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Broere, S.C.J.R.

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Synthesis and Race: Barge, Buytendijk, and the *rassenvraagstuk* of the 1930s

SEBASTIAAN BROERE*

ABSTRACT

On the basis of two case studies, this article demonstrates that throughout the 1930s ‘synthetic reasoning’ in the Netherlands provided arguments to denounce racial reductionism and eugenicist policy. These two case studies concern the anatomist and physical anthropologist J.A.J. Barge (1884–1952) and the physiologist and psychologist F.J.J. Buytendijk (1887–1974). Barge and Buytendijk participated in a public debate on race and fiercely contested the claim – from their perspective primarily defended by German scientists – that heritable, racial factors determined personality and physiology. Christian principles undoubtedly motivated Barge and Buytendijk to raise their voices, but in criticizing the public uses of race, they based their arguments, above all, on epistemological considerations. This article examines theoretical investigations by Buytendijk and Barge into the foundations of the life sciences, the ‘race question’ of the 1930s, and the 1939 Seminar on the Race Question organized by the Catholic University in Nijmegen. Although both intellectuals supported the broadening of explanatory schemes in biology and the human sciences, they differed on the question what synthesis meant with regard to the concept of race.

Keywords: Race Question; Synthesis; Interbellum; The Netherlands

Introduction

During the 1930s race and eugenics became topic of public debate in the Netherlands. Although eugenics had been discussed by a small circle of Dutch intellectuals from the turn of the century onwards, it was only after 1930 that eugenic attempts to improve the genetic quality of the national population began to captivate the minds of a broader public.¹ Despite this lively debate, the state never implemented any official policy. In accordance with Jan Noordman’s seminal work on eugenics in the Netherlands, Hans Pols argued that the main reason why the Dutch eugenics movement failed to shape government policy, relates to the

* Ph.D. student, Department of History, UCLA, 6265 Bunche Hall, Box 951473, Los Angeles, California 90095-1473. E-mail: broere@ucla.edu. I would like to thank Bert Theunissen, Ad Maas, Scottie Buehler, and two anonymous reviewers for commenting upon earlier versions of this paper.

1 Jan Noordman, *Om de kwaliteit van het nageslacht. Eugenetica in Nederland 1900–1950* (Nijmegen 1989) 17.

strong influence of so-called confessionals (Orthodox-Protestants and Roman-Catholics) on the public sphere until the 1950s.² Moreover, Pols observes that ‘even the most enthusiastic Dutch eugenicists were cautious and tentative about eugenics; they almost always emphasized the need for further research and rarely proposed practical application.’³ This interpretation deserves some modification; as Stephen Snelders has shown, throughout the 1930s some of the authors who contributed to the Dutch eugenics journal *Afkomst en toekomst* (‘Ancestry and Future’) discussed German population politics and forced sterilization in neutral terms and wished to draw practical conclusions from their own scientific findings.⁴ Yet both authors agree that, in Pols’ wording, German ideas on racial purity ‘were generally dismissed as unscientific’.⁵

But what understanding of science did Dutch intellectuals use to dismiss German racial science as ‘unscientific’? Throughout the same period scientists and scholars disputed what constituted proper scientific explanation. Many scientists, especially those interested in organisms, dedicated themselves to a search for ‘synthesis.’⁶ It was felt that scientific understanding had become too mono-causal and materialist to understand the complexity of organic reality. Several intellectuals theorized that a phenomenological or holist approach to nature would infuse scientific reasoning with a deeper understanding of nature’s hidden harmony. ‘Synthesis! Give us synthesis!’, Leiden anatomist Johannes Antonius James Barge (1884–1952) cried out in 1927 (*fig. 1*).⁷

This paper aims to demonstrate the historical existence of a relation between synthetic reasoning and objections to eugenics, a connection that is not discussed by either Noordman or David Baneke in their respective studies on eugenics in the Netherlands and the search for synthesis.⁸ Bert Theunissen has argued in a case study that holistic reasoning in the 1920s and 1930s accounted in part for the historical peculiarity that the neo-Darwinist synthesis was accepted relatively late in the Netherlands; an observation which might also

2 Hans Pols, ‘Eugenics in the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies’, in: Alison Bashford & Philippa Levine (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics* (Oxford 2010) 347–362, 358; Noordman, *Om de kwaliteit van het nageslacht* (n. 1).

3 Pols, ‘Eugenics in the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies’ (n. 2) 347.

4 Stephen Snelders, ‘Op weg naar een “Germaansche” volksgezondheid: Nationaal-socialisme, erfelijkheidsleer en eugenetica in Nederland 1940–1945’, *Gewina* 30 (2007) 62–72, esp. 66; 71. Cf. Stephen Snelders & Toine Pieters, ‘Van degeneratie tot individuele gezondheidsopties: Het maatschappelijke gebruik van erfelijkheidsconcepten in de twintigste eeuw’, *Gewina* 26 (2003) 203–215, esp. 211–212.

5 Pols, ‘Eugenics in the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies’ (n. 2) 347. Snelders remarks that ‘especially the German interpretation of the concept “race” [...] was considered to be problematic’. Cf. Snelders, ‘Op weg naar een “Germaansche” volksgezondheid’ (n. 4) 66.

6 David Baneke, *Synthetisch denken. Natuurwetenschappers over hun rol in een moderne maatschappij, 1900–1940* (Hilversum 2008); Noordman, *Om de kwaliteit van het nageslacht* (n. 1).

7 J.A.J. Barge, ‘Retardatie en foetalisatie. Een nieuwe beschouwing van het vraagstuk der anthropogenese’, *De Gids* 91 (1927) 358–379, esp. 359. Baneke’s article on the Dutch biologist Jordan bears this outcry as its title. Cf. David Baneke, ‘“Synthese! Geef ons synthese!”: H.J. Jordan en het intellectuele debat tijdens het Interbellum’, *Gewina* 28 (2005) 169–185.

8 Although unrelated, Baneke does discuss the relation between holism and world peace in the writings of biologist H.J. Jordan. In their introduction to Buytendijk’s letters to Anton van Duinkerken, Antoinette Lap and Henk Struyker Boudier discussed the relation between Buytendijk’s objections to racial theory and his criticism towards scientific naturalism. Buytendijk’s writings, however, are not examined with respect to the early twentieth-century search for synthesis. See: Antoinette Lap & Henk Struyker Boudier (eds.), *Tijdingen. Brieven van F.J.J. Buytendijk aan Anton van Duinkerken* (Zeist 1987) 34.



Fig. 1: J.A.J. ('Ton') Barge (1884–1952). (Bron: Museum Boerhaave, Leiden)

hint at a relation between holism and eugenics.⁹ The relation between synthetic reasoning and objections to eugenics is discussed by analyzing the writings and lectures of the aforementioned anatomist Barge and the Dutch physiologist and animal psychologist Frederik Jacobus Johannes Buytendijk (1887–1974). Both Barge and Buytendijk participated in what was termed 'the race question' (*het rassenvraagstuk*) and fiercely contested the claim – from their perspective primarily defended by German scientists – that inheritable, racial factors determined personality and physiology. '[T]he entirely Cartesian and positivist-oriented natural sciences', Buytendijk stated, 'are to blame for the inhumane and heathenish opinions and actions, sanctioned by governments, in large parts of Europe'.¹⁰ Barge, a prominent Dutch expert in racial morphological research, likewise conceived connections between scientific positivism and social misconduct.

Christian faith motivated Barge and Buytendijk to raise their voices. Barge was Catholic from his early childhood and Buytendijk gradually converted from Protestantism to Catholicism during the 1930s. Recently, historian Ab Flipse argued that instead of being opposed to science, many Christian intellectuals favored scientific reasoning in the form of a Christianized alternative. Inspired by Neo-Calvinist or Neo-Thomist theology, these scientists aimed to revitalize science by introducing notions of organic unity, teleology and divine providence.¹¹ The Neo-Calvinist movement was initiated by the Dutch Orthodox-Protestant theologian and politician Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920). Kuyper's aim was to modernize traditional Calvinism while simultaneously preserving its orthodox core

9 Bert Theunissen, 'Jan Boeke en de harmonie van het organisme. Een case-study van de totaliteitsidee in de 20e-eeuwse Nederlandse biologie', *Tijdschrift voor de geschiedenis van de geneeskunde, natuurwetenschappen, wiskunde en techniek* 11 (1988) 58–74.

10 F.J.J. Buytendijk, 'Het ras physiologisch beschouwd', in: J.A.J. Barge, F.J.J. Buytendijk & J.E. Schulte, *Het ras morphologisch, physiologisch en psychologisch beschouwd* (The Hague 1939) 23–62, esp. 41.

11 Ab Flipse, *Christelijke wetenschap. Nederlandse rooms-katholieken en gereformeerden over de natuurwetenschap, 1880–1940* (Hilversum 2014).

principles. In the view of Kuyper and other Orthodox-Protestant intellectuals, Christian faith was the point of departure for scientific enquiry. Nature, God's creation, had to be studied organically by grasping the teleological principles at work in natural processes.¹² Neo-Thomist theology, on the other hand, had its roots in Italy. In 1876 Pope Leo XIII issued the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* in which he recommended to study the works of Thomas Aquinas in order to formulate an answer to the challenges of modernity. The medieval philosopher Thomas Aquinas had viewed human reason as a God-given instrument that would lead to God if properly used. During the second half of the nineteenth century, Aquinas' teachings guided the development of a Catholic stance towards modern science.¹³ The search for synthesis and Christian attempts to revise scientific reasoning partially overlapped. In criticizing the public use of race, Buytendijk and Barge based their arguments, above all, on epistemological rather than religious or moral arguments. From their point of view, theories of biological reductionism transgressed the normative boundaries of proper science.

This paper starts off with an examination of Buytendijk and Barge's theoretical investigations into the foundations of the life sciences. Thereafter, the 1930s race question is discussed. Special attention is devoted to the 1939 'Seminar on the Race Question' (*Studiedag over het rassenvraagstuk*) organized by the Catholic University in Nijmegen. Both Buytendijk and Barge gave a lecture at this conference, which will be examined separately in this paper's final sections.

Buytendijk & Barge: biographical introduction

Buytendijk was born in 1887 in Breda and grew up in a Dutch Reformed family. He studied medicine at the University of Amsterdam and specialized in physiology after obtaining his degree in 1909. From the very beginning of his studies, Buytendijk had shown an interest in philosophy. In 1913, the Dutch psychiatrist Leendert Bouman (1869–1936) appointed Buytendijk as assistant at the physiological laboratory of the Protestant *Vrije Universiteit* ('Free University') in Amsterdam. Six years later Buytendijk secured a position as professor of physiology and general biology at that same institution (*fig. 2*). In 1918 he defended his doctoral thesis on animal behavior.¹⁴ According to the philosopher Wim Dekkers, Buytendijk's thesis demonstrates a shift in his interest: 'from physical chemistry and electrophysiology, which focused on detailed aspects of animal life, to animal psychology'.¹⁵ In the meantime, Buytendijk had become member of the Reformed Church; intellectually, he appropriated Neo-Calvinism to merge science and religion and formulate a 'Christian theistic worldview'.¹⁶ During the 1920s, close contact with intellectuals such as Max Scheler, Viktor Emil von Gebattel and Helmuth Plessner increased Buytendijk's interest in phenomenology and Catholicism. Buytendijk gradually converted to Catholicism and was baptized in 1937.¹⁷ In 1925 Buytendijk accepted a position as professor of general physiology

12 Ibidem 108–111.

13 Ibidem 40.

14 F.J.J. Buytendijk, *Proeven over gewoontevorming bij dieren* (Amsterdam 1918).

15 Wim J.M. Dekkers, 'F.J.J. Buytendijk's Concept of an Anthropological Physiology', *Theoretical Medicine* 16 (1995) 15–39, esp. 17.

16 Flipse, *Christelijke wetenschap* (n. 11) 198.

17 H.M.A. Struyker Boudier, 'Buytendijk, Frederik Jacobus Johannes (1887–1974)', in: *Biografisch woordenboek van Nederland* 3 (1989) <http://resources.huylgens.knaw.nl>.



Fig. 2: Frederik J.J. Buytendijk (1887–1974) depicted in 1919 in his laboratory at the *Vrije Universiteit* in Amsterdam. (Bron: *De Spiegel*, 5 April 1919)

at the University of Groningen. In 1946 he moved to Utrecht and became the university's professor of general and theoretical psychology, a position he maintained until his retirement in 1957. Throughout his career, Buytendijk published on an impressive number of topics, including human and animal relations, pain, aggression and violence, the female, mass communication, animal psychology, and human physiology.

Barge, three years Buytendijk's senior, likewise obtained his medical degree from the University of Amsterdam in 1909. Although originally born in Semarang (Java), Barge spent most of his childhood days in the Netherlands in a Catholic family. Upon completion of his studies, Barge became an assistant in the anatomical laboratory of Lodewijk Bolk (1866–1930). In 1912 he successfully defended his dissertation on the physical-anthropological makeup of the Dutch population.¹⁸ Barge stayed in Amsterdam until 1919, when he moved to Leiden University to succeed Jan Boeke (1874–1956) as chair of anatomy and embryology. Three years later, the first part of his *Leerboek der beschrijvende ontleedkunde van den mensch* ('Textbook of Descriptive Human Anatomy') appeared. Compiled together with Boeke and Arnoldus Johannes Petrus van den Broek (1877–1961), the book remained a standard Dutch textbook in anatomy until the 1950s (for a group portrait, see fig. 3).¹⁹ Similar to Buytendijk, faith – in Barge's case Catholicism – was an essential component of Barge's identity as a scientist. In 1924 he became president of the *Vereeniging tot het bevorderen van de beoefening der wetenschap onder de katholieken in Nederland* ('Society for the Promotion of Science among the Catholics in the Netherlands'). As the Society's chairman, Barge repeatedly promoted Neo-Thomist philosophy as the way to create a synthesized science; after all, he argued, 'The Aristotelian-Thomist biology is still unprecedented in its capacity to identify the particularity of life [*het eigene des levens*].'²⁰

18 J.A.J. Barge, *Friesche en Marker schedels. Bijdrage tot de kennis van de anthropologie der bevolking van Nederland* (Amsterdam 1912).

19 J. Bosmans, 'Barge, Johannes Antonius James (1884–1952)', in: *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland 5* (2002) <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl>.

20 Barge, cited in: Flipse, *Christelijke wetenschap* (n. 11) 244.



Fig. 3: Anatomical lesson by Lodewijk Bolk (in the middle), busy with the dissection of a monkey. Bolk is surrounded by his former students (from left to right): Jan Boeke, J.A.J. ('Ton') Barge and Arnold J.P. van den Broek. In the background a bust of the eighteenth-century anatomist Petrus Camper. Painting made in 1925 by Martin Monnickendam. (Bron: Amsterdam Museum)

A search for synthesis

Viewing the intellectual landscape surrounding them, Barge and Buytendijk witnessed a shift in the conceptualization of nature. In his 1925 inaugural lecture – a text of programmatic importance to Buytendijk's future development – the professor spoke of 'a shift from analysis to synthesis, from explanation to understanding [in Dutch: 'van verklaren naar verstaan'], and from logical-construction to phenomenological "understanding"²¹ Buytendijk maintained that scholars in both the natural sciences and the humanities felt the need to transgress disciplinary boundaries and put their research subject in a wider perspective. Modern physics – 'the relativity of time and space' – had released human thought and inquiry from 'the blindness of our senses.'²² The search for synthesis had become fact.

Barge and Buytendijk provided several reasons to account for this transition. First, they pointed at recent developments within the life sciences. Over the previous fifty years, the amount of data on natural phenomena had increased tremendously due to the introduction of new chemical and physical methods. Although an increase in factual knowledge was not problematic in itself, Buytendijk maintained that scientific enquiry had resulted in a chaotic collection of curiosities. In his view, this was caused by the fact that the analytic methods used to generate facts were incapable to simultaneously synthesize and organize.²³ In addition, as Barge explained in a 1926 lecture, the introduction of experimental methods in biological research had made biologists aware of the fact that 'life reveals an

21 F.J.J. Buytendijk, *Over het verstaan der levensverschijnselen. Rede uitgesproken bij de aanvaarding van het ambt van hoogleeraar in de physiologie aan de Rijksuniversiteit te Groningen op 17 januari 1925* (Groningen 1925) 4. Cf. J.A.J. Barge, 'Gewijzigde opvattingen in de hedendaagsche biologie', in: Prof. dr. J.A.J. Barge. *Verzameling van lezingen, toespraken, verslagen en niet in boekvorm verschenen geschriften aangeboden door zijn kinderen ter gelegenheid van zijn 25-jarig professoraat* (Leiden 1944) 200–206, esp. 201. According to Louis ter Steeg, Buytendijk's inaugural lecture was programmatic to his future development. See: Louis ter Steeg, 'Een rijkere vorm van realisme'. *Wetenschap en wereldbeschouwing bij F.J.J. Buytendijk* (Nijmegen 1998) 19.

22 Letter from Buytendijk to Anton van Duinkerken, 17 May 1942, in: Lap & Struyker Boudier, *Tijdingen* (n. 8) 91.

23 Buytendijk, *Over het verstaan der levensverschijnselen* (n. 21) 9.

organizing principle, which resist a pure materialist explanation?²⁴ In short: while new scientific methods produced too much to know, these practices simultaneously hinted at the existence of a more fundamental, biological organization.

Changes in the life sciences were also explained by pointing at developments in society at large, in particular the First World War. A recent historiographic debate concerns the question of how and to what extent the Great War affected Dutch scholarship and scientific practice. David Baneke notes in his dissertation that the First World War did not mark a significant turning point in the Netherlands' discourse on the dilemmas of modernity.²⁵ Others, on the other hand, have argued that the history of Dutch sciences during the Great War is characterized by continuities and discontinuities.²⁶ Looking back in 1926, Barge himself witnessed discontinuity. In his view, the atrocities of the battles of Verdun and the Somme were the result of the irresponsible popularization of Darwinism, because Darwinian theory had reduced human beings to nothing but brute matter. Originally developed for theoretical purposes, the consequences of Darwinism were detrimental if freely applied to society. Barge claimed that, because of its unforeseen consequences, post-war intellectuals felt the need to re-examine the scientific ideas which had led to one of the most disastrous chapters in human history.²⁷ Throughout the 1930s, Barge used a similar argument in his objections against racial reductionism.

Barge and Buytendijk were not alone in criticizing modernity's effects on the human condition. From the 1890s onwards, critics from all walks of intellectual life began to voice a general sense that modernity had not resulted in progress for humanity. In the Netherlands, as in other European countries, artists and intellectuals felt the need to discuss what was perceived to be modernity's dark side: alienation, fragmentation and insecurity. In these debates, science and rationality were prime targets. It was argued that science had become inhumane by excluding other ways of knowing. These epistemic alternatives included feeling, personal experience, and intuition. The cry for synthesis was a reaction to these developments.²⁸ Research conducted by Dutch biologists Jan Boeke (1874–1956) and Hermann Jacques Jordan (1877–1942) fitted the same cultural movement.²⁹

While Barge and Buytendijk entered these debates in the 1920s, the discussion intensified. Those searching for synthesis saw a fundamental problem with positivist or material-mechanical approaches to living nature because of its failure to grasp life in its full appearance. A biologist raised in the tradition of Newton and Descartes would practice a one-dimensional approach to organisms, because life, Barge declared, was fundamentally different from the chemical reactions in a test-tube or events in a magnetic force field.³⁰

24 Barge probably referred to embryological research by Hans Driesch, although Barge did not entirely agree with what he took to be Driesch's use of the concept 'entelechy'. Barge, 'Gewijzigde opvattingen' (n. 21) 205. Cf. Flipse, *Christelijke wetenschap* (n. 11) 264–265.

25 Baneke, *Synthetisch denken* (n. 6) 43.

26 See e.g.: F. Hoeneveld, I. Kloosterman, & R. Abma, 'The First World War and Dutch Scientific Culture', *Studium* 7 (2014) 117–123. The *Studium* issue in which this article appeared is devoted to the relation between the First World War and the Dutch sciences.

27 Barge, 'Gewijzigde opvattingen' (n. 21) 201.

28 Baneke, *Synthetisch denken* (n. 6) 29; 136.

29 Baneke, 'Jordan en het intellectuele debat' (n. 7); Theunissen, 'Jan Boeke en de harmonie van het organisme' (n. 9).

30 J.A.J. Barge, 'Vernieuwing der beschouwingwijzen in de vergelijkende anatomie', in: Barge. *Verzameling van lezingen, toespraken, verslagen en niet in boekvorm verschenen geschriften* (n. 21) 266–273, esp. 266.

Barge and Buytendijk did not dispute the claim that life, in part, was nothing but matter, but they challenged the view that the biological equaled the physical-chemical and mechanical. To create a true biology, a science of *bios*, a causal-experimental approach to nature and physiological function had to be synthesized with a descriptive or philosophical take on organic form.

One of the strategies to clarify why the life sciences needed synthesis involved comparing the structure of a machine to the structure of an organism. Machines are man-made: they are a collection of individually created elements. These parts are assembled with a particular goal in mind. An organism, on the other hand, organizes itself: its self-generation can therefore only be understood with respect to the fundamental unity of its individual parts which together work towards the realization of the organism's form. At the same time, however, it is form that steers the generation of biological parts. In the Aristotelian vocabulary deployed by Buytendijk, form is an organism's entelechy or final cause, one of the causes that actualizes an organism's potential. One can explain all the single processes of an organism's generation mono-causally, but to fully appreciate how all these processes together realized the formation of an organism, one must entertain a notion of unity. In this context, Buytendijk spoke of 'circle-processes'. This term referred to the logical necessity of cooperation between an organism's function, form, and lifestyle.³¹ In order to understand life, biologists had to transcend simple models of causality. If not, Barge warned, one of Goethe's century-old rhymes would still apply: 'Da hält er die Teile in seiner Hand, fehlt aber leider das geistige Band'.³²

Barge, and especially Buytendijk, used metaphors derived from the arts to make their ideas more accessible. Fundamental to these metaphors was the idea that there were different ways of perceiving the same object. In his inaugural lecture for example, Buytendijk compared life to a painting. One can analyze a painting by looking at the quantity or the composition of the paint used, but in that case one would fail to grasp the meaning of a work of art.³³ Similarly, one can think of a sentence as a series of inkblots, but if one wants to understand the meaning of the sentence, the inkblots should be interpreted as letters that, when combined make words and sentences. Another metaphor employed by Barge and Buytendijk, but taken from the German physiologist Jakob Johann Baron von Uexküll (1864–1944), was that of life as a melody. A melody has a certain qualitative form that is independent of tempo or the material of the instrument used to play the tune.³⁴ The same goes for the form of an organism. These metaphors served to express at least two thoughts. Firstly, there are certain phenomena or objects in the world – a musical composition, a work of art, an organism – whose form or essence is indivisible. In order to understand these phenomena, it is essential to grasp that unity. Secondly, just as human beings are capable to understand a piece of art, they are endowed with a mental faculty to grasp an organism's form. Biologists needed to learn to perceive nature in a new way, but without

31 Buytendijk, *Over het verstaan der levensverschijnselen* (n. 21); F.J.J. Buytendijk, *Grondproblemen van het dierlijk leven* (Antwerp & Brussel 1938) 5–6; J.A.J. Barge, *De betrekking tusschen vorm en functie als biologisch probleem* (Haarlem 1947).

32 Barge, 'Gewijzigde opvattingen' (n. 21) 203.

33 Buytendijk, *Over het verstaan der levensverschijnselen* (n. 21) 6.

34 Ibidem 10.

losing their analytical methods out of sight. In order to fully understand nature, mind and senses had to be synthesized.³⁵

It is important to emphasize that, despite these art-related metaphors, Barge and Buytendijk were not arguing for a more subjective approach to nature. On the contrary, seen from their perspective, science had not been objective enough. Barge warned that synthesis should not pass over into wild speculation. Denouncing plain mechanistic explanations of life and searching for an active principle behind empirical phenomena was the methodology that Barge considered to be fruitful. Yet, Barge argued that many biologists were too speculative in their approach to nature. Their theories contained 'too much of the unknown and mysterious'.³⁶ Buytendijk likewise assured his audience that there was nothing mysterious about the modern search for synthesis. It was rather a search for 'a richer form of realism'.³⁷ The scientific worldview had to be 'opened more widely, so that man can perceive nature. [This is] a higher form of objectivity'.³⁸ Here, the meaning of 'objectivity' differed from the mechanical or structural objectivity discussed in recent times by, among others, the historians Lorraine Daston, Peter Galison and Theodore Porter.³⁹ Barge and Buytendijk's search for synthesis related to matters of faith: by re-enchanting nature, they introduced space to re-accommodate God's existence in the realm of science. According to Buytendijk, the unity and reciprocity of form, function, and lifestyle could only be understood by 'the plenitude of his Person, which encompasses the meaning of all things. The broken unity will be restored and man is brought back to the eternal source of all truth and life'.⁴⁰ With the parts of an organism at hand and their fundamental unity firmly established before the mind's eye, the biologist's understanding of life would reach deeper and be more objective than ever before.

The race question of the 1930s

The search for synthesis reached beyond the boundaries of scientific enquiry. The scientific convictions of these intellectuals intertwined with ideas about the individual and society. An example of this is the biologist Jordan, whose reasoning about synthesis became more politically charged after the Wall Street Crash of 1929.⁴¹ Seeing the social impact of economic crisis and witnessing the political developments in Germany and Italy, Jordan became interested in education and world peace. Teaching individuals to think synthetically would prepare them to deal with society's complexities and this in turn, would make them less vulnerable to demagoguery. For Buytendijk and Barge it was Nazi eugenics that triggered social engagement. 'The German national-socialist measures against so-called non-Aryans', Buytendijk wrote in the newspaper *De Telegraaf* in 1934,

35 According to Louis ter Steeg, Buytendijk's main objection against positivist science was that it was too rationalist. Exactly the opposite, however, was the case. A rationalist theory of knowledge claims that the source or the foundation of knowledge lies at least partly within the mind. Buytendijk objected to positivism because it was too empiricist and did not allow for any other source of knowledge than the senses. See: Louis ter Steeg, *'Een rijkere vorm van realisme'* (n. 21) 13.

36 Barge, 'Gewijzigde opvattingen' (n. 21) 203.

37 Buytendijk, *Over het verstaan der levensverschijnselen* (n. 21) 7.

38 Ibidem.

39 Lorraine Daston & Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York 2007); Theodore Porter, *Trust in Numbers. The Pursuit of Objectivity in Science and Public Life* (Princeton 1995).

40 Buytendijk, *Over het verstaan der levensverschijnselen* (n. 21) 25.

41 Baneke, 'Jordan en het intellectuele debat' (n. 7) 183–184.

‘put the race question before the entire world’.⁴² Buytendijk observed that the race question – sometimes phrased as ‘the Jewish question’ (*het Jodenvraagstuk*) – had become the topic of a fierce public debate.

It is difficult to establish what race and the race question exactly meant in the Netherlands during the 1930s. According to historian Jan Noordman the political developments in Germany had a profound influence on the Dutch eugenics movement, which became somewhat reluctant to voice its views on the social meaning of race.⁴³ Yet, as Ineke Mok has argued, historians should not overlook that, despite this reluctance, a widely shared discourse charged with racial classifications and hierarchies was present in Dutch society.⁴⁴ Moreover, the Dutch government took measures against ethnic minorities such as the Chinese and the Gypsies. Two government organizations were responsible for the registration of personal data to prepare for possible internment or even deportation; in some cases the Dutch government did in fact send Chinese people back ‘home’. The government also had a rather restrictive access policy for German Jews despite increasing evidence of their persecution. However, the establishment of the 1935 Nuremberg Laws and the *Kristallnacht* of November 1938 were generally condemned by the Dutch media. Especially after 1935 a large number of books and brochures was published that discussed these and other race-related issues. Societies, student associations and universities organized meetings where people could engage in debate.

Barge and Buytendijk’s involvement with these debates on race should be understood against the discussion about the social relevance of race. Although they differed from one another as to how they were involved, both started around 1934. In that year, the Leiden *Vrijzinnige Christelijke Studentenbond* (‘Liberal Christian Student Association’) invited three professors to provide a lecture on ‘the burning contemporary question: race and mind [*ras en geest*]’.⁴⁵ Next to Barge, who spoke about the concept of race, the famous historian Johan Huizinga (1872–1945) and the theologian Lambertus Jacobus van Holk (1893–1982) gave talks. Barge repeated this lecture on many occasions as evidenced by summaries and advertisements found in newspapers published between 1934 and 1939.⁴⁶ In addition, Barge’s article in *De rassen der menschheid* (‘The Races of Mankind’) emerged as a significant contribution to the public debate on race.⁴⁷ This 478-page book, edited by ethnologist and sociologist Sebald Rudolph Steinmetz (1862–1940), also contained contributions by

42 F.J.J. Buytendijk, ‘De beteekenis van het rassenvraagstuk’, *De Telegraaf* (1 January 1934) 9.

43 Noordman, *Om de kwaliteit van het nageslacht* (n. 1) 129.

44 R.J.M. Mok, *In de ban van het ras. Aardrijkskunde tussen wetenschap en samenleving, 1876–1992* (Amsterdam 1999) 281–288.

45 ‘Drie hoogleraren over het rassenvraagstuk. Ras en geest’, *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* (26 March 1934) 13; ‘Drie hoogleraren over het rassenvraagstuk. Ras en geest’, *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* (22 March 1934) 10; ‘Ras en geest’, *Het Vaderland* (1 March 1934) 10.

46 Barge was invited by, amongst others, the *Amsterdamsche Studentenvereniging voor Sociale Lezingen en Sociale Studie*, the *Museum voor Oudheden* in Leiden, the *Koninklijk Nederlandsch Aardrijkskundig Genootschap*, and the *Vereeniging voor Vrijheid en Recht*. The content of this lecture shall be discussed below. See: ‘Vereen. voor Vrijheid en Recht. Professorale beschouwingen’, *Het Vaderland* (23 May 1936) 5; ‘Kon. Ned. Aardrijkskundig Genootschap. Over anthropologie en de anthropologische samenstelling van het Nederlandsche Volk’, *Het Vaderland* (14 January 1936) 10; ‘Rassenkenmerken van ons volk. Voor de beoordeling van andere rassen blijft oud-christelijke naastenliefde geboden’, *De Telegraaf* (4 March 1936) 14; ‘Het rassenvraagstuk. Lezing van prof. dr. Barge’, *De Tijd* (16 December 1938) 7.

47 To a large extent Barge’s contribution resembled the talk he gave on so many occasions. See: J.A.J. Barge, ‘Anthropologie’, in: S.R. Steinmetz, J.A.J. Barge, A.L. Hagendoorn & R. Steinmetz, *De rassen der menschheid. Wording, strijd en toekomst* (Amsterdam 1938) 1–128.

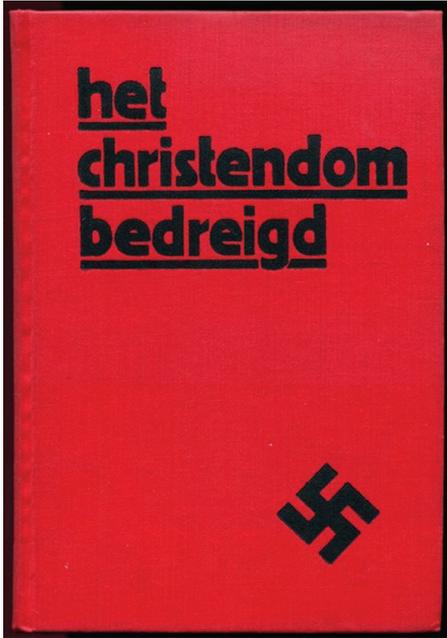


Fig. 4: Cover of the book in which Buytendijk published his article 'Rassenwaan en medische wetenschap'. The volume was a protest against Nazi ideology. The swastika represented what it rejected rather than embraced. The full title *Het christendom bedreigd door rassenwaan en jodenhaat. Een internationale protest*, translates as 'Christianity Threatened by Racism and Antisemitism. An International Protest'. (Amsterdam: Fidelitas, 1936, first edition). (Bron: Utrecht University Library)

leading Dutch geneticist Arend Lourens Hagedoorn (1885–1953) and Steinmetz' son Rudolf Steinmetz (1900–1979). Convinced that human qualities were inherited, S.R. Steinmetz formulated a eugenics program to stimulate procreation of the better social classes and abolish aid to the feeble and weak.⁴⁸ The volume's aim was to have the 'important', but 'controversial problem' of race discussed by experts for a 'civilized audience'.⁴⁹

While Buytendijk did not lecture on the race problem as often as Barge, he wrote on the subject frequently. Between 1934 and 1939, he produced around fifteen newspaper articles and book reviews in which he expressed his thoughts and concerns about the public discussion on race. Initially these articles appeared in *De Telegraaf*, but as the newspaper became more rightwing, and Buytendijk himself gradually converted to Catholicism, he began to publish in the Catholic newspaper *De Tijd*. Another contribution, entitled 'Rassenwaan en medische wetenschap' ('Racial Delusion and the Medical Sciences'), appeared in the book *Het christendom bedreigd door rassenwaan en jodenhaat* ('Christianity Threatened by Racism and Antisemitism'), which contained essays by authors from several European countries (fig. 4).⁵⁰ The only time Buytendijk expressed his ideas about race in a public lecture was in 1939 at the Nijmegen Seminar.

The 1939 Seminar on the Race Question

So far, Buytendijk and Barge's ideas have appeared together, because their theoretical work on the foundation and methodology of the life sciences can be understood as part of a

48 Pols, 'Eugenics in the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies' (n. 2) 349.

49 S.R. Steinmetz, 'Een woord vooraf', in: Steinmetz et al., *De rassen der menschheid* (n. 47) VII–XIV, esp. XII.

50 F.J.J. Buytendijk, 'Rassenwaan en medische wetenschap', in: *Het christendom bedreigd door rassenwaan en jodenhaat. Een internationaal protest* (Amsterdam 1936) 28–36.

similar search for synthesis. On February 4, 1939 these protagonists physically met at the Nijmegen Seminar on the Race Question. Ironically, it was during this event that the differences between Buytendijk and Barge became clear.

The incentive to organize the Nijmegen Seminar on the Race Question came from Fascist Italy. On 14 July 1938 the Italian Fascist Party issued an article on 'Fascism and Racial Problems' in *Giornale d'Italia*.⁵¹ This article presented the official Fascist standpoint regarding race. It stated, among other things, that 'the concept of race is a purely biological concept' and it proclaimed that 'Jews do not belong to the Italian race'.⁵² The Vatican responded immediately and on the 29th of July the Pope declared that the Catholic Church did not want to divide the human family, and that racism and exaggerated nationalism were barriers that tore God's people apart.⁵³

Two months earlier, the *Sacra Congregatio de Seminariis et Studiorum Universitatibus* of the Vatican circulated a document among Catholic universities in which these institutions were encouraged to fight 'contemporary errors' [in Dutch: 'dwalingen'].⁵⁴ The document summarized these 'errors' in eight points, including the propositions that race determined moral and intellectual character, that racial purity was the most important aim in life, and that every means was justified to achieve this end. Together with the *Rooms-Katholieke charitatieve vereeniging voor geestelijke volksgezondheid* ('Catholic Charitable Association for Public Mental Health'), the Catholic University in Nijmegen organized the Seminar on the Race Question in response to this publication. During his opening speech, the university's rector explained that the Seminar's aim was, first and foremost, to gather expert knowledge. At that moment the Catholic University did not yet have a faculty of natural sciences.⁵⁵ Apart from Barge and Buytendijk, who spoke on racial morphology and physiology, a third speaker at the seminar provided a lecture on racial psychology. In addition, an impressive collection of pictures, reconstructions and gypsums of torsos, skulls, and brains was exhibited.⁵⁶ Newspapers reported that the seminar was attended by a large audience; all the seats in the University's auditorium had been taken.⁵⁷

Barge: premature synthesis

From his days as a student of Lodewijk Bolk, Barge had been engaged in physical-anthropological research.⁵⁸ By 1939 he had become one of the Netherlands' prime experts in the field. His contribution to *De rassen der menscheid* contained detailed morphological descriptions of people of various ethnical backgrounds and included over a hundred illustrations. The validity of racial-morphological research was therefore beyond question for Barge. It was rather the populist character of the debate on race that Barge lamented. In his view, the

51 Aaron Gillette, 'The Origins of the Manifesto of Racial Scientists', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 6 (2001) 305–323.

52 Michele Sarfatti (translation by John & Anne C. Tedschi), *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy. From Equality to Persecution* (Madison & London 2006) 128.

53 'Rassenleer en Rassencultus', *Veritas. 14 daagsch katholiek blad* 6 (1938) 1.

54 'Openingswoord, uitgesproken door den rector magnificus Prof. Dr. Desiderius Franses, O.M.F.', in: J.A.J. Barge, F.J.J. Buytendijk & J.E. Schulte, *Het ras morfologisch, physiologisch en psychologisch beschouwd* (The Hague 1939) 1–4, esp. 2.

55 *Ibidem* 3. The Catholic University in Nijmegen was opened in 1923.

56 'Het rassenvraagstuk. Verder verloop der studiedagen te Nijmegen', *De Tijd* (6 February 1939) 2.

57 'Het rassenvraagstuk. Inleiding van Prof. Barge op den studiedag te Nijmegen', *De Tijd* (4 February 1939) 1.

58 Laurens de Rooy, *Lodewijk Bolk en de bloei van de Nederlandse anatomie* (Amsterdam 2011) 232–234.

scientific concept of 'race' had left the safe environment of the laboratory and had entered the domain of public opinion. As an inevitable result, the concept had become subject to hollow sloganeering. Barge's argument resembled his views on the causes of the First World War, namely the irresponsible popularization of Darwinism. 'What we are experiencing at this very moment', Barge stated, 'is a renewed confusion caused by the premature synthesis of the results obtained from physical and psychological anthropology'.⁵⁹

As it had been crucial for intellectuals to examine their former conceptual apparatus after the First World War had ended, Barge argued that his contemporaries had the duty to scrutinize the meaning of 'race'. Throughout his lecture, Barge selected his words carefully in order to convey to the audience what could and what could not be determined on the basis of adequate scientific methods. Crucial to his argumentation was his definition of race. In Barge's understanding, race was a natural-scientific concept that belonged to comparative anatomy. It was used to analyze and compare organic forms with one another. On the basis of such an analysis, organisms could be categorized into groups, which could be fitted into larger morphological systems. Applied to human beings, 'race' designated 'a large group of human individuals that is distinguished from another group by a number of shared physical features'.⁶⁰ Barge emphasized that psychological characteristics did not fit his definition. No a priori reasons accounted for this, because it was theoretically possible that a set of psychological characteristics applied to a specific race and, in fact, Barge did not doubt that this was the case. But whether it was true or not had to be established empirically and Barge claimed that scientists lacked trustworthy methods to do so. Moreover, an individual's psychology or personality did not solely depend on his or her physical makeup. Barge concluded that 'education, social milieu, geographic milieu, history, tradition, and most importantly someone's free will are all factors that determine an individual's psychological and moral structure'.⁶¹ It would prove an extremely demanding task to disentangle these factors and identify which psychological traits were inherent to a particular race.

The morphological facts collected by Barge and other physical anthropologists were facts waiting for future synthesis. The idea that race determined character was wild speculation. As long as anthropology did not establish itself as a normative science, only one fundamental Christian value could guide moral conduct: 'love thy fellow man as much as thyself'.

Buytendijk: race as attitude

'From my point of view', Buytendijk wrote in 1938 to his close friend and literary historian Wilhelmus Johannes Maria Antonius Asselbergs (1903–1968), better known under his pen name Anton van Duinkerken, 'there is something fundamentally wrong with Dutch anti-Semitism, and I think it is about time that someone says that straight out'.⁶² Right after

59 'Over [...] de anthropologische samenstelling van het Nederlandse volk' (n. 46) 10.

60 J.A.J. Barge, 'Het ras morphologisch beschouwd', in: J.A.J. Barge, F.J.J. Buytendijk & J.E. Schulte, *Het ras morphologisch, physiologisch en psychologisch beschouwd* (The Hague 1939) 5–22, esp. 9.

61 *Ibidem* 21.

62 Letter from Buytendijk to Anton van Duinkerken, 30 May 1938, in: Lap & Struyker Boudier, *Tijdingen* (n. 8) 74. Buytendijk was referring to the writings of the Dutch humanist H.J. Pos. Buytendijk did not agree with Pos upon the question how National Socialism had to be countered. In Buytendijk's view, Pos believed that Nazism could be stopped by appealing to rational and moral arguments. Buytendijk opposed this position. Peter Derkx has argued that Buytendijk took antisemitism to be a religious issue, not a scientific one; anti-Semites, Derkx continues, therefore had to be converted rather than rationally convinced. Although I propose in this article

Barge's lecture, Buytendijk stood up and replied that Barge made a mistake by leaving psychological characteristics out of his definition. From Buytendijk's synthetic point of view, man was the unity of both mind and body. Barge answered that Buytendijk was right, but repeated his argument that it was irresponsible to include the unknown in a scientific definition.⁶³ In his 1938 review of *De rassen der menscheid*, Buytendijk had expressed similar concerns about Barge's approach. Despite the anatomist's suggestion that morphological findings should be synthesized with racial psychology, his contribution unintentionally radiated positivism and naturalism. After all, Barge implicitly suggested that it was possible to separate the bodily aspects of race from human psychology and history, which, according to Buytendijk, was unscientific and, frankly, plain nonsense.⁶⁴

Buytendijk, too, saw similarities between the popularization of Darwinism and materialism during the second half of the nineteenth century and the problem of race of his own times, though he deemed the new materialism to be more systematic and refined, and therefore more dangerous. What both had in common was the belief that 'a fragmented experience is artificially combined into a system that is presented to the people as a scientific anthropology.'⁶⁵ The scientific community, Buytendijk continued, was therefore obliged to respond by acknowledging its ignorance. With respect to physiology – the subject of his lecture – it needed to be made clear that it was extremely difficult, if not impossible, to detect heritable factors in physiological processes. The ways in which body and mind, constitution and character, and predisposition and personal appearance related to one another remained a mystery.

During his lecture in Nijmegen, Buytendijk listed some of the difficulties racial physiologists had to face. First, there were the plasticity of physiological function and what Buytendijk called the 'principle of compensation'. Physiological plasticity implied that heritable factors were moldable: an organism's phenotype did not solely depend on genetic input, but likewise depended on a large number of external factors. The principle of compensation stated that the function of a damaged organ could be compensated by another part of the body, which would result in similar phenotypes. Another problem for racial physiologists was the prohibition of human experimentation. Therefore, knowledge could only be produced on the basis of indirect evidence. Moreover, Buytendijk maintained that physiology lacked a thorough analysis of basically every bodily function. Without complete insight into these processes, it would be difficult to determine what role hereditary factors had.⁶⁶

The fundamental flaw, however, in a purely biological approach to human race was its disharmony with the nature of its very subject: the human being. At the beginning of his lecture, Buytendijk explained to his audience that vital processes can only be understood in relation to their final cause. Bodily processes work together towards the realization of form

that scientific ideals did in fact inform Buytendijk's criticism against antisemitism, Buytendijk did maintain that Christian values were crucial in fighting National Socialism. See: Peter Derkx, 'Het humanisme van H.J. Pos. Metafysica tegen nationaal-socialisme en kapitalisme', in: Peter Derkx et al. (eds.), *Voor menselijkheid of tegen godsdienst. Humanisme in Nederland, 1850–1960* (Hilversum 1998) 132–146, 133–135.

63 'Het rassenvraagstuk. Verder verloop' (n. 56) 2.

64 B.[uytendijk], 'Het vraagstuk der rassen. Een omvangrijk boek', *De Tijd* (28 August 1938) 5.

65 Buytendijk, 'Rassenwaan en medische wetenschap' (n. 50) 33–34.

66 F.J.J. Buytendijk, 'Het ras physiologisch beschouwd', in: J.A.J. Barge, F.J.J. Buytendijk & J.E. Schulte, *Het ras morphologisch, physiologisch en psychologisch beschouwd* (The Hague 1939) 23–62, esp. 27–28.

and, at the same time, organic form influences physiology. In consequence, both the past and the future partook in present physiological processes: the past provides the material that in the present is molded in the shape of a future form. The key difference between humans and other organisms was that for human beings the past had a specific form, namely history, culture, and tradition. This is related to another, even more crucial difference: humans have a mind, and mind influences matter. Since in Buytendijk's view, mind and body were a dialectic unity, he considered it to be impossible to separate the two.⁶⁷ Buytendijk illustrated these philosophical ideas by means of the example of a 'youthful negro'. The boy's activities depended on the culture of his tribe, but the activities themselves – dancing, singing, fighting – were purely physical. As a result, the rhythm of his movements, and more generally, how the boy would organize his life, would become a certain 'typology' which could only be termed physiological.⁶⁸ It was impossible to separate psychological and cultural from physiological processes. Yet, in the end, it was the mind that shaped the body and not the other way around. 'Race', Buytendijk concluded his lecture, 'is characterized, above all, by one's attitude towards life, his mental style, in which present, past, and future are harmonized; this attitude is expressed in physicality, even if the physiological functions themselves are retracted from one's consciousness.'⁶⁹

Concluding remarks

In the wake of the First World War, and in confrontation with economic malaise and political turmoil, old ideas intensified and new ones developed. This article aimed to investigate the relation between two of these: synthetic reasoning in the life sciences and the race question of the 1930s. Following Noordman, Pols explained the lack of success of the Dutch eugenics movement by pointing at the strong influence of confessionals on civil society. In addition, Pols observed, eugenicists themselves generally emphasized the need for further research; practical application was seldom proposed. German theories of biological reductionism and racial purity were deemed unscientific. The two case-studies discussed in this paper support the picture of a connection between, on the one hand, the search for synthesis and, on the other hand, Dutch objections against biological reductionism and eugenics. Confronted with a crisis in culture and science, Barge and Buytendijk, like other confessionals, blazed a trail for a new, Christianized style of scientific reasoning.⁷⁰ As the product of a decades-long movement towards naturalization and mechanization, the life sciences had become incapable of understanding and explaining natural phenomena. Scientists like Barge and Buytendijk drew inspiration from Neo-Thomist and Neo-Calvinist theology in an attempt to revitalize science with notions of formal unity and organic teleology. German racial science, they argued, posed a threat to fundamental Christian values and was out of tune with what they conceived to be the scientific melodies of the future.

In her study of holism in German culture, Anne Harrington has shown that the history of the concept of *Ganzheit* (wholeness) is partially covered by its 'racialization' and absorption into National Socialist ideology.⁷¹ For one, National Socialists imagined the state to

67 Lap & Struyker Boudier, 'Inleiding', *Tijdingen* (n. 8) 13–51, esp. 18.

68 Buytendijk, 'Het ras physiologisch beschouwd' (n. 66) 25.

69 Ibidem 59–60. Buytendijk defended a similar position in 1934. See: F.J.J. Buytendijk, 'Het rassenvraagstuk. Ras als houding', *De Telegraaf* (2 February 1934) 11.

70 Flipse, *Christelijke wetenschap* (n. 11) 286–290.

71 Anne Harrington, *Reenchanted Science. Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler* (Princeton 1996) 184.

be an organically integrated whole. Being more than the sum of its parts, the individual was subordinate to the state which, in the words of the German holistic psychologist Felix Krueger (1874–1948), ‘must continue to exist over all else.’⁷² ‘It is given to people,’ he continued, ‘that they may recognize that which is *un-whole* in their being, that is to say, opposed to life and hostile to development. They must make a sacrifice of their imperfection [...]’⁷³ Synthetic rhetoric, in other words, could provide support for eugenicist policy. A National Socialist discourse on holism was also applied to man’s cognitive abilities. Jewish thinking was, for example, characterized as chaotic, mechanic, and fragmented; ‘the healthy non-Jew’, on the other hand, ‘unifies, builds up – he thinks in terms of wholes.’⁷⁴ Harrington shows that many German holistic psychologists and biologists were willing to play their part in the creation of a National Socialist ideal state.

Harrington’s work raises the question how Barge and Buytendijk responded to the work of those Nazi scientists who made use of a comparable synthetic conceptual scheme. Whereas Barge criticized certain German scientists for legitimizing eugenicist policy without any form of scientific substantiation, Buytendijk more explicitly questioned their faithfulness to the epistemic value of objectivity. During his Nijmegen lecture, Buytendijk took ample time to discuss the ‘biologically-underpinned psychological anthropology’ of Erich Rudolf Jaensch (1883–1940), a representative of the so-called Marburg school of holistic psychology and ‘one of the most prominent representatives of German science.’⁷⁵ During the 1920s, Jaensch developed a bio-psychological typology in which individuals were categorized according to the level of integration of their mental functions and their relation to the outer world. Brought to its essence, Jaensch contrasted between a superior ‘Northern integration type’ and an inferior ‘Jewish-liberal dissolution type.’⁷⁶ Buytendijk judged Jaensch’ work to be worthwhile of considering, because rather than plain description, the German bio-psychologist endeavored to ‘reveal essences’ (*wezenskenmerken*). Yet after Buytendijk exposed some of the flaws in publications of Jaensch and his students, he concluded that it ‘so clearly presents an adoration of “Arians” and an evident contempt for Jews, half-Jews, the French, etc., that it has to be called a disgrace to German science.’⁷⁷ In Buytendijk’s understanding the search for synthesis comprised a quest for a higher form of objectivity, one that could be grasped in the light of divine providence alone.

The search for synthesis was no monolith. Synthesis and its German counterpart *Ganzheit* refer to a group of intellectuals whose ideas showed family resemblances, but which could be endowed with very different political and/or religious meanings. This also brings us to the heart of the tension between Barge and Buytendijk. Although their research into the foundations of life sciences showed strong similarities, their minds diverted on the question what synthesis meant in relation to the public meaning of race. To Barge, synthesis

72 Felix Krueger, cited in: *Ibidem* 185.

73 *Ibidem*.

74 Physician Alfred Böttcher, cited in: Harrington, *Reenchanted Science* (n. 71) 184.

75 Buytendijk, ‘Het ras physiologisch beschouwd’ (n. 66) 52.

76 Harrington, *Reenchanted Science* (n. 71) 181–182.

77 Buytendijk, ‘Het ras physiologisch beschouwd’ (n. 66) 58. In her study of German holism, Harrington discusses the relation between Hans Driesch and Nazi scientists who drew inspiration from Driesch’ work, even though the biologist himself explicitly opposed the Nazi regime. ‘In the present time,’ Driesch wrote in 1932, ‘feeling has become popular, while reason has been denigrated. This kind of contempt of the intellect is, however, incredibly one-sided. All progress in culture is indebted to properly applied intellect’. See: *Ibidem* 188–193.

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foremost signified the integration of scientific disciplines. Accordingly, race was a biological factor that undoubtedly determined individual physical and psychological characteristics, yet it was premature for scientists to establish exactly how. Buytendijk's starting point, on the other hand, was the strong conviction that an organism's morphology, physiology, and psychology form a harmonious totality in which each part influences the whole and, conversely, the whole influences each part. In the form of life shared by human beings, the past comes as history and tradition. These ideas not only shape human culture, but also human physicality; race is historically constructed and no biological given. To study morphology or physiology in separation from the human mind would not only distort scientific understanding of human beings, but could also serve political ends that ran against the most fundamental values of Christianity.