FREDERIK VAN EEDEN AND THE INTRODUCTION OF SIGNIFICS INTO THE NETHERLANDS: FROM LADY WELBY TO MANNOURY

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Just now I have a friend staying here of whom the world will soon I think hear something though he carries modesty to extremes. I mean F. van Eeden the Dutch poet. (Lady Welby to W. Fuller, letter of Feb. 7, 1906)

1. A Sketch of the Signific Movement in the Netherlands

Aside from the extensive Dutch signific literature, which has remained practically unknown outside the Netherlands, the literature on Lady Welby and her significs contains almost no reference to that aspect of Lady Welby’s impact which has proved most significant from the standpoint of scientific history, namely, the signific movement in the Netherlands. This is all the more astounding considering that representatives of all major scientific disciplines participated in this movement from 1937 on and that a total of ten International Signific Summer Conferences took place between 1939 and 1954 with contributions by renowned scientists from various Western countries such as Piaget, Denk, Ph. Frank, C. Cherry, and L.E.J. Brouwer. Furthermore, close ties existed between the Dutch significians on the one hand and the Vienna Circle, the Unity of Science Movement, Arne Naess and his collaborators and the circle of Swiss scholars associated with the periodical Dialectica on the other hand through the medium of the journal Synthese which was published by the significians from 1936 to 1963 and was the most important published organ of the movement, not to mention numerous personal contacts.

In light of its approach and topics, it is just as surprising that after the late 50’s the signific movement shared the fate of Lady Welby’s writings in that it sank into oblivion in international circles. For significians concentrated their
studies on questions of communication and sign theory, a rudimentary speech act theory, and the theoretical foundations of mathematics, natural, and social sciences. Anyone who ventures today upon an intensive study of the significants' extensive publications will repeatedly encounter issues which are still relevant, stimulating ideas, and occasionally theses and concepts which are startling in their early formulations of "modern" scientific inquiries. Familiarization with this body of work leads to the realization that it embodies a broad philosophical tradition of relevance to current discussions of science, and has more than merely historical or sociological interest.

However, before the signific works can yield results for present issues, a preliminary historical study of the signific movement must be undertaken so that the respective texts can be understood in their historical and intellectual context. This requires, first of all, focusing on the rise of the signific movement, that is, the events and factors leading to the introduction and adoption of Lady Welby's significs in the Netherlands. However, before turning to this matter, I would like to summarize the history of the movement to clarify and describe the significance and repercussions of van Eeden's intercession between Lady Welby and Dutch scholars which played such a major role in this process.

In the fall of 1912, the Dutch poet and lawyer Jacob Israël de Haan (1881–1924) published an article with the topical title "Nieuwe rechtstaalphilosophie" (New Philosophy of Legal Language) (de Haan 1912) in a law journal. There, in the first paragraph, de Haan introduces his readers to a "new philosophy of language":

"On Saturday the 30th of March, 1912, Lady Victoria Welby, the founder of a new philosophy of language which she called significs — a name which has been adopted by English and American philosophers — died in Harrow on the Hill near London at the age of 75. The authoress characterizes significs as: the philosophy of Significance, that is: the philosophy of the human capacity of expression. Language is not only the means of human expression and signifies therefore encompasses more than the philosophy of language: the philosophy of expression. For the student of significs, the other means of expression are also of interest: music, painting, sculpture, chemical and mathematical formulas, geometric figures, gestures. Yet verbal language is certainly the most usual and best known means of expression and (practically the same thing) of relations. For this reason, the significian is well advised to start with the phenomenon of language." (de Haan 1912: 480f)

To be sure, de Haan was, in this article, the first to introduce Lady Welby's communication oriented theory of signs to the Netherlands. And in so doing, he coined the Dutch equivalents to her central terms "sense", "meaning", and "significance", namely "Zin" (sense), "Bedoeling" (intention), and "Waarde"
(value) (de Haan 1912: 497) and used them in his analyses of legal language. Nevertheless, it was the poet, psychiatrist, and social reformer Frederik Willem van Eeden (1860–1932) who was the first to use the designation “significa” (significes) (van Eeden 1908b: 224) and to publish the first signific study in the Netherlands, his treatise on “Redekunstige grondslag van verstandhouding” (Logical basis of mutual understanding) (van Eeden 1897). But in this article he did not specifically cite significs or its founder, Lady Welby. Through the mediation of van Eeden, who had known and maintained close personal contact with Lady Welby since 1892, the products of signific thought entered the Netherlands and Germany as well.

It therefore appears to be no mere coincidence that de Haan prefaced his above mentioned article by three quotations as mottos, one sentence each from publications by Lady Welby, F. van Eeden, and Volker, i.e. the German author Erich Gutkind (1877–1965). For he chose quotations which document that criticizing language as an unreliable and inadequate means of expression was a cross-cultural phenomenon (cf. for example Mauthner, K. Kraus, Wittgenstein, Benjamin) and that there were numerous scientific and practical reformist efforts to improve, or at least better to understand, knowledge and communication based on symbols. Second, van Eeden’s role as mediator could be reflected at least by the order of the quotes, since the first person in Germany he introduced to Lady Welby’s significs was Erich Gutkind, followed by Gustav Landauer (1870–1919), Martin Buber (1878–1965), Florens Christian Rang (1864–1924), and others with whom he eventually founded the so-called “Forte-Kreis” (Forte Circle) in 1914. The goals of this circle, which did not even last through the first year of World War I, included, at least for van Eeden, the creation of verbal means of expression suitable for carrying out interpersonal communication of spiritual powers and values in a clear and lucid manner, thereby effectively counteracting misuse of language in this area.

At the same time, de Haan, following the example and pointers of van Eeden, began to develop and to expound on in numerous publications (cf. de Haan 1916a; 1916b; 1919) his “significs of law”. Then during World War I the institution of an association of Dutch scientists, who were for very different personal, social, and scientific reasons interested in signific research, came into being, once again under the strong influence of van Eeden. Along with van Eeden and de Haan, other members of this society who should be noted were: L.E.J. Brouwer (1881–1966) who not only contributed to the foundations of topology and founded intuitionistic mathematics, but was at the same time a mystic and philosopher; Gerrit Mannoury (1867–1956), mathematician and philosopher, one of Brouwer’s teachers; finally, the sinologist and author Henri
Borel (1869–1933) who, like de Haan, was a crony of van Eeden. During this period the position of Dutch signific research, which is, to be sure, based on Lady Welby’s critique of terminology and sign theory (cf. Schmitz 1985: lxxvii ff., xxi ff.), but in many respects goes far beyond them, was developed in regular group workshops and in joint and private publications. The phenomenon of such noteworthiness from the standpoint of a sociology of science which, since the 30’s, has been called the “signific movement” resulted finally from the cooperation of scientists from widely varying disciplines for the purpose of joint signific research, from the capability of de Haan and Mannoury to incorporate significs in their teaching at the University of Amsterdam, and from the echo of this work among other scholars.

The scientific and social reform goals of the “Internationaal Instituut voor Wijsbegeerte te Amsterdam” (International Institute for Philosophy, Amsterdam), which was the first formal society of significians, founded in 1917, were obviously too ambitious and proved inachieviable due to financial difficulties and above all due to the divergent, in part irreconcilable positions of the members. Then, in 1922, a small group of remaining members—Brouwer, van Eeden, Mannoury, and the linguist, psychologist and theologian Jacques van Ginneken, S.J. (1877–1945)—founded the “Signifische Kring” (Signific Circle). This group redefined significs as going beyond a critical examination of language and linguistic synthesis (creation of new concepts and words). Instead, they intended for significs to shed light on combinations of words and on needs and tendencies of the human mind, thereby touching on social and mental conditions of mankind in a more general way. In addition to von Eeden’s deteriorating health, renewed drastic disagreements as to significs’ primary focus and the hierarchy of the Signific Circle’s goals led to the dissolution of the Circle in 1926.

The respective points of disssion among the Dutch significians from their first formation till 1926 reflect the different orientations toward Lady Welby’s significs. For we find therein three different points of emphasis: an analysis based on the theory of signs of the phenomena of “meaning” and “interpretation” in processes of communication and knowing; the signific critique of terminology; and the educational and social reform goals of significs (cf. Schmitz 1985). Regardless of how a particular significian interpreted Lady Welby’s approach and intended to develop it with his colleagues, Lady Welby’s significs remained until 1926 at least implicitly a point of orientation. This includes Mannoury, who steadily gained influence over the further development of significs throughout the years and finally became the dominant figure in the signific movement. For despite his rejection of Lady Welby’s theory of signs,
the foundations of which he considered too vague and arbitrary (cf. Mannoury 1949: 12f), he was a steadfast admirer of Lady Welby's acute and broadly relevant critique of terminology.

Not until the dissolution of the Signific Circle did Dutch signifers emancipate itself from Lady Welby's stance. She was subsequently mentioned only in treatises on the movement's own history. At first it was Mannoury alone who continued to handle signific problems in his publications and teaching, whereby he further developed the theory of signifiers on a relativistic psychological basis and kept interest in signifiers alive in the Netherlands. The main impetus for further attention to signifiers came from the founding of the journal Synthese. Maandblad voor het Geestesleven van onze Tijd (Synthese. Monthly publication for Ideas of Our Time) in 1936 by a younger generation of scholars from various disciplines, a majority of whom had turned their attention to signifiers. The psychologist David Vuysje (1900–1969), who – like Otto Neurath for the Vienna Circle and the Unity of Science Movement – became the propagator and organizer of the signific movement in the Netherlands and other Western countries, was the editor who played the most important role. At the instigation of the editors of Synthese, Mannoury's students and followers along with other scholars interested in signifiers founded the "Internationale Signifische Studiegroep" (International Group for the Study of Signifiers) in 1937. Among others, Otto Neurath joined this group, a fact which documents the similarities of goals of the late Vienna Circle and the Unity of Science Movement on the one hand and of the signific movement on the other just as clearly as does their cooperation from the 30's to the early 50's. At the same time, contacts with scientists in France, Switzerland, Germany, Norway, England, and the U.S.A. were initiated. Thus the significans had every right to call their association the "International Signifisch Genootschap" (International Society for Signifiers) when they joined forces once again in 1948 following the interruption of their public cooperation by the German occupation of the Netherlands. The international nature of the movement came most clearly to the fore in the international Signific Summer Conferences between 1939 and 1954.

But with Mannoury's death in 1956, it became apparent that the continued existence of the movement as a working interdisciplinary group of scholars as well as continued refining of the substance of signifiers was too strongly connected to the work of Mannoury and the mathematician David van Dantzig (1900–1959), his student. Not even the appointment of David Vuysje to the post of external lector for signifiers at the University of Amsterdam in 1961
could halt the decline of the movement, nor could it keep signifies from sinking into oblivion from about the beginning of the 60's.

By founding the periodical Methodology and Science in 1968 as the successor to the old Synthese and by conducting rather small meetings on a more or less informal, personal level, the psychiatrist P.H. Esser (Haarlem), a member of the signific movement since the 30's, has been trying up to the present to support the cohesiveness of a few remaining significians and to support continued interest in signifies. Nevertheless, the present “International Signifisch Genootschap” is a mere shadow of its former self and deals almost exclusively with topics from history, i.e. with ideas and topics of previous significians. Therefore, a revival of the signific movement seems unlikely, despite the renewed recent interest in signific studies from the last 70 years. But this does not by any means mean that the signific tradition with its methods has lost its relevance or timeliness for modern research on semiotics or communication.

What exactly did the Dutch significians mean by significs? Well, from the movement’s beginnings with van Eeden’s first contact with Lady Welby to the end of the Signific Circle this view of their own research approach took on different forms and was always debated, at least with respect to details, among significians. For example, de Haan did actually use the terms “Significa” or “Signifiek”, but he soon changed to “semasiology” and “semantics”, and he translated all three concepts as “the study of meaning”, which along with “the study of sounds” constituted “the science of language” (de Haan 1916: 1). However, the signific movement did not adopt this definition of signifies, which was already in opposition to Lady Welby’s description of “Significs” (cf. Welby 1911: 79). Of course the designation “signifika” or “significa” was retained, but in addition “psycholinguistiek” (psycholinguistics) was also used, most of all by the psychologist D. Vuysje. By so doing, Vuysje gave clear expression to the significians’ subsequent general acceptance of Mannoury’s definition of signifies without departing from the distinction between signifies and the more linguistically oriented disciplines which was traditionally part of the signific approach. For in 1953, for example, Vuysje wrote:

Signifies aims at an investigation of the acts of communication, i.e., of acts by which living beings try to influence the behavior and the activities of other living beings. In a somewhat narrower acception it may be described as the scientific study of the mental associations underlying the human acts of communication excluding the more specific departments of the science of language in the proper sense, like philology, etymology, semantics. (Vuysje 1953: 228)
In closing, let us consider two definitions by Mannoury, the undisputed authority of the signific movement:

Signifies or the science of the laws of association in processes of communicating is a method of investigating the meaning of communicative acts or speech acts (spoken or written words, facial expression, gestures, etc.) which has been widely used in the last decades, whereby the psychological phenomena underlying these activities are placed in the forefront. (Winkler Prins 1953, vol. 16: 624; author: G. Mannoury)

By the science of signifies we mean

[... ] the systematic study of the general and particular speech acts with respect to their substantive content of will, feeling, and conceptualization (Mannoury 1935: 86).

Thus the recently expressed view of signifies as a uniquely Dutch form of scientific endeavor dealing primarily with fundamental problems of mathematics and social science (cf. for example van Nieuwstadt 1978: 341), is not exactly false, but it is one-sided. Even the “signifische varia” by Mannoury, written very informally, are more accurate about it. There he states:

Wait a moment! I just thought of something. And now, all of a sudden, I know what signifies really is: naturally nothing else but the customs officers stationed at the customs office to make sure no misunderstandings or “pseudo problems” get smuggled in! (Mannoury 1939: 570)

The Dutch significians cared about more than the treatment of special problems involved in knowing mediated by symbols. They also addressed themselves to the analysis of interaction by means of signs, namely communication, and these two goals more than anything else constitute the affinity of their studies to those of V. Lady Welby even though their respective methods are not at all identical.

2. Van Eeden’s Contact with Lady Welby and the Creation of His Treatise on “Logical Basis of Mutual Understanding”

Frederik van Eeden is certainly the most striking and versatile personality among Dutch men of letters at the turn of the century. As a poet, psychiatrist, and social reformer whose works encompass the most divergent intellectual and social trends of his day, he strikes me as being a more eloquent spokesman for the cultural situation in the Netherlands at that time than any of his fellow writers, all the more because of his inner contradictions and his perception of
the sometimes painful but inevitable irreconcilability between the ideal and the real in all areas of life (cf. van Tricht 1934: 10f).

In the year of 1892, van Eeden was a delegate of the “Société d’Hypnologie et de Psychologie” at the International Congress of Experimental Psychology in London (August 1–4) where he spoke on “The Theory of Psycho-Therapeutics” (van Eeden 1892). Among the participants at the congress was Lady Welby, who distributed a lengthy critical pamphlet on terminology called “The Use of ‘Inner’ and ‘Outer’ in Psychology: Does the Metaphor Help or Hinder?” (Welby 1892) to those attending. Her purpose was to call the attention of a larger scientific audience to the problem of meaning and to recruit some of them to devote some special studies to this problem. Apparently Lady Welby considered van Eeden to be a scholar who was receptive to and possessed the necessary qualifications for working on the problem of meaning in language, communication, and knowledge as she had posed it. For she invited him to spend a few days at her mansion (Denton Manor) following the congress, and van Eeden did in fact visit her there from August 5–9.

Van Eeden’s presentation could not help but interest Lady Welby in him. For van Eeden’s statement of the principles of psychotherapy clearly and successfully attempts to clarify basic concepts by a short list of definitions which discuss the pros and cons of therapeutic methods and procedures and above all to underline the necessary theoretical and methodological distinction from hypnotism and the purely physiologically oriented medical theory of his day. In so doing, he made very perceptive terminological remarks, notably on “normal” and “abnormal”, to name but one dichotomy.

Although van Eeden talked about his first encounter with Lady Welby at various times and places (cf. van Eeden 1912: 82ff), neither what they talked about for those five days nor what effect the stay at Denton Manor had on van Eeden is known. Of course we should remember that at that time, Lady Welby had not yet completed work on her theoretical foundations of significs. It was not until 1890 and 1891 that she had begun to appear before a larger audience after the privacy of extensive correspondence with numerous distinguished scholars of her time (cf. Schmitz 1985: xxxviii ff). The stage her work had then reached is best represented by her article on “Meaning and Metaphor” (Welby 1893). There she starts with the problem of arbitrary use of metaphors and analogies leading to misunderstanding and proceeds to call for insight into the sign nature of language, which amounts to a clear distinction between sign and denotation. However, since this goes no farther toward guaranteeing successful interpersonal communication than does an effort to speak clearly, she also calls for a critique of existing ideas about what is metaphorical or literal and, most
Importantly, what is "plain meaning", in other words, a critique of false everyday ideas about how the process of communication works. Lady Welby herself accomplishes this critique in a rudimentary form, just as she critically examines language as it has been passed down containing outdated images which no longer conform to the state of scientific knowledge, thereby distorting and hindering thought. Throughout all these considerations and lines of argument, she maintains in accordance with her communication-oriented approach an equal balance between a concern with means of expression in speaking or writing and the analysis of the process of interpretation and understanding.

Probably they discussed topics such as these. At any rate, van Eeden was impressed by their conversations, but also — which is not without significance — by her personality and the aristocratic atmosphere which had been till then completely unfamiliar to him and about which he was on later occasions so enthusiastic. On August 6, he wrote in a letter:

I am learning a great deal, for Lady W. is an extraordinary person, quite special, I am going to bring back some of her books. It would be hard for you to imagine it too beautiful here ... Lady W. invited me into her study this morning and talked to me for three hours. Oh, she is a very exceptional woman. (van Eeden 1907: 65)

These lines make it quite clear, how much van Eeden was impressed by his stay at Denton Manor. Yet it is doubtful whether he fully understood Lady Welby's cause or the direction in which her work was leading her. This conclusion is corroborated by the subsequent evolution of their relations with each other and the following passage from a lecture held by van Eeden on March 13, 1918:

Now [at the time of the encounter with Lady Welby] I was myself already on the way to a critical insight into language. And I had already expressed it, but I was by no means close to a clear understanding of the matter, and it took years before I fully grasped, thanks to exchanging views and personal association, what Lady Welby was after. 3

This retrospective evaluation by van Eeden is substantiated by the entries in his diary, where, during a visit at Lady Welby's on January 20, 1904, he noted for the first time:

I realize now for the first time how important Lady Welby's purpose and insight are. This all is related to my work, too. It is the great, collective, international work of attaining wisdom. (van Eeden 1971–1972, II: 581)
Similar entries of this nature then followed in 1906, 1907, and 1908 (cf. van Eeden 1971–1972, II: 702, 849, 898).

But on the other hand, the timing of van Eeden’s encounter with Lady Welby and the writing of his treatise on the “Logical Basis of Mutual Understanding” seem to indicate that van Eeden’s new acquaintance with Lady Welby’s works and goals stimulated him to devote serious attention to the complex of topics surrounding language, knowledge, and communication. For at the time of his meeting with Lady Welby it had been three years since his last general publication on this area (“Gorter’s verzen”, 1889). Furthermore, even though it is true that van Eeden’s critical stance toward language was clearly recognizable even before 1892, still it alone does not explain the inception of his subsequent treatise. Rather, both the cultural and personal context must be considered. This context includes the new sensibility to language of the impressionistic poets, the influence of Multatuli and Shelley, the impact of romanticism on van Eeden with the concurrent rejection of rationalism in medicine and psychology, as well as the contemporary surge of interest in Spinoza and the influence of Lady Welby’s critique of language and terminology and her approach to a theory of signs.

To substantiate our contention that Lady Welby had this kind of influence, let us point out the temporal relationship between the further development of his contact with Lady Welby and the publication of van Eeden’s treatise. Lady Welby’s more theoretical influence has been documented in detail elsewhere (cf. Schmitz Ms.).

In addition to numerous new ideas (“But surely some new seed has fallen into me.” ⁵), van Eeden returned from his first visit to Denton Manor carrying books and numerous essays by Lady Welby, including her first book, Links and Clues (Welby 1883). Furthermore, contact between the two of them from then on was not limited to van Eeden’s visits to England. Rather, they both entered into a regular correspondence which was, however, characterized between 1895 and 1900 mainly by discussions about political events, especially England’s South African policy ⁶. The fact that despite this — especially on the part of van Eeden — strong disagreement of their mutual esteem and friendship did not suffer was taken by van Eeden as proof of an unusually strong and close bond having arisen between himself and Lady Welby (cf. van Eeden 1912: 83f).

On February 19, 1893, half a year after visiting Lady Welby, van Eeden next mentioned his new literary and scientific plans in his diary. The entry begins right off with plans for a new treatise:
This plan returns by and large to van Eeden’s intent of 1889 (‘Gorter’s verzen’) insofar as he aims to address those who have little understanding of poetical works and cannot be reached in this manner, and thus at the same time can be led to unlock the door to the realm of poetry.

That this was in fact supposed to be one of his new goals and techniques was disclosed to Lady Welby by van Eeden shortly thereafter (letter of Feb. 2, 1893; cf. van Eeden/Welby 1954: 8). And educational goals of this sort were of course also not disowned by Lady Welby. On the contrary, parallel to her scientific goals for significs, Lady Welby also always had pedagogic ones, even in her publications. For she believed that problems of interpersonal communication could at least be reduced only if signific insights were introduced as early as children’s education. In fact she even assumed that most social problems would not even occur if misunderstandings could be avoided by improved insight into the fundamentals of communication.

As early as 1893, van Eeden began drafting his treatise, the theme of which carried over into another work he was writing at the same time, “Het lied van schijn en wezen” (The Song of Appearances and True Nature)” (cf. van Eeden 1981). From July of 1893 on, he studied a number of philosophical works for both texts. Among them were works by Protagoras, Plato, Marcus Aurelius, Lucretius, Comte, Taine, Eduard von Hartmann, Schleiermacher, and primarily, Spinoza. Two other points of emphasis in his reading at that time were works of eastern Indian philosophy and various German and French mystics.

At the end of July, 1895, van Eeden again spent several days at Lady Welby’s and they renewed their long and involved talks about everything each of them was busy working on (cf. van Eeden 1907: 122ff; 1971–1972, I: 248). In order to be able to assess correctly the importance of these encounters between the two, there are two main aspects which must be considered. Ever since she began her studies on the philosophy of language and the theory of signs, Lady Welby had endeavored to call the attention of contemporary scholars to the problem of meaning which had, she felt, been neglected so long and to enlist their efforts in writing their own studies on the questions she had raised. Thus, she aspired first of all to point out problems to others and to stimulate them. She carried out this function by means of her extensive correspondence, her privately published essays, and small meetings or even conferences at her home. Her goal, namely, to one day see significs as an independent discipline with
distinguished scientists, was one she persevered in pursuing till her death in 1912, even though she had meanwhile herself became a recognized authority in this field.

As for van Eeden, we must keep in mind his close personal ties to Lady Welby as well as his admiration for her personality and her great learning. He was also very enthusiastic about the long, stimulating conversations which, after 1895 at the latest, he had to do without when he was in his own country. For in 1893 he ceased to work at the psychotherapeutic clinic in Amsterdam which he had helped to found, and had a falling out with his fellow writers associated with the periodical De Nieuwe Gids. He had become estranged from most of them. Thus, about 1895, van Eeden stood alone. For this reason, his correspondence and encounters with Lady Welby must have been very important to him, particularly at this time.

Special note should be taken of remarks by van Eeden from which it can be concluded that they did discuss at least the first versions of Lady Welby’s essay on “Sense, Meaning and Interpretation”, which was published in 1896 (cf. for example van Eeden 1971–1972, I: 348) and which is generally considered, and rightly so, to have laid the groundwork for signfics. For this essay combined ideas formulated in two manuscripts completed as early as 1894 (“Psychology and Significance” and “Logic and Significance”). It was composed in mid-year of 1895 (cf. Schmitz 1985: 1). Thus, it is probably safe to assume that at that time van Eeden had become familiar with Lady Welby’s sign theoretical concepts.

And yet there was at first little influence on van Eeden’s original views on knowledge and communication. For in the spring of 1896, when he received a copy of “Sense, Meaning and Interpretation” from Lady Welby, van Eeden did concur with the critique of science it contained, but without accepting her sign theoretical approach. He saw in it no basis for a practical solution of problems associated with knowledge mediated by signs and communication. In addition he found it difficult to understand her terms “sense”, “meaning”, and “significance” despite partial terminological agreement — for example he spoke of “woord-waarde” (word-value), while Lady Welby called it “value of a sign” (van Eeden/Welby 1954: 27; Welby 1896: 28). And so van Eeden proceeded in his letter to Lady Welby of Dec. 16, 1896, by informing her there about several theses that were of central importance for his treatise, to express for the first time the points on which their approaches differed. These differences persisted until 1909 in their exchange of letters, whereas they strangely enough started disappearing as early as 1904 in van Eeden’s diary.
As he expressed these differences, van Eeden’s path toward “purifying language” is poetry and only the poet can eliminate the problems which Lady Welby saw as requiring a unique science, namely signifies, to study them. While Lady Welby contends that scientific terms do not always have clearly defined meanings and cannot be permanently determined by definitions, van Eeden maintains the very opposite, at least with regard to the natural sciences:

I admit only two kinds of pure language i.e. a scientific and poetical. I think a book on physics pure, because every word has a unalterable worth, and allows free logical handling. But in every philosophical treatise the well-poised and unchangeable worth of words is lost, and this makes them as good as useless. (van Eeden/Welby 1954: 27)

Moreover, Lady Welby argued that the suggestiveness and flexibility of language are no more to be considered flaws calling for elimination than all ambiguity is and that they are rather inherent characteristics of language without which it would be impossible to communicate under constantly changing conditions. Van Eeden, on the other hand, claims precisely these qualities as pertaining solely to poetical language:

This worth of words in poetry is not unchangeable, but altering, alive, as I might say, like the notes in music, their worth changing with their environment of neighbours. You see, a musical note is a fixed thing, it has a fixed amount of vibrations, but its worth, or value – its effect – changes with the change of the surrounding notes. So does the worth of the poetical word. I see no possibility of intensifying or purifying the language but by poetical feeling, artistic intuition – or by not accepting any speculation as rigidly scientific when not every word has a fixed worth, like it is the case in chemistry, physics astronomy a.o. (van Eeden/Welby 1954: 27)

Since this tenet of his treatise was irrefutable in the eyes of van Eeden, especially in his capacity as a poet, understanding Lady Welby’s publications continued to cause him extraordinary difficulties for the next ten years. This did not change until poetical activity began to lose its predominance more and more in his work while at the same time he started engaging in the international endeavors which finally led to the Forte Circle and then to the signific groups in the Netherlands.

Shortly before van Eeden had completed his treatise in July 1897, he received Lady Welby’s new book, Grains of Sense (Welby 1897) which is in certain respects a pendent to van Eeden’s treatise. For whereas “Logical Basis of Mutual Understanding” represents a logically axiomatic attempt to discuss problems of knowing and communicating in terms of the primary goal of clarifying the function and meaning of poetical language in that context, Grains of Sense
addresses similar problems by means of parables, satires, and aphorisms "written on low level for I know that those who most influence 'language' would not read a book on any other" (Lady Welby to van Eeden on Aug. 18, 1897; van Eeden/Welby 1954: 28). Furthermore, Lady Welby did not at that time share van Eeden's views on the philosophy of language, but still hoped to be able to win him over to a scientific investigation of the questions of signifies which she had raised (cf. van Eeden/Welby 1954: 81ff), and, on the other hand, van Eeden wished that Lady Welby would write more like a poet (cf. van Eeden/Welby 1954: 6, 82). Thus, van Eeden the poet commented on *Grains of Sense*:

[...], that in matter of language the parable is the most stable and undeceiving thing. Meaning and sense of the single word change constantly and I do not see a way to fix them. But the parable remains unaltered, however translated or repeated. (van Eeden/Welby 1954: 28)

However, van Eeden the scientist also realized that Lady Welby by and large took the same problems as a point of departure that he did, using different methods and envisioning different solutions:

It is very remarkable how you touch the very things which have occupied me so much, and which I consider to be the most important in our present condition of society, in intellectual respect.

But sometimes I think we are too impatient. The material condition of society is as yet too undeveloped, how can a pure language grow on an impure and disturbed society? [...]. Who knows what will come, when the equipoise of society is reached, when universal peace and equality reigns, when mankind becomes one nation. And this seems by no means an all too utopian hope, when we consider what has changed in our short life-time. (van Eeden/Welby 1954: 28)

Even though van Eeden respected his own and Lady Welby's studies to date, in 1897 they seemed to him premature and thus not timely. As the last lines of the quotation indicate, van Eeden the pioneer and social reformer now came to the fore, believing that changes in the material conditions of society would also prepare the solution of the intellectual problems and eventually implement that solution. Not until ten years later, after all his practical reform efforts which were inspired first of all by Thoreau had failed, as Lady Welby had prophesied they would back in 1898 (cf. van Eeden/Welby 1954: 37), did he once again start to address himself to questions of signifies in his publications. His personal relationship to Lady Welby, which was influenced from the very beginning by his inner contradictions as well as the differences between them in personality and social background, continued throughout this time. Finally
it was thanks to this relationship that Lady Welby’s theoretical influence won him over.

Now what exactly is the subject of van Eeden’s treatise which was to a certain degree written under the influence of Lady Welby among others and has, for that reason, rightly been designated as the first signific study in the Netherlands by later significans? The text is comprised of seven chapters of very different length, an introduction, and a closing section. Considering that the treatise, which was planned as a logically axiomatic text, falls under the influence of Spinoza’s ideas, it comes as no surprise that it is written “more geometrico”. Thus, the chapters consist of a series of sequentially numbered theorems, some of which follow logically from the ones before. These theorems are frequently augmented by explanations, paraphrases, proofs or substantiating passages set off in small print.

The introduction (van Eeden 1897: 7–10), entitled “Argument”, provides a rough outline of the goal, purpose, and subject of the following presentation.

The first chapter (“Reality and Gradation”, pp. 10–17) deals with the gradation in reality and thought from the concrete and the real to the abstract and the unreal, and the respective types of language use associated with the graduated stages (figurative vs. symbolic). In addition, he established at this point the theoretical bases, philosophically and linguistically speaking, of the treatise which relate to the language in which the treatise is to be formulated and for what linguistic and philosophical reasons this is to be done. Thus, the chapter is essentially devoted to the derivation and substantiation of two polar opposites of language levels, namely, symbolic and figurative. Both levels of language correspond not only to degrees of abstractness and concreteness or apparent irreality and reality, but also at the same time to two different avenues to knowing, namely symbolic and intuitive knowledge, which can be communicated only by means of symbolic or figurative language respectively. Van Eeden recognizes the validity of both variants of knowledge in their extreme forms, each of which pertains to a different class of entities. Validity is also conceded to symbolic communication (such as that in the form of a mathematical formula), but van Eeden finds utter soundness and universality of figurative language used to communicate intuitive knowledge to be unattainable, thereby questioning the understanding of such language. According to van Eeden there is increasing uncertainty in knowledge and growing misunderstandings in the communication of knowledge to the extent that the two modes of knowing become separated from their appropriate realm of entities and to the extent that the respective form of language wanders from its pure pole to the intermediate levels. This is the case in natural sciences, psychology, and
philosophy, which are located between the extremes of mathematics on the one hand and poetry on the other. Of course this is even more so in everyday thought and speech.

In spite of its short length, the second chapter ("Word-Value", pp. 20–24) is of particular importance because, supplementing the first, it contains van Eeden's theory of signs. Here he discusses the problem of the meaning of words by defining the relationship between reality, image of reality (idea), and word (symbolical vs. figurative). According to van Eeden, the value of words consists of what they represent on stand for. The value or meaning (here probably to be considered equivalent) of a symbol is an idea of something that exists, whereby the relation between the representational idea and the existing entity that is represented is one of sameness with partial difference. That is, the idea is a representation or model of some original object. While the symbol-meaning-relation is based on convention or agreement, the figurative word in poetry gets meaning by its sound and rhythm which make it a picture of psychical states or processes. The figurative word stands more directly for what exists, it illustrates or portrays what exists. The relation involved is largely one of sameness, but yet still with differences since the poetic word is usually also a symbol and as such also represents an idea. Figurative expressions or words aside from literary or poetic use are only images (representations) of representations. That is why there occur in this case two relations of sameness accompanied by essential difference between word and actually existing, represented entity. All metaphorical word usage is an example of this type of expression.

The third chapter ("Truth", pp. 24–30) proceeds on the basis of the preceding exposition to establish the expression "truth" as it is usually used to be an "impure term", and to examine the implications of the expressions "to tell the truth" and "to be honest". After explicating his concept of truth, there follows a discussion of Spinoza's concept of the "true idea" and of Spinoza in general.

As indicated by the title "Certainty, Reason, and Mystery", the fourth chapter (pp. 31–45) can be subdivided into three parts which critically examine and relativize the claimed efficacy of the natural sciences, and contrasts symbolic and intuitive knowing. Theorems 52–62 postulate certainty in the natural sciences to mean immutability in place and time, which is always only gradual and depends on man and language. The natural sciences are portrayed as the expression of the typical human striving for order, universality, and constancy as well as unity and completeness. According to theorems 63–80 three aspects, namely reason, together with the "perceiving ego" and that which is perceived are seen as constitutive requirements for the natural sciences. However, van Eeden's analysis of the term and concept of reason concludes that the unit of
measurement in the natural sciences is not human reason, it being inadequate as a measure of all things, and that in the long run even these sciences give evidence of a tendency to suspend reason and strive to obtain the absolute. Finally, the theorems 81—100 deal with the term “mystery”. They attempt to demonstrate that the rejection of mysticism and the tendency to espouse it are both equally rooted in a striving for the absolute, and that rationalists and mystics both depend on their respective mode of knowledge to the exclusion of the other.

The fifth chapter (“The Ego”, pp. 45—57) introduces the definition of “ego” or “self” and designates ultimate knowledge as that which gives the greatest certainty, which can be accounted for neither by perception nor by reason, where being and knowing coincide. For van Eeden, ego is absolute and one with the highest order of knowledge.

The sixth chapter on “Timelessness and Immortality” (pp. 58—70) falls into three parts. The first part deals with the capabilities and limitations of logical method (ordo geometrica) with respect to complicated things like “soul”, “spirit”, etc. Thus, it is reflexive toward the whole exposition. The second part describes all perception as basically a feeling and the self, that which feels, as different from the person, that ego encompassing the totality of our feelings. Also, the expression “mortal” is discussed here, leading to the claim that the ego (self) is neither changing nor transitory, that it has no place in space and resides in no location, and that, as a consequence, we both know and are something that is neither mortal nor changing, which can just as well be called omnipresent as nowhere present. Then, in the third part, this is distinguished from “person” and van Eeden pursues the question of what aspect of the person comes to an end and what does not. Since in his view no perception is solely or completely dependent on sensory organs he finds it probable that perceptions, and thus human individuality as well, remain possible even after the body has ceased to exist. Each person thereby is part of the eternal and absolute, but in differing degrees, and to these differing degrees, it is also mortal, eternal, and unchanging.

In the last chapter (“Direction, Freedom, and Goal”, pp. 70—80) van Eeden departs more and more from the path of logical dialectics and here he undertakes some conceptual modifications of the earlier chapters. First an analysis of the expressions “movement”, “act”, “deed”, “action”, “change”, “cause” and “direction” leads to insight into the limitations of the logical-symbolic method. For the application of these expressions to soul or life necessarily entails a falsehood. After considering the figurative aspects of the expressions “freedom” and “bondage”, finally, the free will of the self is examined together with its influence on all human action (the problem of psycho-physical paral-
lelism). He then turns to the resulting question of responsibility. The theorems 155 and 156 then conclude in van Eeden’s own view by making figurative statements about the direction and goal of life, which are declared as God, the absolute, unity, and constancy.

The “conclusion” (pp. 80–84) declares the treatise to be proof that every logical treatment of higher and deeper things must lead to absurdity and contradictions because it involves making the simplest terms into images. Argumentative philosophy must therefore not go beyond the simplest matters. Rather, it is restricted to preliminary criticism dealing with the kind of ability to know, the kind of ability to express, the value of words, and the value of those concepts captured by words in their usage – as in his treatise. Any crossing of this boundary is the sole prerogative of poetry.

There is some validity to Willink’s (1975) recent comparison of this treatise of van Eeden’s which is in many respects quite original to Wittgenstein’s “Tractatus Logico-philosophicus”. Despite the differences between the two texts, they do have several striking similarities. However, the impact of van Eeden’s treatise was largely limited to the subsequent signific movement. It was above all the principle of gradation, adopted from Spinoza’s work, a principle of gradual transition between two poles, which is fundamental to the entire treatise, that had major repercussions, magnified by the influence of Mannoury’s relativism, for the thought of the significans. The most evident effect of these repercussions appear in the significans’ later theory of levels of language, developed in 1918. Van Eeden’s theory of signs, on the other hand, was not adopted by the significans.

3. Van Eeden Propagates Significs

To be sure, from 1897 on, the goal of fundamental social reform dominated van Eeden’s thinking and action, but this did not prevent him from continuing to follow Lady Welby’s gradual development of the basics of significs with great interest. His correspondence with her and, most importantly, his recurring visits in England kept him observing (and now and then contributing to) her scientific work. With the approaching failure of his projects (a production and a sales co-op), he began to view Lady Welby’s significs as not merely a scientific parallel to his practical, organizational reform endeavors, but rather as a prerequisite to the successful realization of social changes. In this context, so different from that of the 90’s of the nineteenth century with regard to culture and society from van Eeden’s perspective, significs became in his eyes a requirement of the age. By 1906 at the latest, van Eeden stepped forth again and again as a prophet
preaching in his literary works and essays on the necessity of signific research
and insights. Van Eeden’s role must be termed that of a prophet, because he
himself did not at this time engage in signific analyses, but called for significs
as a new science. For he associated this demand with the spread of philosophical
and ethical ideals, and he considered himself and designated himself as a prophet
in these matters.

In those years, significs constituted for van Eeden only the critique of lan-
guage and conceptualization, whereby the critique of language referred almost
exclusively to the distorting, false, and unconscious use of metaphor or figures
of speech in general. Other conditions causing the unreliability of language as
a means of communication, such as questions of interpretation, context, etc.,
grew unmentioned. To him, the agents of signific analysis, critique of language,
and linguistic reform were the mathematicians – he included Mannoury in this
group – and, naturally, those who were true poets as opposed to those who
strive only for formal virtuosity (cf. van Eeden 1908a). In the process, he
considerably overestimated the potential effects of a science of meaning on
communication processes, and he expected significs to bring about a new body
of everyday language based on the example of the language of mathematics.

This was not at all what Lady Welby expected of van Eeden, who heralded
that version of significs to which he was able to assimilate his ideas and ideals.
To be sure, the acceptance of significs was one of the goals which Lady Welby
wanted van Eeden to work toward, but not by means of poetry or proclamation,
but rather by scientific studies and discussion of the problem of meaning (cf.
van Eeden/Welby 1954: 68, 77, 81). Van Eeden resisted, commenting that he
was an artist and that therefore his best methods had to be artistic (van Eeden/
Welby 1954: 68). Finally, in 1908, there ensued a drawn out conflict between
the two of them as to van Eeden’s role in the process of working on significs.
Van Eeden clearly formulated the underlying point of dissension. On July 29,
1908, he wrote Lady Welby:

You wondered often why I have not done more yet for the spreading of your sig-
nificent work. It is because every one must know for himself what are his best ways of
expressing himself and his best opportunities of making his work tell. [ . . .], then I
hope you will see also all the gifts of ideas that I got from you come to the world,
but only after being entirely assimilated by myself, because that is the only condition
in which I can give expression to any idea. And I think this will be to the advantage
of our common cause. (F XXIV. B. 20 B. 1; emphasis H. W. Schmitz)
And van Eeden stated in his letter to Lady Welby of November 9, 1908: “Our points of gravitation lie in the difficult question of ‘art’ or ‘science’.” (van Eeden/Welby 1954: 80) This made it clear that van Eeden saw some fundamental differences to have remained since 1897 despite his acceptance of numerous ideas and concepts of Lady Welby’s. Not only did he see himself as a poet, whose best means of expression are poetic and not scientific, but he also continued to insist — at least in those years — on the sovereignty of poets as opposed to all philosophy and science as he had postulated back in the 80’s. Accordingly his advocacy of significs could only be a prophetic guideline which others, including scientists, would follow (letter of November 19, 1908):

And so the science of Significs will come and find its devoted scholars, after its reason, its right of existence and its value have been founded and proved by the poet. The poet, who is, as Shelley, Schiller, Hebbel stated boldly, the only true man. (van Eeden/Welby 1954: 83)

It seems that the first of these two sentences of van Eeden’s was to come true in the Netherlands.

Van Eeden’s efforts to incorporate significs as a central goal of the Forte Circle were unsuccessful, although he did bring Gustav Landauer and Erich Gutkind, both proponents of Mauthner’s critique of language, into an exchange of letters with Lady Welby and see to it that they received copies of What is Meaning? (Welby 1903) from her. He turned out to be the only one among the extremely idealistic and very short-lived Forte Circle who looked for a contribution to significs from within its ranks.

Van Eeden’s efforts to promulgate significs were successful only in the Netherlands. Between 1909 and 1911, the poet and lawyer J.I. de Haan several times sought out his older friend van Eeden for advice. At that time, de Haan was a very popular tutor for law students in Amsterdam, and he was planning a dissertation in law on the three terms “aansprakelijk” (responsible in the legal sense), “verantwoordelijk” (responsible, capable of being called to account for something), and “toerekeningsvatbaar” (responsible for one’s actions, said of a person). He was on his own with regard to choosing a theoretical approach and methods for analysing the three terms he had chosen, with no obligations to a particular school of thought in legal science. Thus, he was able to integrate van Eeden’s reference to significs without bias and adopt the views on sign theory and the philosophy of language which he encountered in Lady Welby’s books as the theoretical underpinnings he was seeking for his terminological studies.
Van Eeden brought de Haan into contact with Lady Welby, and wrote to her on January 11, 1912:

Mr. de Haan is the most marvellous conquest you made. I gave him your book when he visited me (Significs and Language) hoping he would like it. And he was so enraptured that he could speak of nothing else the whole evening. He drank it in like a thirsty man water. Now he is going to startle the Professors of Law in Amsterdam by quoting and writing articles about you in the Law-reviews. De Haan is a Jew, very shrewd, immensely quick in learning things, a good poet and a renowned 'coach-er' for the students of law. He will take his degree this year. The official Professors are rather afraid of him, for he looks like a juvenile Cherub, but he is daring as a devil with his pen. (E XXIV. B. 20 B. 1) 6

From 1912 on in nearly forty articles and two books, de Haan worked on creating the basis for legal significs and on the analysis of legal problems from a signific standpoint. However, due not least to the influence of van Eeden's treatment of Lady Welby's significs, the result was only a distorted reaction to Lady Welby's writings. For in his dissertation, de Haan envisioned a logical legal language as the goal of legal significs. In so doing, he understood a logical language to be a language "in which old words are used and new words are formed intentionally according to strict rules" (1916a: 79). Thus, he derived logicalness from two basic principles, namely the adherence to etymology and definite rules for creating words in word usage and word formation.

Not until after 1916 did de Haan break with this limitation of significs and its restriction to the realm of Bréal's semantics. This occurred especially as a reaction to Brouwer's criticism of his dissertation and due to the influence of intuitionistic and philosophical concepts of Brouwer, to whom he had been introduced by van Eeden in 1916. That very year, de Haan was made university lecturer for legal significs at the University of Amsterdam. However, his activity as a scholar of law and significian and his work at the Institute of Significians came to a premature end with his emigration to Jerusalem in 1919. In 1924, de Haan was the first victim of a political assassination of a Jew by Jews in Palestine.

Starting in the spring of 1915, van Eeden and his old friend Henri Borel along with other Dutch public figures began to work on planning and preparing an international philosophical college to be built in Amersfoort. Van Eeden and Borel associated this college anew with the aims of their Forte Circle, which had recently disbanded. Therefore it comes as no surprise when in one of the first official programatic articles of the college being planned we find the sentence: "The college shall also be a center for the philosophy of language, conducted in recent times as significs or semantics." (Nr. 670, Van Eeden Archives)
In the fall of 1915, van Eeden and Borel had a meeting with L.E.J. Brouwer, who was also involved in preparing a conceptual groundwork for the college. As early as ten years earlier, in his book *Leven, Kunst en Mystiek* (Life, Art, and Mysticism) (Brouwer 1905), which is to this day hardly known, Brouwer had critically examined language and the possibility of interpersonal communication. In the context of his mysticism and his idealistic, solipsistically colored view of the world, Brouwer turns his attention to the bases and objects of interpersonal communication. This led him to the conclusion, for one thing, that there is a negative social phenomenon consisting of a suggestive turn of speech using certain words (e.g. “property”, “fatherland”) which gives a national constraint directed against the individual and his will the appearance of being self-evident, thus obfuscating the lack of legitimation of this constraint. For another thing, he confirms the existence of a lack of primary words for the wealth of essentially primary concepts. Finally, words for life’s spiritual values, which are part of the means making the communication of mystical experiences possible, are, at least according to Brouwer, totally nonexistent. All of these phenomena are considered by Brouwer to exert considerable influence upon the individual’s potential for developing, morals, and the configuration of a just order of society. Thus, Brouwer’s interest in signifies, which he became acquainted with in 1915 through the efforts of van Eeden, can be understood to be primarily ethically motivated as was that of van Eeden and de Haan.

In the committee for establishing a college in Amersfoort, the plan of founding an international institute for philosophy in Amersfoort whose goal was to be “renewing the evaluation of life elements of the individual and the community” (No. 678, van Eeden Archives) was espoused by van Eeden, Borel, Brouwer, and H.P.J. Bloemers (1890–1947), later to become mayor of Groningen and Arnheim. They proposed to achieve this goal by founding and supporting an “International Academy for Practical Philosophy and Sociology” which was to have as its duties the critique of language, the reevaluation of values, and the creation of new words to name those values. Finally, an international school for philosophy to promulgate the accomplishments of the academy’s work was to be founded and supported.

When the four significans were unable to win over the majority of the committee’s members in the first part of 1916, they resigned from the committee. They then proceeded to implement their plan by themselves, while in 1916 the majority of the committee founded the “Internationale School voor Wijsbegeerte te Amersfoort” (International School for Philosophy, Amersfoort), which still exists today. The plan for an academy, which never came to be, can be traced back to a very similar idea first developed by the German sociologist
and philosopher Ferdinand Tönnies in his essay that won the Welby Prize (cf. Tönnies 1899/1900) (cf. Schmitz 1985: cxxix). Once again the impetus of the driving idea seems to have come from van Eeden.

Finally, in 1917, the first official signific group was founded. The founding members included de Haan, Mannoury, and Ornstein along with van Eeden, Borel, Brouwer, and Bloemers. Whereas de Haan was brought into this circle by van Eeden and Brouwer, Mannoury, a scholar who had been studying the problems of language and meaning involved in knowledge in the context of his studies of the foundations of mathematics, was brought into the circle by Brouwer. It was not until the ensuing collaboration of the members that Mannoury became familiar with the works of Lady Welby. The physicist L.S. Ornstein (1880–1941) also entered into the company of the founding members thanks to Brouwer without knowing much about significs.

With the founding of the “International Institute for Philosophy”, van Eeden had achieved his preliminary goal of gathering support for significs as a new science and a requirement of the age. Yet the long-range social reformist goals were still unattainable. They were primarily the subject of enduring internal disagreements and as such they did actually motivate the scientific cooperation of the members for nine whole years, but at the same time the concentration on the theoretical foundations of significs suffered under them.

The following passage from a speech by Mannoury at the founding session is the clearest expression of the broad palette of the first association of significantians’ goals:

We call for purification of language, of course; for consistency in scientific terminology, for study of the phenomenon of communicating thoughts as it occurs today, but we need more than etymology, semantics, methods or systematic procedure can give us: we seek an enrichment of the stuff of our thought. We challenge people, who we hope to find willing in nations all over the world, to seek out ways to make possible a purer exchange of ideas, a keener expression of will and thereby a more fruitful intellectual discussion of issues. We call for a new basis for human knowledge and human faith, we call for a new science [about words and meaning] [. . .]”

(Mannoury 1918: 16f)

4. Summary

The introduction of Lady Welby’s significs in the Netherlands illustrates the fact that the sciences are spread and carried on not only by means of scientific publications and teaching, but also to a significant extent by literary works,
personal conversations, correspondence, and the various effects of personal contacts. The unpredictability of these latter factors in their evolution and forming of constellations which are conducive to the spreading and passing on of an idea should give rise to doubts that a body of knowledge which has gone unnoticed in the evolution of science is ipso facto obsolete or invalidated by scientific progress.

NOTES

1 Cf. on this point Schmitz (1984). – Considering the numerous studies on the theory of speech acts and listening acts long before Austin, of which the signific studies constitute only one group, the historical ignorance of modern speech act theorists is very irritating. Searle, for example, said only a few years ago: "One of the reasons why the subject of speech acts is so much fun, is that you don't have to worry what all the great figures of the past said, because most of the great philosophers had no theory of speech acts. You can't go and find Kant's view on apologising or congratulating, as far as I know." (quoted from: Information Philosophie, Jan. 1984, p. 25)


3 This manuscript entitled "Significa" (E 1284, pp. 5f) is part of the van Eeden collection at the University Library, Amsterdam.

4 Substantial parts of the present text are based on this study of "Verständigungshandlungen – eine wissenschaftshistorische Rekonstruktion der Anfänge der signifischen Bewegung in den Niederlanden (1892–1926)" ("Communication acts – a science-historical reconstruction of the beginnings of the signific movement in the Netherlands (1892–1926)").

5 Cf. van Eeden's letter to Lady Welby of August 13, 1892 (van Eeden/Welby 1954: 5).

6 Only excerpts from van Eeden's correspondence with Lady Welby have been published at this time. The original letters between the two of them are to be found in the van Eeden collection at the Library of the University of Amsterdam (van Eeden Archives).

7 After all, Fritz Mauthner had written in his Wörterbuch der Philosophie (Dictionary of Philosophy) in 1910: "The English theory of meaning (signifies) is not far removed from a critique of language. It distinguishes clearly between the usual meaning (the common language usage) [sense], the individual meaning (the intention of the speaker or author when using a word) [meaning], and the meaning value of an idea [significance]." (Mauthner 1923, I: 150; initially 1910) See Weiler (1970) on Fritz Mauthner; on his stance toward signifies cf. Weiler (1970: 125) in particular.
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