over to the child, who becomes increasingly independent and takes responsibility for him/herself. Langeveld calls this a process of gradual release of responsibility, which ends when the child reaches adulthood and is "self" responsible, and the educator no longer needs to carry the responsibility for the child.²¹

Within this process of identification with the educator on the one hand and the increasing individual responsibility on the other lies a second important concept: authority. This authority is not "power" over the child: it is better explained as a necessary trust that the child places in the educator. In other words, it is an authority recognised by the child.²² In the educational process, the educator takes responsibility for the interests, well-being and welfare of the child (self-responsible). In doing so, the educator acts on behalf of the child. But the educator also aims to gradually dissolve this authority-based relationship. The child becomes increasingly independent and able to choose the right course of action (self-determination). Langeveld compared this to the function of the educator as a substitute conscience that gradually dissolves itself. The child, who initially identifies with the educator, starts to detach the educator's norms and values from the person of the educator and increasingly makes them their own. Like the educator's process of relinquishing responsibility, the educator's function of authority diminishes and gradually disappears altogether when the child reaches adulthood.²³

Participation in Society

Self-responsible self-determination, or adulthood, is not only an internal and individual process; it also manifests externally as constructive participation in social life.²⁴ This second component can be discerned in Langeveld's idea that the process of growing into a self-responsible, self-determining person includes being a good citizen, whereby

freedom obliges one to be responsible for and bound to the other. In other words, the individual and “the other” or “the community” belong together, which is in accordance with Langeveld’s anthropology.²⁵

Anthropology: Animal Educandum

To understand Langeveld’s theory of self-responsible self-determination, his anthropology must be briefly considered. Langeveld formulated his view of man as follows: “A human being is a being that educates, is educated, and depends on education.” Langeveld proposes the human being as an *animal educandum*: an animal that depends on education.²⁶ In Langeveld’s time it was common to compare the human subject with an animal. The Amsterdam Valeriuskring (1918–1925), a forerunner of the Utrecht School, was among those that did. Langeveld’s teacher and subsequently colleague Buytendijk was also well known for his human–animal comparisons.²⁷ This does not mean that animals and people were seen as equal or that Langeveld saw the child as a developing animal. For the training of animals, Langeveld distinguished habit formation (*gewoontevorming*) and dressage (*dressuur*) from education. Although habit formation was also part of the process of bringing up children, education was exclusive to humankind, and the *educandum* underlines the difference between animals and humans.²⁸

In elaborating his view of man, Langeveld formulated four interconnected fundamental principles: morality, individuality, sociality and human personality.²⁹ These four tenets form the basis of his educational theory. Langeveld considered morality to be unique to humans, who alone are capable of knowing the difference between right and wrong and of acting accordingly.³⁰ Hence education should focus on the formation of morality. Personality means being a person who is different from other persons, as well as being a “self” or being independent. This is not a possibility but rather a prerequisite. Langeveld thought that a person should be different from others.³¹ He saw sociality and individuality as complementary. Humans are social. They live in community with others and are therefore educable and also responsible for others. At the same time, Langeveld emphasised the importance of individuality, with each person having a unique value that must be protected.³²

Origins of the Theory of Self-Responsible Self-Determination in Publications of 1934–1945

In his theory, Langeveld included numerous similar and related concepts and formulations of self-responsible self-determination, such as becoming an adult, becoming a moral person, becoming an ethical person, becoming an empowered personality, being an educated or good person, and simply being a person.³³ In all these formulations, education is linked to morality, responsibility and personhood. Therefore, examining these related concepts in Langeveld’s own work facilitates a more thorough analysis of his theory and a more accurate identification and examination of its origins. In light of the function of BTP – namely, to provide a concise summary of his lectures – this publication could also be regarded as a reflection of his thinking up to that point and being built on his earlier thoughts and publications. Thus, to obtain a comprehensive understanding of Langeveld’s theory of self-responsible self-determination, his earlier works must also be

studied.³⁴ Specifically, this section addresses the following question: What clues and references can be found in his publications from 1934 to 1945 regarding his theory of self-responsible self-determination? To this end we focus on three main publications written in 1937, 1939 and 1942.³⁵

1937

In 1937, Langeveld published the comprehensive work *Inleiding tot de studie der paedagogische psychologie van de middelbare schooklassen* (Introduction to the study of educational psychology in secondary school classes), which included the previously published work *De psychologie der middelbare schooklassen* (Psychology of secondary school classes) (1934). The publication was reprinted and revised many times and was followed by an abridged edition (1938). *Inleiding* can be characterised as a comprehensive literature review of the (new) developmental psychology of Langeveld's time. It contained many well-known names of the period, such as William Stern, Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), Charlotte Bühler (1893–1974), Litt and Kohnstamm. *Inleiding* can be seen as the basis for BTP, as it addressed many of the latter work's important themes. An example is his consideration in this work of the morality of man, for which he drew on the theory of his teacher Kohnstamm (see section 5).³⁶ A second example is Langeveld's elaboration of the process of identification between the educator and the child, which can be seen as a precursor to the concepts of responsibility and authority in his theory of self-responsible self-determination.³⁷ Last, his reflections on and connections to the anthropological foundations of personality and the individual are evident in his references to, among others, Stern (see section 5).³⁸

1939

Langeveld delivered the lecture *Over het opzettelijke en het onwillekeurige in de opvoeding en de opvoedkunde* (On the intentional and the inadvertent in education and educational sciences) (1939) when he accepted his appointment as extraordinary professor of educational sciences, succeeding Kohnstamm in Utrecht. The word “intentionality” in the title illustrates his phenomenological orientation. Further, Langeveld's idea that “freedom” is part of education is striking. In discussing this, Langeveld referred to medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), who defined freedom in his third book of *Summa Contra Gentiles* as “responsible self-determination.”³⁹ The similarity to Langeveld's words “self-responsible self-determination” from the 1945 publication is significant. In BTP, Langeveld repeated these words, only adding another “self” and no longer referring to Aquinas. In this 1939 lecture, Langeveld interpreted Aquinas's words to mean that although humans, as reasoning creatures, are also subject to divine providence, at the same time humans have a certain power to control their own actions because they can recognise meaning and direction. In sum, individuals are in a state of tension because they are simultaneously bound to God and self-determination. Langeveld described this tension as follows: “It is a freedom that is given to us and at the same time a bondage, and a bondage of a very definite nature. Freedom, in this sense, is only complete when we have God's freedom in view.”⁴⁰ This view has consequences for Langeveld's views on

the human subject and the source of morality: the human subject is self-determining, but not self-legislating, as only God has this legislative power. Langeveld then linked these ideas to a view of the person as a responsible being.⁴¹ In 1945, he repeated this by referring to a freedom that obliges one to take responsibility for oneself, a freedom that is not separate from everything else but means obedience to Jesus Christ.⁴² To understand Langeveld's theory of self-responsible self-determination, this publication of 1939 and especially this conception of freedom must be considered and is discussed further in section 5.

1942

The lecture *Handelen en denken in de opvoeding en de opvoedkunde* (Acting and thinking in education and educational sciences) contains remarkably few similarities to the themes of his theory of self-responsible self-determination. The lecture was given on the occasion of Langeveld's appointment as professor at the University of Amsterdam, succeeding Kohnstamm, who had been forced into hiding because of his Jewish identity. One clue to the theory of self-responsible self-determination in this lecture is the notion of the child as a co-determiner in the process of education. In other words, education is not just about the parents and their intentional actions: the child actively participates in the upbringing process and is therefore a determining factor already. Langeveld embraced this idea, which he had adopted from his teacher Litt, to whom he referred as one of his inspirations.

Sources of Inspiration for the Theory of Self-Responsible Self-Determination and the Historical Context

The preceding section shows that the theory of self-responsible self-determination was not new when Langeveld wrote his BTP (1945). The ideas underlying his theory were developed in earlier publications and culminated in BTP. Hence in identifying the sources Langeveld used for his theory, the references in those publications must also be taken into account. In this section, the focus lies on the sources and movements that Langeveld mentioned explicitly in his publications between 1934 and 1945: Stern, Kohnstamm, Litt, Aquinas, and phenomenology. Stern, Kohnstamm and Litt are certainly sources of inspiration, because they were his teachers. This section also scrutinises how Langeveld may have come across Aquinas's work and investigates interesting analogies.

Last, this section considers sources to which Langeveld did not refer explicitly, but that can be identified by relating his thinking and its origins to the context of the time. Therefore, the analysis of the above-mentioned publications includes the remarkable similarities between Langeveld's theory, movements (personalism) and contemporaneous circumstances (resistance against positivist thinking within academia, and the Second World War).

Stern and Kohnstamm

As shown in section 4, Langeveld was inspired by the German-American philosopher and psychologist William Stern and the aforementioned Kohnstamm.⁴³ This was

especially recognisable in Langeveld's conceptualisation of the theory of self-responsible self-determination and the anthropology included therein. These two thinkers are discussed together, as Langeveld adopted three fundamental ideas that Stern and Kohnstamm also shared: individuality, sociality and human personality.⁴⁴ Langeveld's explanation of the individual corresponds to the ideas of both his teachers, who described the individual as a whole, an indivisibility and a value in itself.⁴⁵ In the theories of Stern and Kohnstamm a living individual is characterised by "purposefulness" (*einheitliche zielstrebige*) and develops into a spontaneous individual through self-efficacy (*Selbsttätigkeit*).⁴⁶ Langeveld adopted this notion but elaborated on it further in his references to Litt (see below). Langeveld's understanding of the sociality of the individual also shows similarities to the thinking of Stern and Kohnstamm: individuals cannot exist without others and are thus linked to the community, in which they are equal to other individuals.⁴⁷ Third, Langeveld's explanation of human personality corresponds with those of Stern and Kohnstamm, which emphasise that it is the personality that makes the person unique and distinguishes that individual from others.

However, the similarities between Stern, Kohnstamm and Langeveld do not extend to morality. Here only Kohnstamm's influence can be recognised. This is because Kohnstamm's explication of the human person is clearly different from Stern's. Kohnstamm considered morality as the distinctive characteristic of man, whereas Stern did not. According to Stern, being a person is not limited to human beings. Stern distinguished a hierarchy of "persons" of different sizes, starting with the atom, followed by a cell, plant, animal, human, family, people, humanity, earth and solar system, and ending with the absolute person or God. Each person is part of the higher person while the person formed the unity for everything under her/him. All persons mentioned are real persons and have their own value because they are units with a purpose. So for Stern, a tree or a bird is also a person. According to Kohnstamm, although man is part of higher categories, such as family, people, society, earth or the cosmos, a person is not subordinate to these higher categories. The human person is the highest created category and "a being of his own nature," owing to the characteristic of moral knowledge.⁴⁸ Langeveld built on this important and distinctive characteristic of human beings by incorporating morality into his anthropology.

Kohnstamm characterised human beings as moral beings and related this to the function of conscience in human life.⁴⁹ A recurring emphasis in Langeveld's theory is moral knowledge as a unique characteristic of the person and an indicator of the high status of human beings. Langeveld also attributed an important function to conscience, as described in section 3. By considering morality to be a personal and human characteristic, Langeveld took a stand against evolutionist theory, according to which the human person is part of a chain of development and is equal to animals. From this perspective, Langeveld contested the theory of Piaget, in which he saw this developmental thinking represented.⁵⁰

Stern and Kohnstamm are both regarded as adherents of personalism, a philosophy that considers "the person" or "the personality" as the key category of thinking. This philosophy has its roots in the eighteenth century in the ideas of Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743–1819) but attracted renewed interest in the twentieth century. This was partly due to the modernisation and mechanisation of society and the questions that arose regarding the meaning, value and freedom of

the individual person during these processes.⁵¹ Especially after the First World War, personalism received increased attention. The many victims and the great economic consequences of the war raised the question of how one could live as a person (an individual) in community with other persons. The interest in personalism coincided with a growing awareness of and unease with the dominant positivism and deterministic thinking of the naturalistic sciences, also described as anti-positivist movements (1890–1930).⁵² The anti-positivist movements were part of a European-wide phenomenon in countries like France, Germany and Great Britain.⁵³ The movements did not mean a total rejection of science but can be depicted as a quest for an all-inclusive worldview and a constant search for room to include human values and personality. This anti-positivist influence and standpoint is also recognisable in Kohnstamm's theories – especially in his lectures of 1919 and 1922 – and subsequently in Langeveld's work (see below).⁵⁴

Personalism takes different forms. In Stern's work, it manifests as critical personalism, while Kohnstamm's work reflects biblical personalism.⁵⁵ The common denominator is that each person is seen as a unique being to whom value is attributed. Although the person is central, he/she is not seen as an individual *per se* but always as a person in a community. Langeveld did not describe himself as an adherent of the philosophy of personalism. However, the similarities between Stern, Kohnstamm and Langeveld's own theory extend to the personalism shared by the former two.

Although the attention given to personalism was waning in the 1930s – it would gain another boost after the Second World War – its influence on Langeveld's educational theory and his aim is recognisable: the person is free and self-determining (first component) and stands as an individual in a community (second component). Especially in his publications of 1939 and 1945, Langeveld pursued this personalistic way of thinking, showing a strong belief in the indefinite growth and freedom of the person, his/her conscience, and the balance of individuals in a community.⁵⁶ With Langeveld's anthropological ideas and emphasis on the individual and their freedom and responsibility, as well as on morality as part of moral independence, he continued the personalistic tradition of his teacher Kohnstamm, who in turn was inspired by Stern.⁵⁷

Phenomenology

Simultaneously with his formulation of the theory of self-responsible self-determination, in 1945 Langeveld presented himself as an adherent of phenomenology. As shown in section 4, his choice of titles and subjects of his publications of 1939 and 1942 evidence that he had already incorporated phenomenology into his thinking and theory. The individual and subjective character of the phenomenology movement corresponds with Langeveld's theory of the self-determination of the individual child. Particularly important are his emphasis on intentionality – which he shared with Husserl – and his proposal that the individual (the child) is free. Like phenomenology, Langeveld's theory revolves around the individual's situation and their relationship to the world. In phenomenology, the phenomenon has an objective intentional content – like morality – and speaks for itself. At the same time, the phenomenon is experienced itself and partly determined by this subject (the child). There are no clear dividing lines between subject and object; they influence and merge with each other.

The fact that Langeveld presented himself as a phenomenologist in the 1930s is not remarkable. The movement received a great deal of attention across Europe. Langeveld was in the company of numerous others, including his teachers Pos and Buytendijk. Weijers has outlined the complexity of pre-Second World War Dutch phenomenology, which has similarities to the aforementioned anti-positivist movements.⁵⁸ The development of the philosophy of phenomenology coincided with the personalistic movement, focusing on intentionality, subjectivity, the relationship between human beings and their world, and the consequent social responsibility for their community.⁵⁹ The most important common denominator was that natural scientific thinking had become dominant in culture, as a result of which many essential questions about being human were dismissed as unscientific and many subjects were ignored in research. This opposition to positivism found a common orientation in phenomenology, as introduced by Husserl around 1900 and later developed by Max Scheler (1874–1928) and Heidegger.⁶⁰ As Bos described it, the ideas of these great phenomenologists held a promise: the old objectivist and positivist thinking was in crisis and would soon be replaced by the new science.⁶¹ Dutch phenomenology was a complex of random concepts and interests that were not typically phenomenological. However, all shared an anti-deterministic and anti-positivist orientation. According to Weijers, phenomenology should therefore be understood primarily as a cultural phenomenon, the proponents of which used each other's definitions and explanations randomly.⁶² This also applies to Langeveld in his publications until 1945, in which he presented – first and foremost – a philosophical anthropology and an educational theory but not an educational philosophy of phenomenology.

In his theory Langeveld often used the work of the German phenomenologist and philosopher Nicolai Hartmann (1882–1950). It is striking that publications on Langeveld do not point to his frequent citing of Hartmann.⁶³ Langeveld used Hartmann's ideas to explain his own views on responsibility within his theory of self-responsible self-determination. These included the description of the adult person as someone who can bear responsibilities for the child and the notion that during the child's upbringing, the child must acquire "the basic ethical skills of the person."⁶⁴ Langeveld referred to numerous other Dutch and international personalists, phenomenologists and educationalists such as Max Scheler and the Dutch philosopher and educationalist Johannes Hoogveld (1878–1942, see later in this section).

Litt

The theory of self-responsible self-determination was strongly influenced by the ideas of the German philosopher and educationalist Litt, the successor of the German philosopher and psychologist Eduard Spranger (1882–1963). The impact of Litt's views on Langeveld's theory is particularly evident in the primary insight that in education there can be no "technical means–ends relationship," and that there must be a personal pedagogical relationship between parents and children in which self-responsible self-determination can be learned. This is a much more dynamic process and a key notion of Langeveld's theory.⁶⁵ A second insight taken from Litt is the conviction that an educator supports the child, who is assigned freedom and co-determines the process of education and its result.⁶⁶ Litt argued that education should not be based on a predetermined *Bildung* ideal but rather that it should begin with an independent self-determining

subject.⁶⁷ Both insights coincide with the anti-positivist movements that opposed the deterministic view. Litt's idea of the self-determination of the child had a significant influence on Langeveld and can be directly linked to the theory of self-responsible self-determination: it is the subject – the child – who determines the process of upbringing/education. As a consequence, Langeveld gave the child an explicit role in this process, even though the child does not yet bear full responsibility. Langeveld thereby acknowledged that the child is already a person, but also went a step further: by mentioning the value of this self-determination, Langeveld attached great value to childhood. For this reason, Langeveld's theory is also regarded as empowering the child and is praised for the explicit value it assigns to childhood. Therefore his theory is also associated with the New Education Movement. New Education refers to the many educational innovations – such as the Montessori, Dalton and Steiner schools – that arose from the late nineteenth century until approximately 1940. This period partly overlapped with the time in which Langeveld studied and developed his theory. The movement developed a wide range of educational ideas but had a common ideal: education adapts the individuality of every child, often connected to the pursuit of a society of peace and, eventually, the realisation of a new man.⁶⁸ Langeveld never presented himself as a representative or supporter of New Education. Unlike his teacher Kohnstamm, Langeveld showed little interest in New Education experiments, did not propagate a specific educational vision, and hardly published on the subject of school education. Langeveld's contribution lies mainly in the family sphere, for he had his own educational-psychological practice, from where he published on parenting issues and the parent–child relationship.⁶⁹

Aquinas

As explained in section 3, Langeveld embraced the ideas of Aquinas on human freedom and adopted his words “responsible self-determination” as the educational aim in the process of bringing up children. The direct reference to Aquinas and its relation to the key words of Langeveld's theory is a new finding compared with the existing literature on Langeveld's theory.⁷⁰ It also helps in distinguishing Langeveld's sources and understanding his theory, as it shows the conjunction between the phrase “self-responsible self-determination” of the 1945 publication and Aquinas's notion and explanation of freedom in the 1939 publication. However, Aquinas's phrasing is not the only similarity shared with Langeveld's theory of self-responsible self-determination. Notable analogies have also been identified and are discussed below.

First, Langeveld's emphasis on the intentionality of educational action cannot be traced back to phenomenology alone; it also corresponds with Aquinas's ideas. The views on acts Langeveld expressed in 1939 are similar to Aquinas's classification of acts: *actus humanus* (human act, deliberate act) and *actus hominis* (act of a human being, a random act that is neither deliberate nor wanted). Only *actus humanus* qualifies for moral evaluation and falls under the responsibility of man. A key idea within Langeveld's educational theory is that education is a conscious, deliberate act and is therefore always intentional.⁷¹

Second, Langeveld's concept of freedom corresponds with another of Aquinas's ideas: the will is not persuaded by another but convinces itself and is thus the cause of its own movement.⁷² Both Litt's and Langeveld's notions of the child as the determiner of its own

education have similarities to this idea of Aquinas: the child convinces itself and is a partner in the process of education.

Third, there are similarities to Aquinas's determination of the source of moral human action. For Aquinas, the common good and morality lie in the highest object: God. God is not only the source of action: the individual also works towards God in his actions because God is the source of perfect happiness and the perfection of the individual's personality. Therefore, God is also the object of human action. Every morally right action is directed at God, whereas an ethically wrong action removes the individual from God.⁷³ Therefore, through human freedom every individual has the choice to aim for this goal or to turn away from it. Freedom, its actions and its self-determination thus mirror and coincide with the goodness of God. But how does the will know what is good to do? According to Aquinas, the determination of what is good is not only a function of reason but also of conscience. He considered this conscience to offer good guidance in leading the individual to his/her goal.⁷⁴ Therefore, Langeveld's theory shows similarities not only to the personalistic ideas of Kohnstamm but also to Aquinas's conception of the source of morality and his idea of conscience in which self-responsible self-determination is tested internally by conscience.

Last, Aquinas also believed that the human subject is not merely an individual but also depends on the community. In other words, the individual needs a community: the individual is a social being whose personality develops through living with others.⁷⁵ For Aquinas, morality lies first and foremost in God. But the human being should also follow the rules of the community because the individual, the community and morality are connected. The fact that the individual does not simply live and act alone means that the individual has both a duty to society and a right to benefit from society. This idea corresponds with Langeveld's theory, especially the second component – participation in society.⁷⁶

Langeveld was not alone in referring to Aquinas: Buytendijk and, later, his other colleagues at the Utrecht School did the same.⁷⁷ Their interest in Aquinas should be considered within a broader context. During the 1930s Aquinas enjoyed an increase in attention. This was a consequence of the neo-Thomist movement that flourished at the end of the nineteenth century, particularly in Western Europe. It was fostered by the Roman Catholic Church and is often linked to the activities of Pope Leo XIII. The movement was dynamic and embraced the spirit of the times.⁷⁸ The neo-Thomists found an important and innovative philosophical basis for Catholic dogma and morality in Aquinas's teaching. Because the "old" doctrine of Aquinas was abstract and philosophical, it remained elusive to ordinary people and everyday life. Neo-Thomism, which presented the human subject as a person living as a responsible individual before God, offered a more accessible and open form.⁷⁹ The neo-Thomistic movement's emphasis on freedom, the person and the individual, and concrete life – using the writings of Aquinas – overlaps with movements that are also linked to Langeveld's theory, namely personalism, phenomenology and anti-positivist movements.⁸⁰

In the Netherlands, the revival of Aquinas's ideas coincided with Roman Catholic intellectual emancipation in the first half of the twentieth century. An important Dutch representative of the neo-Thomists was professor and educationalist Johannes Hoogveld (1878–1942). Hoogveld co-founded the Catholic University of Nijmegen and was in close contact with Kohnstamm and, later, with Langeveld, amongst others, to establish the

Dutch educational sciences.⁸¹ The study of Aquinas's teachings took place in the state universities (*Rijksuniversiteiten*) of Amsterdam, Leiden and Utrecht, which had chairs dedicated to Aquinas's ideas. Because of the audiences at these universities, neo-Thomism also reached many non-Catholic students and academics.⁸² Langeveld was affiliated with the universities of Amsterdam and Utrecht, so it is possible it was at these universities that he was exposed to Aquinas's writings. Still, the adoption of the Aquinas phrase could also have originated from his network, e.g. from his colleague Buytendijk – who converted to Catholicism (1937) – or from the broader context of the Utrecht School.⁸³ Another possibility is the collaboration with the Catholic professor Hoogveld or his colleague the priest and philosopher Ferdinand Sassen (1894–1971). The latter had also published work on Thomas Aquinas (1934) and had corresponding activities with Langeveld, such as their work for UNESCO, and both participated in various governmental education committees after the Second World War.⁸⁴

And yet, the fact that Langeveld, a Protestant, adopted a phrase from Aquinas and showed some notable analogies in his work could be attributed to the overlap in themes within the aforementioned movements and thus a shared Christian tradition. This is not sufficient to call him a neo-Thomist, though. Moreover, the idea of self-responsible self-determination can also be found in a wider context of developments in society and the humanities. Langeveld called Christianity one of the most important elements in his thinking. In giving central stage to the concepts of freedom, conscience and the relation of the individual to Jesus, he seems to follow the Protestant Kohnstamm. However, the adopted phrase and the aforementioned analogies could also be considered within developments among Christian academics. Especially within academia, Protestants and Roman Catholics found each other in a desire for a Christian science that was related to ordinary life. Within this group there was a lot of interaction, cooperation and reciprocal influence.⁸⁵ An example was the mentioned cooperation among the educationalists Hoogveld, Kohnstamm, Sassen and Langeveld.⁸⁶ Together they opposed positivist, deterministic and Darwinist thinking in science. They found support and justification in each other's work, such as neo-Thomism.⁸⁷

Second World War

We cannot set aside the fact that Langeveld developed his theory on freedom, morality and responsibility in the turbulent times surrounding the Second World War. Should Langeveld's theory on individual freedom therefore also be seen as a reaction to the national-socialistic ideas and the impact of the war on people's freedoms? We did not find any evidence for this idea. Aquinas's principle of freedom, introduced by Langeveld in the 1939 speech and elaborated in 1945, indicated a philosophical approach and lacked practical application.⁸⁸ Movements like personalism and phenomenology had long before brought freedom and responsibility to the forefront. These movements, and social, philosophical and scientific ideas, could be conceived of as a continuation of the discussions of the interbellum or even before the First World War.⁸⁹ However, his theory is considered to have anticipated the post-war era, when there was a need in Dutch society for a new interpretation of social life to achieve reconstruction and a sense of community life. The "new way of thinking" would still be based on values from Christianity and humanism, but would be less moralistic and less determined by the Church. It was also

present in Langeveld's theory: religion or another philosophical interpretation of life is compatible with his theory but not its most decisive aspect. Langeveld's pre-war educational theory could also be considered as building/relying on the discussion of the interbellum but also anticipating new ideas for Dutch society. One such trend was the *Doorbraakbeweging* (Breakthrough Movement), a post-war progressive movement in which progressive Catholics, such as the aforementioned Sassen, and Protestants were involved. The movement strove for a "breakthrough" in the Netherlands' pillarised society and politics, spreading the notion that faith was important but should no longer determine political choice.⁹⁰

Conclusion

To identify Langeveld's sources and understand his theory properly, his publications of 1937, 1939 and 1942 have been analysed alongside his theory of self-responsible self-determination as published in 1945. As it appeared in the 1939 publication, this research shows that Langeveld borrowed a phrase and a key idea on human freedom from the medieval theologian Aquinas for his theory of self-responsible self-determination. This research further shows that the foundations of his educational theory, which includes educating for responsibility, the function of conscience and the child as a co-determining subject, can be traced back especially to his teachers: the psychologist and philosopher Stern, the former physicist and educationalist Kohnstamm, and the philosopher Litt. In particular, in his anthropological ideas Langeveld depended on the explanation of individuality, sociality, human personality (Stern and Kohnstamm) and an emphasis on morality (Kohnstamm). From Litt, he adopted his key idea of the child as a co-determiner in the process of upbringing.

Langeveld's theory can also be explicated from the pre-war philosophies of personalism and phenomenology. Both philosophies stress the person in relation to the community/world, human freedom and responsibility, the person's unity and autonomy, the inner source of morality and the importance of conscience. Furthermore, all these names and movements show similarities to the struggle against deterministic, positivist and Darwinist thinking within science, and aim to protect the person against mechanistic thinking and absolute, general rules (anti-positivist movements). So for a comprehensive and better understanding of Langeveld's theory and its emphasis on freedom, morality, the role of conscience and participation in society, it is necessary to consider all these sources and the overlap between them alongside the context and quests of his time.

As a given, Langeveld did not always refer to his sources, or did so only to a limited extent. Ultimately, this research shows that the identified sources of inspiration display a great deal of variety. Langeveld appears to have been selective and to have used sources to his own ends, adjoining the needs and quests of his time. Nevertheless, it will be of interest to further investigate whether this also applies to the source of Aquinas. At first glance, Langeveld "just" borrowed a phrase of Aquinas and used it for his own purposes. However, as this study has shown, notable analogies have also been identified, such as personalism and phenomenology and the ideas of neo-Thomism. Subsequent research could examine to what extent Langeveld was engaged with Aquinas's work and how exactly this can be understood within the neo-Thomistic movement.⁹¹ This could be complemented by an examination of Langeveld's own religious development in relation

to his former teacher Buytendijk. The role of pillarisation within Dutch society in conjunction with the developments in Dutch academia after the Second World War would also be of interest.

Analysing the origins and sources of Langeveld's inspiration within the historical context, we conclude that Langeveld did draw upon the work of many of his predecessors and was not as original as he is sometimes believed to be. And yet with his theory of self-responsible self-determination Langeveld still had a major influence on Dutch educational sciences and thus on the training of pedagogues and teachers.

Accordingly, Langeveld's contribution is unique in two ways. The first relates to the origins of his sources. Langeveld's theory is an original mix of the ideas of Aquinas, Stern, Kohnstamm, Litt and phenomenology. Especially by linking his theory to phenomenology, which was *en vogue* during his time, Langeveld developed an educational theory that turned out to appeal to a new generation in the Netherlands, a generation that searched for new ways of life after two destructive wars and that welcomed the idea that the individual is self-determining.⁹² By stressing the child's uniqueness, Langeveld proposed a theory still grounded on societal and collective values based on Christianity and humanism but not determined by the Church. In this way Langeveld established a new theoretical framework within the Dutch educational sciences. Langeveld's concept of self-responsible self-determination seems to be a precursor to the contemporary Dutch view of human beings – and their upbringing – and is also common in the Dutch educational sciences, namely as individual and autonomous beings who are responsible for their own choices. It will be interesting to investigate how this has affected educational sciences and practices internationally, and in particular why there was interest from countries like Japan in this rather individualistic orientation. A closer look at this influence and reception in the context of a diversified and rapidly changing Dutch and international educational landscape might be worth pursuing.

The second contribution points to the way in which Langeveld laid down his theory: it was – perhaps unintentionally – concise, and therefore practical and usable for training purposes. These two points of originality have made his theory of value by connecting with a new generation of Dutch educationalists and teachers. In the context of the Netherlands, Langeveld was bridging the gap between educational theory and practice. Indeed, that is ultimately the purpose of an educational theory, as Langeveld quoted the Dutch educationalist J. H. Gunning Wzn (1859–1951): “Theory without practice is for geniuses, practice without theory is for fools and rogues, but the intimate, unbreakable union of the two is for the majority of educators.”⁹³

Notes

1. Mulder, “Patterns, Principles, and Profession,” 231–46. The academic discipline *Pedagogiek* is part of a continental tradition, called *Pädagogik* in German. This places limits when trying to translate *Pedagogiek/Pädagogik*, as there is no adequate equivalent either in British or in American English. In this article, by *Pedagogiek* we mean the academic discipline that studies the educational and upbringing activities in schools and families and the accompanying responsibilities of educators.
2. Bos, *M.J. Langeveld*, 244, 352; Levering, “De Betekenis van M.J. Langeveld,” 147–60, 189–206; Levering, “Praktische Wetenschap Als Levenslange Ambitie,” 149; Rang and Rang, “Een Bekende Onbekende,” 178–92; Rispens and Schoorl, “Professionele Pedagogische

- Hulpverlening,” 161–77; de Vries, “Die Teoretiese Pedagogiek van M.J. Langeveld,” 18–21; Weijers, “Mondige Burgers,” 189–206.
3. Bakker, “Westward Bound,” 213–28; Brinkmann, “Purposes of School,” 255–69; Levering and Manen, “Phenomenological Anthropology,” 274–86.
 4. Bakker, “Westward Bound,” 213–28; Bos, *M.J. Langeveld*, 220; Levering, “Praktische Wetenschap als Levenslange Ambitie.”
 5. Bos, *M.J. Langeveld*, 214–19.
 6. Langeveld, *BTP*, sections 5, 13a, 62.
 7. The book was published in the last months of 1945 and sold out by April 1946. Thirteen reprints and four reprints of the revised edition followed: Bos, *M.J. Langeveld*, 214–19.
 8. Mulder, “Patterns, Principles, and Profession,” 231–46.
 9. Bos, *M.J. Langeveld*, 61–3, 77, 84.
 10. Langeveld, “Taal en Denken.”
 11. *Ibid.*
 12. Bos, *M.J. Langeveld*, 77.
 13. Levering, “Martinus Jan Langeveld,” 133–46.
 14. Abma, “Frederik Buytendijk,” 27–102; Levering and Van Manen, “Phenomenological Anthropology,” 274–86.
 15. Biesta and Miedema, “Feiten en Waarden,” 396–411; Langeveld, *Capita uit de Algemene Methodologie der Opvoedingswetenschap*.
 16. Bos, *M.J. Langeveld*, 388; Levering, “Praktische Wetenschap als Levenslange Ambitie,” 102, 136–7.
 17. Bakker, “Westward Bound,” 213–28.
 18. Langeveld, *BTP*, introduction and ch. 7.
 19. Langeveld, *BTP*, 62.
 20. *Ibid.*, sections 13a, 19–22.
 21. *Ibid.*, sections 15–18, 29.
 22. *Ibid.*, sections 17–18.
 23. *Ibid.*, sections 8, 15–18, 21, 29; also in Bos, *M.J. Langeveld*, 77.
 24. Langeveld, *BTP*, sections 13a, 29.
 25. *Ibid.*, sections 13a, 27, 36–7, 42, 65.
 26. *Ibid.*, section 42.
 27. Buytendijk, *Bijdrage tot een onderzoek naar het wezenverschil van mensch en dier*.
 28. Langeveld, *BTP*, section 29.
 29. *Ibid.*, sections 8, 22–3, 27.
 30. *Ibid.*, sections 22, 27.
 31. *Ibid.*, section 28.
 32. *Ibid.*, section 22.
 33. *Ibid.*, sections 16, 27.
 34. For this section, the following sources were studied: “Taal en denken” (1934), *Inleiding Tot De Studie Der Paedagogische Psychologie Van De Middelbare Schoolleef tijd* (1937) and its two inaugural lectures, *Het Opzettelijke En Het Onwillekeurige In De Opvoeding En De Opvoedkunde* (Utrecht University, 1939) and *Handelen En Denken In De Opvoeding En De Opvoedkunde* (University of Amsterdam, 1942). Some smaller publications are also included in this study: *De Psychologische Analyse Van De Schoolklasse* (Wolters: Groningen, 1937), “Lichamelijke En Geestelijke Opvoeding In De Eenheid Van De Persoon” (*De Lichamelijke Opvoeding* 25, no. 12 [1937]: 237–43), and *Sociaalpsychologische Ontwikkelingsverschijnselen Van De Puberteit* (Loosduinen: Kleijwegt, 1939).
 35. The publication “Taal en Denken” (1934) has been studied, but aside from some thoughts such as the mentioned upper limit of education, it does not offer important leads. It is therefore not elaborated in this article. Also, the smaller works do elaborate on some recognisable themes, such as being human or being an adult. This confirms that such themes and concepts already existed in Langeveld’s thinking and publications, and substantiates the arguments given from the aforementioned publications of 1937, 1939 and 1942.

36. Langeveld, *Inleiding Tot De Studie Der Paedagogische Psychologie*, 22–3, 230, 302, 319.
37. *Ibid.*, 113, 117–18, 322, 323, 409.
38. *Ibid.*, 134–5, 293.
39. Langeveld, *Over het Opzettelijke en het Onwillekeurige*, 14.
40. *Ibid.*, 14.
41. *Ibid.*, 16, 20.
42. Langeveld, *BTP*, 63, 145.
43. Stern worked at the Universities of Breslau and Hamburg and, starting in 1934, at Duke University in Durham, NC (USA). He was considered a pioneer in the field of developmental psychology and was one of the founders of differential psychology. See Heinemann, *Das Kind als Person*; Stern, *Psychologie der frühen Kindheit*.
44. Hoencamp et al., “Personalism,” 1–22.
45. Hohmann, *Die Pädagogik M.J. Langevelts*, 89.
46. Kohnstamm, *Het Waarheidsprobleem*, 73.
47. Kohnstamm, *Staatspaedagogiek of Persoonlijkheidspaedagogiek*, 14–19.
48. Heinemann, *Das Kind als Person*, 155; Stern, *Die menschliche Persönlichkeit*, 7–10.
49. Kohnstamm, *Schepper en Schepping*, 376.
50. Langeveld, *BTP*, sections 31, 40, 62–5; and the chapters “De Ontwikkelingspsychologie Als Probleem” (9–23) and “Principiële Gezichtspunten Met Betrekking Tot Piaget’s Kinderpsychologie” (41–50) in Langeveld, *Verkenning en verdieping*, 9–23, 41–50.
51. de Wilde, *De Persoon*, 77–104.
52. Baneke, “Synthetic Technocracy,” 89–113; Hoencamp et al., “Personalism,” 1–22.
53. The clash between the anti-positivists’ thinking and the naturalistic sciences occurred in many fields of science and academia, and was later labelled the *revolt against positivism* by Hughes, *Consciousness and Society*.
54. Kohnstamm, *Staatspaedagogiek of Persoonlijkheidspaedagogiek*; Kohnstamm, *Persoonlijkheid en Idee*.
55. Plantinga, *Personalist Philosophies*.
56. de Wilde, *De Persoon*, 225, chapters 7, 10, 13, 16; Weijers, “Mondige Burgers.”
57. Hoencamp et al., “Personalism,” 1–22; Plantinga, *Personalist Philosophies*.
58. de Wilde, *De Persoon*, 86–9; Levering and Van Manen, “Phenomenological Anthropology,” 274–86; Weijers, “Terug Naar Het Behouden Huis,” 16.
59. de Wilde, *De Persoon*, 33, 83–9.
60. Bakker, *De Geschiedenis van het Fenomenologisch Denken*, ch. 1–2; de Wilde, *De Persoon*, 83.
61. Bos, *M.J. Langeveld*, 73.
62. Weijers, “Terug naar het Behouden Huis,” 16; Levering and Van Manen, “Phenomenological Anthropology,” 274–86.
63. Hartmann is regarded as belonging to the phenomenological movement. Amongst others, de Wilde, *De Persoon*, 92.
64. Langeveld, *BTP*, section 16.
65. Hohmann, *Die Pädagogik M.J. Langevelts*, 89; Langeveld, *Handelen en Denken*.
66. Langeveld, *Handelen en Denken*, 6; Bos, *M.J. Langeveld*, 82, 242–4; Langeveld, *BTP*, 149–58, 167–75.
67. Bos, *M.J. Langeveld*, 82–3, 194–5.
68. Hoencamp et al., “Dutch Example,” 789–806.
69. Bos, *M.J. Langeveld*; Rang and Rang, “Een Bekende Onbekende,” 178–92; Rispens and Schoorl, “Professionele Pedagogische Hulpverlening,” 161–77.
70. Bos, *M.J. Langeveld*, 244, 352; Levering, “De Betekenis van M.J. Langeveld,” 147–60, 189–206; Levering, “Praktische Wetenschap Als Levenslange Ambitie,” 149; Rang and Rang, “Een Bekende Onbekende,” 178–92; Rispens and Schoorl, “Professionele Pedagogische Hulpverlening,” 161–77; de Vries, “Die Theoretiese Pedagogiek van M.J. Langeveld,” 18–21; Weijers, “Mondige Burgers,” 189–206.
71. Langeveld, *BTP*, ch. 2.
72. Sassen, *Thomas van Aquino*, 82.

73. Ibid., 83.
74. Ibid., 86.
75. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3, 85, in Cap, *Wijsgerige Gemeenschapsleer*, 13.
76. Sassen, *Thomas van Aquino*, 86.
77. Weijers, “Terug naar het Behouden Huis,” 74.
78. Wilson, “Style and Substance,” 43–73; Goodrich, “Neo-Thomism and Education,” 27–35.
79. Elias, “Catholic Philosophy,” 92–110; Goodrich, “Neo-Thomism and Education,” 27–35.
80. Abma, “Frederik Buytendijk,” 27–102; Viglioglia, “Pedagogical Perspective,” 53–66.
81. Mulder, *Beginsel en Beroep*, 170–88.
82. Laeven and Winkeler, *Radboudstichting*.
83. Abma, “Frederik Buytendijk (1887–1974),” 27–102.
84. Sassen, “Herinneringen,” 52.
85. Luykx, *Daar is nog poëzie, nog kleur, nog warmte*.
86. Mulder, *Beginsel en Beroep*, 175.
87. Flipse, *Christelijke Wetenschap*; Mulder, *Beginsel en Beroep*, 183–6.
88. Bos, *M.J. Langeveld*, 171, 184–5, 215.
89. For instance, Baneke, “Synthetic Technocracy,” 89–113.
90. Levering and Van Manen, “Phenomenological Anthropology,” 101; See also Molendijk, “Willem Banning,” 139–54.
91. Compare for instance, Heynickx and Symons, *About Scholasticism*.
92. Biesta and Miedema, “Feiten en Waarden,” 396–411.
93. Langeveld, *BTP*, 15.

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ORCID

Marloes Hoencamp  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2894-8701>

John Exalto  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6632-6025>

Abraham de Muijnck  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5311-8884>

Doret de Ruyter  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7891-6818>

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