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Hoencamp, Marloes; Exalto, John; de Muynck, Abraham; de Ruyter, Doret

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# “Educating children to follow the voice of their conscience” – a comparative study of the Dutch educationalists Philipp Abraham Kohnstamm (1875–1951) and Martinus Jan Langeveld (1905–1989) within the context of early twentieth-century Europe

Marloes Hoencamp <sup>a</sup>, John Exalto <sup>b</sup>, Abraham de Muynck <sup>c</sup>  
and Doret de Ruyter <sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of Educational and Family Studies, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands; <sup>b</sup>Department of Education, University of Groningen, Groningen, The Netherlands; <sup>c</sup>Department of Practical Theology, Theological University of Apeldoorn, Apeldoorn, The Netherlands; <sup>d</sup>Department of Education, University of Humanistic Studies, Utrecht, The Netherlands

## ABSTRACT

Two of the greatest Dutch educationalists of the twentieth century, Philipp Abraham Kohnstamm (1875–1951) and Martinus Jan Langeveld (1905–1989), believed that education meant, above all, the formation of a conscience. They developed their ideas in a time full of developments within Europe: the rise of fascism, two world wars, and pioneering theories on human development by Charles Darwin (1809–1882) and Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), among others. Kohnstamm’s and Langeveld’s educational theories were also influenced, to a greater or lesser extent, by optimistic ideas about the spontaneous development of the child and the unique personality of humankind, as expressed in movements such as New Education, New Psychology, and the philosophy of Henri Bergson (1859–1941). This article aims to compare these two Dutch educationalists on conscience formation to contextualise their differences and similarities and subsequently understand them within European developments, such as New Psychology, and specifically the Dutch context of the twentieth century.

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## Introduction

Dutch educationalists Philipp Abraham Kohnstamm (1875–1951) and Martinus Jan Langeveld (1905–1989) are regarded as the two most important founding fathers of Dutch educational sciences. They have been pivotal not only in the formation of academic disciplines but also in educational practice, such as teaching and teacher training, including the deep-rooted use of their publications in professional training.<sup>1</sup>

**CONTACT** Marloes Hoencamp  [m.l.m.hoencamp@vu.nl](mailto:m.l.m.hoencamp@vu.nl)  Department of Educational and Family Studies, Faculty of Behavioural and Movement Sciences, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Van der Boechorststraat 7, Amsterdam 1081 BT, The Netherlands

<sup>1</sup>John Exalto, “Kohnstamm, Philipp Abraham (1875–1951)”, in *Bloomsbury Encyclopaedia of Philosophers* (London: Bloomsbury, 2023); John Exalto, Leendert Groenendijk, and Siebren Miedema, “Philipp Abraham Kohnstamm (1875–1951): Opvoedingswetenschap op filosofische en empirische grondslag”, in *Vier grondleggers van de pedagogiek*, ed. Vittorio Busato, Mineke Van Essen, and Willem Kooops (Amsterdam: Prometheus/Bert Bakker, 2015), 29–95; and Bas Levering,

Both believed that teaching children to follow the voice of their conscience matters first and foremost in education. For Kohnstamm and Langeveld, teaching children to listen to the voice of conscience was essential in the process of becoming a personality and was a prerequisite for achieving the educational aim of finding inner peace (Kohnstamm) and becoming a “self-responsible, self-determining” person (Langeveld). In their educational theories they both referred to the answer of church reformer Martin Luther (1483–1546), who, when asked at the Reichstag in Worms (1521) to renounce the new Protestant doctrine and return to the Roman Church, replied: “Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise”.<sup>2</sup> Referring to this sentence, Kohnstamm and Langeveld gave a Protestant interpretation of conscience, not only by identifying Luther as one of Protestantism’s leading figures, but also by stating that there is no intermediary between man and God; it is God himself who leads the individual through the voice of its conscience.

At first glance, Kohnstamm’s and Langeveld’s ideas on the formation of conscience seem similar. This is not surprising considering that Kohnstamm was Langeveld’s teacher. Langeveld was particularly influenced by Kohnstamm’s personalistic philosophy, which emphasised the unique personality of each individual.<sup>3</sup> However, Langeveld seems to provide a radically different interpretation of that defining philosophy by leaving it open rather than adopting the direct relationship between conscience and the voice of God.<sup>4</sup> The “here I stand, I cannot do otherwise” is thus given a different interpretation. This article investigates the central question: how can the similarities and differences in the formation of conscience between Kohnstamm’s and Langeveld’s educational theories be understood? To this end, another question to ask is how can their theories be situated in their time? Kohnstamm and Langeveld were not alone in their key idea that education is about the formation of conscience. Other European educational theories of the early twentieth century hovered around topics such as the formation of the mind and the “inner self”.<sup>5</sup> Kohnstamm and Langeveld also developed their theories in turbulent times amid the rise of fascism and two world wars, partly coinciding with optimistic school reforms (New Education) and Henri Bergson’s (1859–1941) philosophy of the *élan vital* (vital impetus). Can this explain their similarities and differences? This article starts by providing a description of the European context as well as specific Dutch ideas on conscience and education, and a subsequent section compares Kohnstamm’s and Langeveld’s ideas on conscience formation; this is followed by a conclusion. For this study, Kohnstamm’s magnum opus “*Persoonlijkheid in wording*” [The Becoming Personality] (1929) and Langeveld’s magnum opus “*Beknopte*

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“Praktische wetenschap als levenslange ambitie. Martinus Jan Langeveld (1905–1989)”, in *Vier grondleggers van de pedagogiek*, 97–166.

<sup>2</sup> Philipp Abraham Kohnstamm, *Persoonlijkheid in wording. Schets eener christelijke opvoedkunde*, vol. 2 of *Schepper en scheppling. Een stelsel van personalistische wijsbegeerte op bijbelschen grondslag* (Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink, 1929), 58–9; and Langeveld, *Beknopte Theoretische Pedagogiek* (Groningen: Wolters, 1945), 34–6; 65–6.

<sup>3</sup> See a previous publication of the authors, Marloes Hoencamp, John Exalto, Abraham de Muynck, and Doret de Ruyter, “Personalism: An Elucidation of the Philosophical Foundations of the Educational Theory of Philipp Abraham Kohnstamm (1875–1951)”, *Journal of Philosophy & History of Education* 71, no. 1 (2022): 1–22.

<sup>4</sup> Philipp Abraham Kohnstamm, *Bijbel en Jeugd* (Haarlem: Bohn, 1923), 31; and Langeveld, *Beknopte Theoretische Pedagogiek*, 54–62.

<sup>5</sup> James Arthur, “Christianity and the Character Education Movement 1897–1914”, *History of Education* 48, no. 1 (2019), doi: 10.1080/0046760X.2018.1506049; Nelleke Bakker, *Kind en karakter. Nederlandse pedagogen over opvoeding in het gezin 1845–1925* (Amsterdam: Spinhuis, 1995); and Jürgen Oelkers, “Break and Continuity: Observations on the Modernization Effects and Traditionalization”, *Paedagogica Historica* 31, no. 3 (1995), doi: 10.1080/00309230.1995.11864690.

Theoretische Pedagogiek” [Concise Educational Theory, hereafter BTP] (1945) were the primary sources, but their other important publications are also included.<sup>6</sup>

## Conscience and education in the early twentieth century

### *European thinking on (conscience) education*

Until the twentieth century, European thinking about education was strongly influenced by theories on the importance of conscience formation, which aimed to educate virtuous individuals and responsible citizens. Conscience in these educational theories did not necessarily assume a theistic interpretation, although this applied to seventeenth-century Roman Catholic and Protestant theories, in which it was argued that God speaks to conscience. Ideas about conscience and its formation were strongly affected by Enlightenment views, such as those of German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804).<sup>7</sup> Kant’s view on conscience was in line with the Christian view regarding conscience as an “inner court”, subsequently representing human beings as “inherently evil” who had to fight evil in their conscience and thus fight against their “animal nature”. Kant deviated from a theistic interpretation: he regarded conscience not as the voice of God but as a “higher moral order”.<sup>8</sup>

Major changes in thinking about conscience and its formation occurred in the late nineteenth century. This came in part from British evolutionist Charles Darwin (1809–1882), who described conscience as a sentiment and considered it to be the sum of social instincts and reflections on past deeds. Darwin recognised a positive contribution to conscience: conscience functioned as a form of self-control and as an instigator of moral action. Distinctive from the preceding era, however, Darwin’s conscience was neither considered God-inspired nor recognised as a representation of a higher moral order. Darwin’s theory emphasised conscience as a survival construct: conscience enabled the individual to survive within a community and/or experience at least some degree of happiness culminating as an “individualised, interiorised agent of the interests of the community”.<sup>9</sup>

A second pioneering theory for European thought came from the Austrian psychiatrist Sigmund Freud (1856–1939). Freud amended the previously mentioned interpretations of conscience through a psychological approach to conscience: conscience does not represent a moral order as presented by Kant; moreover, it should be considered as a negative phenomenon – conscience is authoritarian, domineering, and suppressing individuals and their urges. In conscience formation, Freud recognised the pattern of

<sup>6</sup>See note 2 above. Unless otherwise stated, the first editions of both works are used for this study.

<sup>7</sup>For the purposes of this article, Kant’s ideas on conscience are briefly mentioned in the subsequent sentences. For a more complete understanding, the reader may turn to one of the references given in the notes. This also applies to the discussions of Darwin’s and Freud’s ideas on conscience.

<sup>8</sup>John Cottingham, “Conscience: What is its History and Does it Have a Future?”, *History of European Ideas* 45, no. 3 (2019), doi: 10.1080/01916599.2018.1534446; Perry L. Glanzer, “The Rise and Fall of America’s Conscience: The Disappearance of the Conscience From Collegiate Moral Education”, *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 42, no. 4 (2021), doi: 10.1080/13617672.2021.1875312 1; and Anders Schinkel, “Conscience and Conscientious Objections” (PhD diss., Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2007), section 6.3.

<sup>9</sup>Schinkel, “Conscience and Conscientious Objections”, 303.

how children were controlled and ruled by their parents and community, meaning that they were not free from suppression.<sup>10</sup>

Within education, the importance of the formation of a conscience to create virtuous individuals and citizens remained present at least until the early twentieth century. The Ethical movement, among others, emphasised this type of education. This movement was founded in 1875 in New York by German-American Felix Adler (1851–1933); a European branch followed in 1882. Both branches were united in the International Ethical League headquartered in London. Other well-known representatives of this movement include astronomer Wilhelm Julius Foerster (1832–1921) and his son, philosopher and socialist Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster (1869–1965).<sup>11</sup> The Ethical movement arose in response to growing secularism and the concomitant fear of a decline in moral values. The movement aimed to promote a tolerant atmosphere between people that was not dominated by a particular religious doctrine but found common ground in Kant’s philosophy. Some of its educational ideas focus on the formation of an individual’s conscience, strictly separating characters from religious formations. The Ethical movement also set itself against the prevailing positivist and strict naturalistic science view of humankind. It was felt that this positivistic way of thinking, based on schemes and patterns within the sciences and related fields, did not fit with ideas about unique human beings, freedom, and equality with others. It was also believed that human behaviour was understood too much in separate units rather than as a whole. These views have resulted in social initiatives. For instance, the Ethical movement was linked to the socialist workers’ movement, and Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster aimed to realise moral education in schools so that even children from poor backgrounds could be reached and “elevated”.<sup>12</sup>

Because of its emphasis on education, the Ethical movement overlapped with the New Education movement, which was gaining popularity.<sup>13</sup> This movement is a collective term for many educational changes that emerged from the late nineteenth century until around 1940, particularly in Europe and the United States.<sup>14</sup> The ideas went beyond upbringing and education and also concerned social issues such as the emancipation of women and labour workers and the further democratisation of society.<sup>15</sup> Despite their differences, the movements had a shared ideal: upbringing and especially education should contribute to the uniqueness of each child and be characterised by freedom and self-formation.<sup>16</sup> Within this New Education movement, Darwin’s theory of evolution

<sup>10</sup>Cottingham, “Conscience”; Ernst Mulder, “Patterns, Principles, and Profession: The Early Decades of Educational Science in the Netherlands”, *Paedagogica Historica* 34, no. 1 (1998), doi: 10.1080/00309230.1998.11434886; and Schinkel, “Conscience and Conscientious Objections”, sections 6.4 and 6.5.

<sup>11</sup>Sebastian Engelmann, “Das gangbare Kleingeld moralpädagogischer Unterweisung. Pädagogische Wege zur Toleranz in den Schriften der Ethischen Bewegung”, *Vierteljahrsschrift für wissenschaftliche Pädagogik* 98 (2022), 58–72; and Susannah Wright, “There is Something Universal in Our Movement Which Appeals Not Only to One Country, but to All”: International Communication and Moral Education 1892–1914”, *History of Education* 37, no. 6 (2008), doi: 10.1080/00467600802159064.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Arthur, “Christianity”; Wright, “There is Something Universal”.

<sup>14</sup>Richard Aldrich, “The New Education and the Institute of Education, University of London, 1919–1945”, *Paedagogica Historica* 45, no. 4–5 (2009), doi: 10.1080/00309230903100882.

<sup>15</sup>Lauri Luoto, “The Social Nature of New Education: An Affiliation Network Analysis of the Movement’s Evolution, 1875–1935”, *Paedagogica Historica* 59, no. 1 (2023), doi: 10.1080/00309230.2022.2095874; and Oelkers, “Break and Continuity”.

<sup>16</sup>Aldrich, “The New Education”; Jürgen Oelkers, “Reformpädagogik vor der Reformpädagogik”, *Paedagogica Historica* 42, no. 1–2 (2006), doi: 10.1080/00309230600551981; and Marc Depaepe, *Zum Wohl des Kindes?: Pädologie, pädagogische Psychologie und experimentelle Pädagogik in Europa und den USA, 1890–1940* (Weinheim: Deutscher Studien Verlag, 1993).

was frequently used, as recognised in the ideas of new educationalists such as Ellen Key (1849–1926) and Maria Montessori (1870–1952). They also used new insights on learning and child development emerging from New Psychology, which could be considered an umbrella term for new developmental theories that appeared in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These developmental theories not only include new ideas about child development but are also characterised by their emphasis on natural and individual development, often based on Darwin’s theory, and a focus on adolescence. In particular, New Psychology came from the German-speaking world, as represented by William Stern (1871–1938), Eduard Spranger (1882–1963), and Charlotte Bühler (1893–1974). Freud and his students, Alfred Adler (1870–1937) and Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961), can also be regarded as followers of New Psychology.<sup>17</sup> All these new insights, such as the focus on the individual’s unique personality and the characteristics of the newly distinguished developmental stages, were incorporated into their ideas about conscience formation.<sup>18</sup>

An important philosophy that marked European thought in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was that of French philosopher Henri Bergson.<sup>19</sup> Bergson’s philosophy broke with two traditions: Kant’s idealism and the dominant and positivistic natural science. Based on Darwin’s theory, Bergson characterised every living individual as having an internal driving force of life in which all parts of the organism work together towards a particular goal. Instead of scientific concepts, with this *élan vital* the emphasis is on the living person, subjectivity, and the inner self. For upbringing and education, this meant they were no longer seen as “influencing” the child but should be regarded as supporting that which could not be influenced. This replaced the classical image of social engineering of upbringing and stressed subjective experiences, self-creation, and spontaneity. Bergson’s philosophy enjoyed considerable support within the New Education movement and was incorporated, albeit unsystematically and often randomly, into educational ideas.<sup>20</sup>

Bergson’s theory also corresponded with movements and philosophical currents that centred on human beings and inner consciousness, and contested the dominant natural scientific method.<sup>21</sup> Among them are personalism, which emphasises being a unique and free person, and related phenomenology, which strongly focuses on subjective experience and the connection between man and the world, as proposed by philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859–1938).<sup>22</sup> Phenomenologists proposed new methods of investigation as an

<sup>17</sup>Arie de Wilde, *De persoon. Over de grondslagen van het personalistisch denken* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1951), 77; Oelkers, “Break and Continuity”; and Peter Seltens, “Youth Movements as Agencies of Cultural Transmission. The Emergence of Youth Movements at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century”, *Paedagogica Historica*, 32, supp. 1 (1996), doi: 10.1080/00309230.1996.11434868.

<sup>18</sup>Christian Roith, “Educational Theory and Practice in Post-Revolutionary Times: The European Academic Debate on the Experimental Schools in Hamburg (1919–1933) in the 1930s and 1970s”, *Paedagogica Historica* 50, no. 5 (2014), doi: 10.1080/00309230.2014.927891; and Bakker, *Kind en karakter*; Nelleke Bakker, “The Meaning of Fear. Emotional Standards for Children in the Netherlands, 1850–1950: Was there a Western Transformation?”, *Journal of Social History* 34, no. 2 (2000): 369–91.

<sup>19</sup>De Wilde, *De persoon*, chap. 16; and Oelkers, “Break and Continuity”.

<sup>20</sup>Besides the New Education movement, German educational sciences were also influenced by Bergson’s philosophy. For instance, philosophers and educational scientists like Spranger and Theodor Litt (1880–1962) – who were of inspiration to Kohnstamm and Langeveld, respectively – tried to integrate Bergson’s theses into their work. De Wilde, *De persoon*, 224; Peter Drewek, “Educational Studies as an Academic Discipline in Germany at the Beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century”, *Paedagogica Historica*, 34, no. 1 (1998), doi: 10.1080/00309230.1998.11434883; and Oelkers, “Break and Continuity”.

<sup>21</sup>David Baneke, “Synthetic Technocracy: Dutch Scientific Intellectuals in Science, Society and Culture, 1880–1950”, *The British Journal for the History of Science* 44, no. 1 (2011), doi: 10.1017/S000708741000004X.

<sup>22</sup>De Wilde, *De persoon*; and Mulder, “Patterns, Principles, and Profession”.

alternative to natural scientific thinking, searching for unity between an individual and the surrounding world (“the living world”). Phenomenologists believe that it is necessary to return to things themselves as they appear in consciousness. Consciousness can be indirectly understood by focusing on perceptions, concepts, representations, intuitions, and intentions.<sup>23</sup>

### *The Dutch context*

Around 1900, Dutch educationalists considered education almost exclusively in terms of moral and/or character education, a key notion being that the conscience is the seat or “nursery” [*kweekhof*] of moral awareness. Education had to be about listening to the conscience and shaping the firmness of the will, which should not be broken, but only guided or bent.<sup>24</sup> Educational theories were full of notions of autonomy, responsibility, self-control, morality, and virtue. Bakker noted that different definitions of character or conscience were in circulation, and after 1910 conscience was frequently translated as personality.<sup>25</sup> Parents and family played the main role in conscience or personality formation and were regarded as “living examples” with love, understanding, and patience as their primary tools. These ideas sharpened in the second and third decades of the twentieth century. Economic and social conditions, such as dissatisfaction with class divisions, the consequences of WWI, and subsequent fears of social disruption, revived the importance of authority in the parent-child relationship.<sup>26</sup> As a result, not only love, understanding, and patience but also “loving guidance” and “tender severity” became the motto. This guidance aimed to internalise values following an individual’s inner struggle. Despite an emphasis on authority, Dutch educational thinking remained characterised by a strong belief in trust between children and educators.<sup>27</sup>

Dutch educational thinking of the first half of the twentieth century leaned on that of its German neighbour, meaning a traditional hermeneutic approach to conscience formation of the child, harking back to Kant’s philosophy.<sup>28</sup> After WWI, it was influenced by the aforementioned philosophies (Bergson and phenomenology) and movements (the Ethical movement, New Education, New Psychology). It is noteworthy that in the Netherlands – in contrast to the Anglo-Saxon and German academic worlds – a debate on Darwin’s theory and its implications for educational thinking did not take place. With a few exceptions, most prominent scholars showed a lack of interest in Darwin’s work. This can be understood by placing it in the context of Dutch “pillarization”, which until

<sup>23</sup>A notable representative of phenomenological thinking was the German philosopher and psychiatrist Karl Jaspers (1883–1969). His early publications (1910–1913) are considered as important foundational ideas within psychology and were also used for insights in educational theory. For instance, Heinz Häfner, “Descriptive Psychopathology, Phenomenology, and the Legacy of Karl Jaspers”, *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience* 17, no. 1 (2015), doi: 10.31887/DCNS.2015.17.1/hhaefne. Both Kohnstamm and Langeveld, among others, used Jaspers’s insights.

<sup>24</sup>Bakker, “The meaning of fear”, 371–5; and Nelleke Bakker, “De ‘goede’ opvoeding in het gezin: over veranderende kwaliteitsnormen in de twintigste eeuw”, in *Het pedagogisch quotient*, ed. Alexander Minnaert, Henk Lutje Spelberg and Hilda Amsing (Houten: Bohn Stafleu van Loghum, 2009), 21–44.

<sup>25</sup>Bakker, *Kind en karakter*, 118–22; and compare Arthur, “Christianity”, 61.

<sup>26</sup>Bakker, “De ‘goede’ opvoeding”; and Rolf Schuurmsma, *Jaren van opgang. Nederland 1900–1930* (Amsterdam: Balans, 2000), 298–9.

<sup>27</sup>Bakker, *Kind en karakter*, 233–4.

<sup>28</sup>Bakker, “The meaning of fear”, 374–8; Nelleke Bakker, “Westward Bound? Dutch Education and Cultural Transfer in the Mid-Twentieth Century”, *Paedagogica Historica* 50, no. 1–2 (2014), doi: 10.1080/00309230.2013.872679; and Drewek, “Educational Studies”.



the 1960s divided Dutch society into groups with different religious and political beliefs: people within one nation lived side by side in separate cultures (mainly Protestant, Roman Catholic, liberal, and socialist).<sup>29</sup> The negative disposition of both Roman Catholic and Protestant churches towards Darwinism counted heavily in this society, which also contributed to the initial rejection of Darwin's theory. Kohnstamm played an important role in rejecting Darwin's theory.<sup>30</sup>

Regarding the Ethical movement, it had some Dutch followers, as represented by socialist and educator Adriaan Gerhard (1858–1948).<sup>31</sup> However, no Dutch branch was established because the Ethical movement had limited impact on Dutch society. This can be explained by the Ethical movement being strongly focused on moral education as a task of the school, while educational theory and practice in the Netherlands had different orientations: moral education and, in particular, the formation of conscience had to occur within the family. An important factor in this orientation was the major influence of the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches, which formed the two largest pillars. These pillars emphasised the importance of the family and were closely linked to the respective churches.<sup>32</sup> A striking exception to the limited impact of the movement was the interest in the work of Friedrich Julius Foerster, which is also evident in the publications of Kohnstamm and Langeveld.<sup>33</sup> Foerster's books on moral upbringing and religious education were popular because of the educational ideals of virtuous individual autonomy, responsible citizens, and the notion that conscience formation did not necessarily coincide with religious education.<sup>34</sup>

Despite the aforementioned emphasis on the family, New Education ideas were being experimented with within the Netherlands as early as the start of the movement. This involved frequent visits to school experiments, both in the Netherlands and abroad.<sup>35</sup> A notable representative is Jan Ligthart (1859–1916), who was visited by Montessori and Key.<sup>36</sup> In the 1920s and 1930s, the influence of the New Education movement grew. This was partly due to a typical Dutch phenomenon: the revision of school law and finance (1917), which stated that schools could receive full government financial support, thus

<sup>29</sup>Ernst Mulder and Frieda Heyting, "The Dutch Curve: The Introduction and Reception of Intelligence Testing in the Netherlands, 1908–1940", *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 43, no. 4 (1998), 349–66.

<sup>30</sup>Kohnstamm, "Paedagogiek", in *Scientia. Handboek voor wetenschap, kunst en godsdienst deel 1*, ed. A.W. de Groot (Utrecht: Uitgeversmaatschappij W. de Haan, 1938), 209–38.

<sup>31</sup>Sjoerd Karsten, *De rode bovenmeester. De humanistische pedagoog en sociaaldemocratische politicus A.H. Gerhard, 1858–1948* (Utrecht: Humanistisch Historisch Centrum / Papieren Tijger, 2019).

<sup>32</sup>Peter Selten, "The Religious Formation of Youth. Catholic Youth Movements in the Netherlands from 1900 to 1941", *Paedagogica Historica* 29, no. 1 (1993): 165–87.

<sup>33</sup>John Exalto, "Sexual Hygiene: Dutch Reflections on the Adolescent Body in the Early Twentieth Century", *History of Education* 48, no. 4 (2019), doi: 10.1080/0046760X.2019.1576235; and Vincent Stolk, Willeke Los, and Sjoerd Karsten, "Education as Cultural Mobilisation: The Great War and Its Effects on Moral Education in the Netherlands", *Paedagogica Historica* 50, no. 5 (2014), doi: 10.1080/00309230.2014.911756. See also for instance the publications *Bijbel en Jeugd* (Kohnstamm) and Langeveld, *Kind en religie* (Utrecht: Bijleveld, 1956).

<sup>34</sup>Later, Foerster's work took a remarkable turn through the convergence of moral formation and religious education, which remained strongly separated within the Ethical movement. As a result, Foerster increased in popularity among Dutch Catholics, but Protestants also made use of his work. Bakker, *Kind en karakter*, 88–9, 231; and Bakker, "Westward Bound".

<sup>35</sup>Sjaak Braster, "From Holland to Hamburg: The Experimental and Community Schools of Hamburg Seen through the Eyes of Dutch Observers (1919–1933)", *Paedagogica Historica* 50, no. 5 (2014), doi: 10.1080/00309230.2014.927513; see also Kohnstamm's reports of his visits to school experiments: "Reisindrukken uit Engeland (276–83)", "Reisindrukken uit Vledderveen" (284–90) and "Reisindrukken uit Hamburg", (291–99) in *Individu en gemeenschap. Verzamelde sociaal-paedagogische opstellen* ('s-Gravenhage: Daamen's uitgeversmaatschappij, 1929).

<sup>36</sup>Barbara C. De Jong, *Jan Ligthart (1859–1916). Een schoolmeester-pedagoog uit de Schilderswijk* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1996), 187; and Mulder, "Patterns, Principles, and Profession".

offering parents the possibility of organising their own schools according to their religious beliefs and/or educational ideals, such as those of New Education. This resulted in the founding of new schools according to new educational concepts such as the Montessori and Dalton Plans. Among others, Kohnstamm wrote proposals for a New School inspired by Anglo-Saxon and German ideas, as described in the subsequent paragraph.<sup>37</sup>

The increased interest in New Education in the 1920s was accompanied by interest in New Psychology.<sup>38</sup> Partly because of the rise of New Psychology, Dutch educational thinking was increasingly dominated by psychologists and psychiatrists. The virtuous, conscientious child did not disappear completely but gave room to a mentally healthy and self-developing child. However, unlike other European countries, Dutch educational thinking was not influenced by Freud's psychoanalysis, or if it was, it was only to a limited extent.<sup>39</sup> The more optimistic theory of Freud's former pupil, Alfred Adler (1870–1937), and his accompanying "individual psychology" found the most support. This caused a shift from an overarching parenting goal (the conscientious individual) to major or minor difficulties in a child's life that could arise sooner or later on the way to adulthood. Subsequently, parenting had to lead to self-confidence and a good emotional balance. The parent-child relationship was given extra emphasis and, at the same time, based on increased knowledge, considered more complex than the "mere" loving guidance from decades earlier.<sup>40</sup>

In the 1930s, the Netherlands struggled nationally with an ailing economy, high unemployment, and an increasing influx of refugees due to international developments such as the Great Depression and the emergence of fascism (which had a limited effect in the Netherlands). This shifted the emphasis within Dutch educational thinking compared to the 1920s towards a stronger focus on education to produce virtuous, useful members of the community.<sup>41</sup> This community can be the nation, one's religious congregation, or even one's family. The influence of New Psychology was woven into it; the developing person can engage properly and responsibly with the community. Adler's theory fitted this thinking, as it placed a strong emphasis on the family as an ideal educational setting and partly incorporated the earlier ideal of conscience formation. The new psychiatric insights of German psychiatrist Fritz Künkel (1889–1956), which deviated from Adler's and addressed parenting styles, among other things, also gained a following.<sup>42</sup> Kohnstamm and Langeveld incorporated and/or evaluated the insights of Adler and Künkel in their work.<sup>43</sup>

After WWII, Dutch society remained pillarised for a short time. The post-war years were characterised by poverty, scarcity, and austerity. The fear of moral degeneration

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<sup>37</sup>See for a more complete discussion of New Education in the Netherlands and Kohnstamm's role in it, a previous publication of the authors: Marloes Hoencamp, John Exalto, Abraham de Muynck, and Doret de Ruyter, "A Dutch Example of New Education: Philipp Abraham Kohnstamm (1875–1951) and His Ideas about the New School", *History of Education* 51, no. 6 (2022), doi:10.1080/0046760X.2022.2038697.

<sup>38</sup>Bakker, "The Meaning of Fear", 374–6.

<sup>39</sup>Freud was read but only gained influence after WWII. Bakker, "De 'goede' opvoeding"; Bakker, "Westward Bound".

<sup>40</sup>Bakker, "The meaning of fear", 376–9; and Leendert Groenendijk and Nelleke Bakker, "Child Rearing and the Neuroticization of Parenting: The Case of The Netherlands", *History of Education* 31, no. 6 (2002), doi: 10.1080/0046760022000018392.

<sup>41</sup>Bakker, "The meaning of fear", 376–7. Compare Stolk, Los and Karsten, "Education as Cultural Mobilisation".

<sup>42</sup>Nelleke Bakker, "Child-Rearing Literature and the Reception of Individual Psychology in the Netherlands, 1930–1950", *Paedagogica Historica* 34 (SS III) (1998): 583–602; and Bakker, "Westward Bound".

<sup>43</sup>Exalto, "Sexual Hygiene".

among young people was high because they had grown up during wartime. This created a parenting climate with relatively strict hierarchical relationships, high regard for the family, and an emphasis on parental authority.<sup>44</sup> It united and continued the two pre-war ideals of moral and responsible individuals serving the community. This changed in the 1960s, when the connections between morality, conscience, responsibility towards the community, and emphasis on the family were definitively severed and replaced by a new model: education for the self-development and happiness of the individual child.<sup>45</sup>

### *Philipp Abraham Kohnstamm and Martinus Jan Langeveld*

In 1919, after a career as a physics professor, Kohnstamm was appointed Professor of Education at the University of Amsterdam. This was in the early stages of building academic educational sciences in the Netherlands, so Kohnstamm is counted among the founding fathers.<sup>46</sup> From the beginning of his career as a pedagogue (in the 1920s), Kohnstamm positioned himself as an adherent of personalism, a philosophy that revolves around being a person with a unique personality, who is an individual in the community and in an I-Thou relationship with God.<sup>47</sup> The personalistic views of Stern inspired Kohnstamm's personalism, and Kohnstamm had maintained close contact with Stern.<sup>48</sup> However, having come from a liberal Jewish family, Kohnstamm's conversion to Christianity also had a great influence. Because of his conversion and its influence on his ideas, Kohnstamm himself described his philosophy as "biblical personalism".<sup>49</sup>

The publication "The Becoming Personality" (1929) is Kohnstamm's best-known educational work and is entirely intertwined with his personalistic views. It includes insights from New Psychology (e.g. Stern, Spranger, and Bühler) and discussions on the work of Darwin, Freud, and Bergson. In addition to his empirical research on intelligence, Kohnstamm is also seen as a representative of the New Education movement because of his visits to other experimental educational venues both in and outside the Netherlands (e.g. Germany and England) and his own proposals for a New School. In particular, Kohnstamm based his New School ideas on the ideas of the "new world": the Dalton Plan of New Educationalist Helen Parkhurst (1886–1973) and lesser-known ideas such as the Gary Plan of William Wirt (1874–1938). However, Kohnstamm also paid attention to German New Educationalists such as Georg Kerschensteiner (1854–1932) and Peter Petersen (1884–1952).<sup>50</sup> Kohnstamm's "The Becoming Personality" was prescribed to students of education at universities in the Netherlands until the 1970s.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>44</sup>Nelleke Bakker and Janneke Wubs, "A Mysterious Success: Doctor Spock and the Netherlands in the 1950s", *Paedagogica Historica* 38, no. 1 (2002), doi: 10.1080/0030923020380110; and Martinus Jan Langeveld, *Maatschappelijke verwildering de jeugd. Rapport betreffende het onderzoek naar de geestsgesteldheid van de massajeugd* ('s-Gravenhage: Staatsuitgeverij, 1952).

<sup>45</sup>Bram Mellink, "Having Faith: Religious Optimism in Dutch Parochial Schools During the 1960s as a Case for Secularisation", *Paedagogica Historica* 49, no. 1 (2013), doi: 10.1080/00309230.2012.744069.

<sup>46</sup>See note 1 above. See also for instance the studies of Bakker, "Westward Bound"; Nathan Deen, "Een halve eeuw onderwijsresearch in Nederland. Het Nutseminarium voor Pedagogiek 1919–1969" (PhD diss., Universiteit van Amsterdam, 1969), or Mulder and Heyting, "The Dutch curve".

<sup>47</sup>Hoencamp et al., "Personalism".

<sup>48</sup>Bakker, "Westward Bound"; and Braster, "From Holland to Hamburg", 626.

<sup>49</sup>Kohnstamm, *Hoe mijn "Bijbelsch personalisme" ontstond* (Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink, 1934).

<sup>50</sup>Hoencamp et al., "A Dutch Example".

<sup>51</sup>Bakker, "Westward Bound"; and Exalto, Groenendijk and Miedema, "Philipp Abraham Kohnstamm (1875–1951)".

Kohnstamm's student Martinus Jan Langeveld (1905–1989) was the face of post-war Dutch educational sciences, both in the Netherlands and internationally. As a professor of educational sciences, developmental psychology, and didactics at Utrecht University, Langeveld participated in international contexts such as the UNESCO Institute for Education and co-founded several European educational journals, including the *International Review of Education*.<sup>52</sup> In addition to insights from New Psychology (e.g. Spranger and Bühler), Langeveld's theory was strongly influenced by his involvement in clinical pedagogical practice. His educational theory focuses on the individual child, who teaches himself or herself to become self-responsible and self-determining.<sup>53</sup>

Following his study of Dutch linguistics, Langeveld studied in Germany, where his teachers included Stern, Husserl, and Litt. Langeveld was in close contact with Litt, whose work proved to be an important inspiration for him.<sup>54</sup> Langeveld was also a Kohnstamm research assistant and was influenced by his philosophy of personalism. Langeveld is also known for his research using phenomenological methods. Together with a group of academic colleagues that comprised criminologists, psychologists, and philosophers – known as the “Utrecht School” – he sought to gain insights into the nature of human beings through phenomenological analysis. The group drew inspiration from philosophers in Germany (Husserl, Heidegger, and Bollnow) and France (Sartre and Merleau-Ponty); however, there was hardly any close contact or international cooperation.<sup>55</sup> Langeveld applied a phenomenological method to gain knowledge about children's environments and pedagogical relationships. His educational theory and phenomenological methods resonated not only within the Netherlands and Germany but also in countries such as South Africa, Israel, Egypt, Jamaica, and Japan. Along with Kohnstamm, Langeveld's choice of subject-oriented theories, such as personalism and phenomenology, had a major impact on both denominational and non-denominational educational practices and institutions.<sup>56</sup> Langeveld's best-known publication, “Concise Educational Theory” (1945), was prescribed for reading in Dutch teacher-training colleges with various (religious) backgrounds into the 1980s.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>52</sup>Jaap Bos, *M.J. Langeveld. Pedagoog aan de hand van het kind* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2011), 244, 352; Bas Levering, “De betekenis van M.J. Langeveld voor de naoorlogse Nederlandse pedagogiek (met het accent op de periode 1945–1960)”, *Pedagogisch Tijdschrift* 16, no. 3 (1991): 147–60; Levering, “Praktische wetenschap als levenslange ambitie”; A. Rang and B. Rang, “Een bekende onbekende. Over de receptie van Langevelds werk in Duitsland”, *Pedagogisch Tijdschrift* 16, no. 3 (1991): 178–92; J. Rispens and P.M. Schoorl, “Professionele pedagogische hulpverlening. Over de bijdrage van Langeveld aan de ontwikkeling van de klinisch-pedagogische beroepspraktijk”, *Pedagogisch Tijdschrift* 16, no. 3 (1991): 161–77; and Ido Weijers, “Mondige burgers. Een cultuurhistorische plaatsbepaling van de pedagogiek van M. J. Langeveld”, *Pedagogisch Tijdschrift* 19, no. 3 (1994): 189–206.

<sup>53</sup>Bakker, “Westward Bound”. For further discussion of Langeveld's work, see a forthcoming publication of the authors: Marloes Hoencamp, John Exalto, Abraham de Muynck, and Doret de Ruyter, “Self-Responsible Self-Determination: The Educational Theory of Martinus Jan Langeveld (1905–1989), its Origins and Sources”, *History of Education* (2023) (forthcoming).

<sup>54</sup>Hoencamp et al., “Self-Responsible Self-Determination”; for a discussion of the relationship between (the theories of) Litt and Langeveld, see the study by Bos, *M.J. Langeveld*, 194–6, 242–4.

<sup>55</sup>Bos, *M.J. Langeveld*, chap. 12; Bas Levering and Max Van Manen, “Phenomenological Anthropology in the Netherlands and Flanders”, in *Phenomenology World-Wide*, ed. T. Tymieniecka (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002), 274–85.

<sup>56</sup>Bakker, “Westward Bound”.

<sup>57</sup>Bos, *M.J. Langeveld*, 220; Hoencamp et al., “Self-Responsible Self-Determination”; and Levering, “De Betekenis van M. J. Langeveld voor de Naoorlogse Nederlandse Pedagogiek”.

## A comparison between Kohnstamm's and Langeveld's educational ideas on the formation of conscience

As mentioned, in the early twentieth century the terms “moral”, “character”, and “conscience formation”, together with the term “personality”, were frequently linked and were interchangeable in Dutch educational science and practice.<sup>58</sup> These connections can also be identified in Kohnstamm's theory, fitting with his personalistic philosophy in which the personality is the central idea and a strict application of distinctive definitions is less important.<sup>59</sup> Connections between conscience, character, and personality are also present in Langeveld's educational science.<sup>60</sup>

This can even be taken a step further by arguing that in both theories, conscience formation can not only be equated with character or personality formation but is also equal to upbringing and education. Kohnstamm described education as “to educate the child to listen and live by its conscience” and regarded it as providing access to the human world.<sup>61</sup> Langeveld adopted not only this equation but also Kohnstamm's distinction between education and habit formation.<sup>62</sup> One can speak of education when children are taught to be bound by the decisions of their conscience. Other methods are not useless but should be understood as the latter.<sup>63</sup> Despite these duplications in their theories, which can be understood from the perspective of a master-apprentice relationship, they also differed in their interpretation of conscience, the role of responsibility in the formation of conscience, and who or what forms conscience. These differences are addressed in this section, which also seeks explanations.

### Conscience as God's voice or an inner authority

Kohnstamm had a broad view of conscience and its functioning: conscience not only concerned moral choices and compulsion, but also influenced choices within areas such as science, politics, law, and aesthetics. In doing so, the voice not only speaks punitively but also guides the making of positive decisions.<sup>64</sup> It was also characteristic of Kohnstamm and his personalism that he considered conscience as a “voice of God” speaking within a relationship.<sup>65</sup> Through this relationship with God (or Jesus), individuals know how to make choices and shape their lives. Therefore, conscience did not function on the basis of a static holy scripture with ever-valid precepts or general norms but was always applied to an individual situation.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>58</sup>Bakker, *Kind en karakter*, 118–22.

<sup>59</sup>Fitting within his personalism, Kohnstamm gave no definitions of conscience, personality and/or character formation. He considered them as related and coinciding. Kohnstamm, *Persoonlijkheid in wording*, 86, 283; Philipp Abraham Kohnstamm, *Staatspaedagogiek of persoonlijkheidspaedagogiek. Rede uitgesproken op maandag 3 februari 1919* (Groningen: Wolters, 1919), 19; and Kohnstamm, “Paedagogiek”, sections 5–6.

<sup>60</sup>Langeveld, *BTP*, 51–7, 62, 65; 2nd edition: 202–3.

<sup>61</sup>Kohnstamm, *Persoonlijkheid in wording*, 58, 66, 73, 79–80.

<sup>62</sup>Langeveld, *BTP*, 153.

<sup>63</sup>Kohnstamm, *Persoonlijkheid in wording*, 60–1, 182; and Kohnstamm, “Paedagogiek”, section 4.

<sup>64</sup>Philipp Abraham Kohnstamm, *Het waarheidsprobleem. Grondleggende kritiek van het christelijk waarheidsbewustzijn*, vol. 1 of *Schepper en schepping. Een stelsel van personalistische wijsbegeerte op bijbelschen grondslag* (Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink, 1926), 336–7; and Kohnstamm, *Persoonlijkheid in wording*, 57; Kohnstamm, “Paedagogiek”, 228.

<sup>65</sup>Hoencamp et al., “Personalism”; Kohnstamm, *Bijbel en Jeugd*, 31; Kohnstamm, *Persoonlijkheid en Idee* (Haarlem: F. Bohn, 1922); and Kohnstamm, *Persoonlijkheid in wording*, 520; Kohnstamm, *Staatspaedagogiek of persoonlijkheidspaedagogiek*.

<sup>66</sup>Kohnstamm, *Het waarheidsprobleem*, 332, 413; and Kohnstamm, *Persoonlijkheid in wording*, 57–60, 520.

Like Kohnstamm, Langeveld attributes the functions of looking back, assessing, and looking forward to conscience.<sup>67</sup> However, an important difference exists in their concepts of conscience. Even in his earliest publications, Langeveld did not consider conscience to be necessarily linked to God, which was essential for Kohnstamm. Langeveld described conscience as an experience of an “authority within oneself” that reveals itself directly and personally as an inner voice or power. Interestingly, Langeveld gave no further interpretations of this concept. As far as he was concerned, this could be God but was not necessarily. Remarkably, in the second edition of the BTP, Langeveld added that in his opinion, there was no biblical reason to consider conscience as the voice of God.<sup>68</sup>

The fact that Langeveld did not attribute the interpretation of inner authority to God but regarded it as a moral authority cannot be ascribed to the limited influence of Darwin and Freud in the Netherlands, or to the fact that the Ethical Society was already past its peak. An explanation for the room that Langeveld gave for another interpretation might be that, first, he wanted to keep his ideas accessible to the different pillars within the Netherlands, thus seeking an overarching interpretation that still appealed to different directions while remaining moralistic. Second, unlike Kohnstamm, Langeveld was much less theologically oriented but remained philosophical. His philosophical orientation, which could explain his different views of conscience, forms the phenomenology and his interpretation of it.<sup>69</sup> This phenomenology provided Langeveld with an approach to individual and subjective experiences rather than starting from generally applicable laws, rules, or dogmas. Hence, this also applies to other views on conscience: it does not necessarily have to be the voice of God, a social construct (Darwin), or a parenting-suppressive mechanism (Freud). In doing so, phenomenology explicitly emphasises the added value of the inner self, subjective experiences (such as the perception of the relationship between the person and the world), and the importance of letting the phenomenon speak for itself. Phenomenology is, therefore, the basic attitude of listening to what the phenomena reveal without giving a prior interpretation.<sup>70</sup>

Given the variable interpretation of the conscience that existed within Europe and the Netherlands in the first decades of the twentieth century, Langeveld’s explanation fits within the context of his time. In contrast, Kohnstamm’s idea of linking conscience to God was striking, as it had a more religious orientation. At that time, the main focus in the European debate was not on religious motives but on inner drives – the subjective and conscious being more central, as illustrated by Bergson’s philosophy, phenomenology, and movements such as New Education. This did not result in a connection with faith or God but put the spotlight on the individual.<sup>71</sup> Kohnstamm’s interpretation of conscience as the voice of God was also unusual given the developments of the 1920s and the influence of new psychological insights within the Netherlands. Moreover, Kohnstamm was not attached to a very orthodox Christian pillar through which pietistic influences worked, and the relationship between conscience and God was more obvious. Where did Kohnstamm’s explanation of conscience as God’s voice originate?

<sup>67</sup> Langeveld, *BTP*, 64–5, 70, 80–4.

<sup>68</sup> Langeveld *BTP*, 2nd edition, 79–80, 203.

<sup>69</sup> Langeveld, *BTP*, 54, 62.

<sup>70</sup> R. Bakker, *De geschiedenis van het fenomenologisch denken* (Utrecht: Uitgeverij Het Spectrum, 1977); and Jouwert Turkstra, “Een onderzoek naar de invloed van Waterink en Langeveld op het pedagogiek-denken in Zuid-Afrika” (PhD diss., Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 1978), 110–13.

<sup>71</sup> Cornelis P. Boele, “Noordmans, de filosofie en christelijk leiderschap” (PhD diss., Vrije Universiteit, 2013), 80.

On the one hand, Kohnstamm's interpretation of personalism could provide an explanation. According to his personalism, God speaks in the I-Thou relationship, among others, through conscience. God speaks to conscience and gives a concrete answer to the question of what a person ought to do in a particular set of circumstances. In this personalism, the relationship between conscience and God is essential.<sup>72</sup>

On the other hand, there is an important connection between his biblical personalism and his membership of the Ethical Society [*Ethische Vereniging*], not to be confused with the aforementioned Ethical movement. Kohnstamm was an active member of this theological movement in the Dutch Protestant Reformed Church.<sup>73</sup> This movement was formed by an influential intellectual and social upper class – to which Kohnstamm belonged – and had, among others, published in the magazine “Algemeen Weekblad voor Christendom en Cultuur” (1924–1939). The Dutch theologian Jan Gunning (1829–1905) and his older colleague Daniel Chantepie de la Sausaye Sr. (1818–1874) are the most important representatives. The Ethical Society was active in the Netherlands in the second half of the nineteenth century and gradually disappeared during and after WWII.<sup>74</sup> The adjective “ethical” does not refer to a formal ethic or morality, nor was it about a theological system, but rather an altruistic Christian attitude. Faith was seen as a matter of personality, inner experience, character, and conscience. Conscience was also understood as “a being-God in us” or a voice of God in the person.<sup>75</sup>

The Ethical Society was divided over the authority of the Bible and the ancient formulas of faith, but a non-dogmatic direction was most important (“not doctrine, but the Lord”): the foundation of Christianity was the person of Jesus, in which God and humankind concur.<sup>76</sup> Both its nondogmatic nature and connection to the person of God in Jesus show similarities with Kohnstamm's personalism. Another similarity is that society fought dominant naturalistic and positivistic thinking, which corresponds to international developments such as the Ethical movement and anti-materialist philosophies such as those proposed by Bergson.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>72</sup>Kohnstamm, *Staatspaedagogiek of persoonlijkheidspedagogiek*, 18–22; and Hoencamp et al., “Personalism”.

<sup>73</sup>On an international level it showed kinship with Social Christianity, a movement that emphasised the social impact of faith on society. Important representatives of Social Christianity are the English Christian Socialist Charles Kingsley (1819–1875) and the Social Gospel movement of American preacher Charles M. Sheldon (1857–1946), whose book “In His Steps, What Would Jesus Do?” (published in 1896 in the USA) also enjoyed fame in the Dutch circle of the Ethical Society. See Susan Wharton Gates, “Topeka to Tangier: The Impact of In His Steps on Public Administration”, *International Journal of Public Administration* 32, no. 1 (2009), doi: 10.1080/01900690802393618.

<sup>74</sup>Gijsbert Bos, *Christus de gekruisigde voor en in ons. Gunning's getuigenis van het verzoende leven* (Dordrecht: J.P. van den Tol, 1981); and Otto J. De Jong, *Nederlandse kerkgeschiedenis* (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1986), 361–4.

<sup>75</sup>M.J. Aalders, *Ethisch tussen 1870 en 1920: openbaring, Schrift en ervaring bij J.J.P. Valetton Jr., P.D. Chantepie de la Sausaye en Is. van Dijk* (Kampen: Kok, 1990), 17–18; Theo Hetteema and Leo Mietus, *Noblesse oblige. Achtergrond en actualiteit van de theologie van J.H. Gunning Jr.* (Gorinchem: Ekklesia, 2005); and P. Prins, *Het geweten* (Delft: Meinema, 1937), chap. 5 and p. 553.

<sup>76</sup>Aalders, *Ethisch tussen 1870 en 1920*; Johannes Hermanus Gunning, “Het ethisch beginsel der theologie” and “Het ethisch karakter der waarheid I en II”, in *J.H. Gunning Jr., Verzameld Werk deel 1 1856–1878*, ed. L. Mietus (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2012); and Aad Schravendesande, “Hilbrandt Boschma (1869–1954): Nederlands-hervormd” (PhD diss., Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2021).

<sup>77</sup>P.H. Esser and P. Prins, *Het geweten* (Kampen: Kok, 1947), 45. Moreover, the Ethical Society had influenced Dutch educational sciences earlier than Kohnstamm. Jan Gunning was the uncle of Jan Gunning Wzn (1859–1951), a contemporary of Kohnstamm and a former private lecturer in educational sciences.

### Conscience formation and responsibility

In Kohnstamm's and Langeveld's educational theories, the formation of conscience is consistently linked to another concept, that of responsibility; thus, both regarded responsibility as essential to the process of the formation of conscience. A child learns responsibility through play during the educational process, and the older a child becomes, the more responsibility the child can take on from their parents. In elaborating on this, Kohnstamm referred to insights of the New Educationalist Montessori movement.<sup>78</sup>

Kohnstamm's emphasis on responsibility in relation to conscientiousness is illustrated in the following example. During Kohnstamm's time, the book "What Would Jesus Do?" (published in 1896 in the USA) by American preacher Charles M. Sheldon (1857–1946) was popular.<sup>79</sup> The book has been translated into more than twenty-five languages and read in the Netherlands. Among others, it enjoyed fame in the Dutch circle of the Ethical Society.<sup>80</sup> Sheldon promoted a revival of the "Christianity of Christ", and the booklet contained a narrative that if one wanted to live a good Christian life one will ask the question "What would Jesus do?" for each possible option.<sup>81</sup> Although he did not mention the name Sheldon, and it is therefore unclear whether Kohnstamm was referring directly to Sheldon, Kohnstamm may have alluded to the same thinking in elaborating the question. This question was at play in the circles of the Ethical Society in which Kohnstamm engaged. Despite the focus on Jesus that would have appealed to Kohnstamm as a Christian, Kohnstamm was not enthusiastic about the question "What would Jesus do?" He considered this question an externalisation of responsibility and, therefore, problematic. To him, conscientiousness was consistently linked to individual responsibility. A decision of the conscience is thus not an impulsive and subjective interpretation of what Jesus would do, but a struggle that is characterised by conscious behavioural regulation, with a supra-rational character, individuality, and involvement of conflict of duties, and at the same time is experienced as a gift involving fidelity to one's own being.<sup>82</sup> The formation of conscience had to contribute to this by teaching the child to account for the norms and commandments under which one wants to set one's life, and at the same time to learn to act under one's own responsibility.<sup>83</sup>

Langeveld embraced Kohnstamm's ideas on conscience and responsibility, attributing an important role to parents in the process of conscience formation and presenting their role as a substitute for conscience within the parent-child relationship. He described parents as models of a "self-responsible personality" characterised by features such as conscientiousness, love, selflessness, and sincerity.<sup>84</sup> This relationship between conscience and responsibility also reveals a direct connection with Langeveld's educational aim of self-responsible self-determination: upbringing aims for children to know who they are and to reflect on what they are doing. This knowledge and reflection are based on the acquisition of a set of moral values and

<sup>78</sup>Kohnstamm, *Persoonlijkheid in wording*, 74–5, 86, 96.

<sup>79</sup>See note 73 above.

<sup>80</sup>Wharton Gates, "Topeka to Tangier".

<sup>81</sup>James H. Smylie, "Sheldon's In His Steps: Conscience And Discipleship", *Theology Today* 32, no. 1 (1975): 32–45; and Wharton Gates, "Topeka to Tangier".

<sup>82</sup>Kohnstamm, *Persoonlijkheid in wording*, 57–60.

<sup>83</sup>Kohnstamm, "Paedagogiek", 228.

<sup>84</sup>Langeveld, *BTP*, 39, 51, 69, 124.



norms (self-determination) for which the child is taught to take responsibility (self-responsibility). Individuals evaluate their actions in accordance with their norms by their inner selves, that is, by their conscience.<sup>85</sup> Subsequently, listening to one's conscience constitutes the individual's moral self-determination, from which responsibility comes, which gradually increases in the upbringing process. This is reflected in new and different words in Kohnstamm's personalist idea of the I-Thou relationship: no generally applicable rules, but a continuous reflection of what is morally right to do. For Langeveld, however, this responsibility was explicitly interpreted as the responsibility of the community. He expressed this as constructive participation in social life. Although this came slightly later, it fits the Dutch context of the 1930s.<sup>86</sup>

Despite parallels between their works, a different emphasis can be found in Langeveld's works. In Langeveld's subsequent publications in 1945, the connection between personality, conscience formation, and responsibility was less prominent, and the parent-child relationship came more into the limelight. To this end, he frequently drew on insights from New Psychology, such as those of Adler and Künkel, and discussed parenting problems, frequently drawn from Langeveld's clinical parenting practice. Here, Langeveld is a mix of the pre-WWII decades: an emotional parent-child relationship in which values must be internalised (1920s) and the explicitly formulated social responsibility that each individual must show (1930s), which incidentally coincided with the moral emphasis on social responsibility that an individual had to show in the 1950s.<sup>87</sup> Social responsibility is not completely missing but, in Kohnstamm's pre-World War II work, the individual and their values, freedom, and equality remain at the foreground. Kohnstamm typically limited his educational aim when it came to the interest of the community, and formulated it mainly and negatively: "to be without bothering or bothering others".<sup>88</sup> The emphasis on the value of each individual's equality and freedom can be understood in the context of Kohnstamm's time – the interbellum – amid a rise in fascism and anti-Semitism. After WWII, this shifted towards a clear social orientation and motivation for reconstruction.<sup>89</sup> Perhaps because Langeveld formulated his educational theory during WWII, he was already anticipating the post-war reconstruction of society and, therefore, emphasised upbringing and education for the common good. This also aligns with his explanation of phenomenology (in the context of his colleagues at the Utrecht School) and coincides with the ideas of the Breakthrough Movement, a progressive movement in which Catholics, Protestants, and socialists worked together to reconstruct society and aimed to break down the pillars.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Langeveld, *BTP*, sections 13a, 19–22.

<sup>86</sup> Langeveld, *BTP*, 64, 143–8.

<sup>87</sup> Hoencamp et al., "A Dutch example"; A.L.R. Vermeer, *Philipp A. Kohnstamm over democratie* (Kampen: Kok, 1987), 147.

<sup>88</sup> Kohnstamm, *Persoonlijkheid in wording*, 122; and Kohnstamm, *Staatspaedagogiek of persoonlijkheidspaedagogiek*, 23.

<sup>89</sup> Philip Kohnstamm, *Idealisme contra existentialisme en personalisme* ('s-Gravenhage: Daamen's Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1947).

<sup>90</sup> Levering and Van Manen, "Phenomenological Anthropology in the Netherlands and Flanders"; and Arie L. Molendijk, "Willem Banning and the Reform of Socialism in the Netherlands". *Contemporary European History* 29 (2020), doi:10.1017/S096077732000003X.

### *Who forms the conscience: the family, the school, or the child?*

Kohnstamm's ideas on conscience formation all circle around the place of this formation in relationships. This is linked to his personalist conviction that only persons and not general guidelines represent the truth and wisdom of life and thereby reveal a piece of God: "Only a person can educate a person, (...) only from personal life can personality grow up and become mature".<sup>91</sup> Kohnstamm did not favour a rigid and uniform education based on scientific insights, but rather education as a reflection of the relationship between God and the person.<sup>92</sup> The family was the best place for this, as he saw the family as being about the individual child-parent relationship.<sup>93</sup> Parents can form a conscience by setting a good example and helping children choose proper values, and, in the case of young children, the dormant conscience can be awakened through punishment.<sup>94</sup> In this orientation towards the family, Kohnstamm represented the Dutch proclivity that prevailed in the first half of the twentieth century: a loving relationship characterised by trust between parents and children but without the trends of strong psychologisation evident from the 1920s.<sup>95</sup> Remarkably, unlike his Dutch colleagues, Kohnstamm did see a role for the school in conscience formation by considering the school as a partner of the parents. Therefore, conscience formation was not limited to the family. Kohnstamm presented the possibility of forming a conscience, not only as a teacher, but also as a leader of a youth movement. According to Kohnstamm, these figures were able to understand the individuality and personality of the pupil and were called co-workers of God.<sup>96</sup> For the New School and the tasks of the teacher, Kohnstamm developed ideas based on the Dalton Plan and in collaboration with Gerhard. Thus, he can be seen as a representative of the New Education movement. However, he continued to emphasise the primacy of the family.<sup>97</sup> Despite cooperating with Gerhard, who was considered a prominent adherent of the Ethical movement in the Netherlands, Kohnstamm was not an adherent of the Ethical movement, which had a limited impact in the Netherlands and was already past its peak. Kohnstamm particularly appreciated Foerster's work for its emphasis on the importance of freedom of conscience and the relationship of the individual with the community but made little use of his insights.<sup>98</sup>

Langeveld embraced Kohnstamm's ideas on the importance of the family, considering it fundamental and life-defining.<sup>99</sup> However, it is striking that Langeveld noted little about the educational values of other educators or environments, but mostly emphasised the parent-child relationship. The unmentioned role of schools and teachers in conscience formation can be attributed to Langeveld's limited affinity for schools and New Education. This was not surprising as the movement was fading. There may also be a practical reason for this: Langeveld's contribution is mainly in the clinical pedagogical

<sup>91</sup>Kohnstamm, *Persoonlijkheid in wording*, 519.

<sup>92</sup>Kohnstamm, *Persoonlijkheid en Idee*, 44; Kohnstamm, *Bijbel en Jeugd*, Kohnstamm, *Het waarheidsprobleem*, 34, 419–22; and Kohnstamm, *Persoonlijkheid in wording*, sections 80 and 99.

<sup>93</sup>Kohnstamm, *Staatspaedagogiek of persoonlijkheidspaedagogiek*, 24; and Kohnstamm, *Persoonlijkheid in wording*, 41–3.

<sup>94</sup>Kohnstamm, *Persoonlijkheid in wording*, 297–310; and Langeveld, *BTP*, sections 52–57.

<sup>95</sup>Exalto, "Sexual Hygiene"; and Groenendijk and Bakker, "Child Rearing and the Neuroticization of Parenting".

<sup>96</sup>Kohnstamm, *Persoonlijkheid in wording*, 74–5; chapters IV and V; Kohnstamm, "Paedagogiek", sections 6 and 7.

<sup>97</sup>Hoencamp et al., "A Dutch example".

<sup>98</sup>See e.g. "Gemeenschap en individu in de paedagogiek van Foerster", *Paedagogische Studiën* 7, no. 1 (1926): 2–10; and Kohnstamm, *Persoonlijkheid in wording*, 524.

<sup>99</sup>Langeveld, *BTP*, 83–5.

sphere. He had his own educational and psychological practice, from which he published on parenting issues and the parent-child relationship.<sup>100</sup> There are also other principled reasons, namely that Langeveld considered this as a schooling task. True, Langeveld recognised that school had a general formative function and should teach children to live as “good people”. However, he frequently stressed that schools relied on the parental formation of conscience and that schools could not fix the deficits of parenting.<sup>101</sup> Nonetheless, he saw a role for schools: to lead children into the community and prepare them for it.<sup>102</sup>

In Kohnstamm’s and Langeveld’s educational theories, the last similarity stands out: the child’s cooperation is essential in the formation of conscience. Moreover, all education is ultimately self-education. In both theories, the educator demands obedience, and some guidance is inevitable within parenting; however, giving children space and allowing them to practise on their own is most important. Both Kohnstamm and Langeveld assumed this self-efficacy of the child in their upbringing; the child’s conscience could not be forced by imposing the will of the educator. All that educators can provide is help and support, for children are not copies but may and must express their own inner beliefs. Otherwise, one can speak of habit formation. Thus, consciousness formation was the first form of self-formation. These ideas were similar to those of New Education and inspired by the ideas of New Psychology.<sup>103</sup>

## Conclusion

Fitting within the Dutch context, Kohnstamm’s and Langeveld’s ideas of education and conscience formation are mixed with or equivalent to character formation and personality education and are directly linked to the aim of upbringing. Kohnstamm’s and Langeveld’s theories reflected most European developments, such as the insights of New Psychology (Bühler, Stern, Adler, and Künkel), which were frequently incorporated into their educational theories.

Rather than Langeveld, Kohnstamm’s ideas of conscience as the voice of God were striking, given their time and context. An explanation can be found in Kohnstamm’s biblical personalism, which partly coincides with beliefs about conscience associated with the Ethical Society. Although Langeveld continued much of Kohnstamm’s thinking, it is not surprising – partly given his choice of phenomenology – that he did not embrace Kohnstamm’s notion of conscience as the voice of God. Conscience, as an inner moral authority, was better suited to his context and time (e.g. subject-oriented philosophies such as Bergson’s philosophy). It could also be understood as Langeveld’s attempt to fit in with all existing pillars of Dutch society.

<sup>100</sup>Bos, M.J. *Langeveld*; Rang and Rang, “Een bekende onbekende”; and Rispens and Schoorl, “Professionele pedagogische hulpverlening”.

<sup>101</sup>Martinus Jan Langeveld, *Verkenning en Verdieping* (Purmerend: Muusses, 1950), 216; and Martinus Jan Langeveld, *Scholen maken mensen* (2nd ed.) (Purmerend: Muusses, 1969), 103–4.

<sup>102</sup>Martinus Jan Langeveld, *Studien zur Anthropologie des Kindes* (3rd edition) (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1968); and Langeveld, *Scholen maken mensen*.

<sup>103</sup>Kohnstamm, *Persoonlijkheid in wording*; 134; Kohnstamm, “Paedagogiek”, 216, 238; Langeveld, *BTP*, 143. Compare Exalto, “Sexual Hygiene”; and Ernst Mulder, “Kohnstamm en het idee van kinderlijke ontwikkeling”, *Pedagogisch Tijdschrift* 17, no. 5/6 (1992), 388–95.

Both of their educational theories of gradually increasing responsibility reflect common early twentieth-century Dutch ideas: the formation of conscience, in which loving guidance and a good example of parents are most important. Partly because of the context of the Dutch pillarised society and the dominant position of the churches within it, there was an emphasis on conscience formation within the family.<sup>104</sup> Influenced by New Education, Kohnstamm broadened the formation of conscience by assigning roles to teachers and youth leaders. However, Langeveld did not adopt this approach and returned to the original Dutch family orientation. This can be attributed to Langeveld's limited affinity for schools. There is also a more principled reason, namely, that Langeveld did not consider conscience formation as one of the tasks of schooling.

Although Kohnstamm showed great interest in the Anglo-Saxon world, given his embrace of the Dalton Plan and other publications in which he showed enthusiasm for the American emphasis on freedom, especially in the school curriculum, Langeveld is known for his critical attitude towards new ideas and research methods coming from the Anglo-Saxon world.<sup>105</sup> It would be interesting to investigate why Langeveld did not choose the same path as his former teacher Kohnstamm – picking the cherries from new Anglo-Saxon insights – but turned back to the traditional direction of Dutch society, for example, narrowing the formation of conscience as a task of the family.

Despite the aforementioned differences, both theories emphasise education of conscience through self-formation. This ensured that children were not moulded into copies of their parents or that children would unreflectively copy strict believers or adherents of a particular ideology. In this respect, both Kohnstamm and Langeveld aimed to transcend or break down the pillars within Dutch society. They wanted children to become personalities themselves, who would one day say, “This is where I stand, I cannot do otherwise”.

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## Notes on contributors

*Marloes Hoencamp* is a PhD student in the history of education at the Department of Educational and Family Studies, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. She also teaches educational theory at Driestar Christian University, Gouda, the Netherlands.

<sup>104</sup>Bakker, “The meaning of fear”, 373–8.

<sup>105</sup>Kohnstamm, *Staatspaedagogiek of persoonlijkheidspaedagogiek*; and Kohnstamm, “Onderwijs in de Vereenigde Staten”, *Paedagogische Studiën*, no. 9 (1928), 24–5. Compare Gert Biesta and Siebren Miedema, “Feiten en waarden in de ontwikkeling van de Nederlandse academische pedagogiek. Een opmaat voor pedagogisch wetenschapsonderzoek”, *Pedagogisch Tijdschrift* 14 no. 5/6 (1992): 396–411; and Hoencamp et al., “A Dutch example”; M. Hohmann, *Die Pädagogik M.J. Langevelts. Untersuchungen zu seinem Wissenschaftsverständnis* (Bochum: Kamp, 1971).

*John Exalto* works as an assistant professor in the theory and history of education at the Department of Education of the University of Groningen. His research focuses on the relations between identity, religion and education.

*Abraham de Muynck* is a professor of education at the Department of Practical Theology of the Theological University of Apeldoorn, the Netherlands, and at the Department of Education, NLA University College in Bergen, Norway. His research focuses on personhood formation and identity.

*Doret de Ruyter* is a professor of (philosophy of) education at the University of Humanistic Studies in Utrecht, the Netherlands. Her research focuses on human flourishing as an aim of education.

## ORCID

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

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

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

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