
Troost’s reply to Douma’s *Kritische aantekeningen bij de wijsbegeerte der wetsidee* (1976) reflects the historical and systematic complexity of the discussion of the nature of theology and philosophy. The questions involved in this discussion are so sensitive that they have often tempted theologians and philosophers to resort to mutual recriminations. A noteworthy feature of Troost’s *Theologie of Filosofie?* is its refusal to give in to such a temptation. Instead, it is an excellent example of a genuine attempt by a philosopher to enter into a meaningful and fruitful dialogue with a theological critic of cosmonomic philosophy.

Given the nature of Douma’s persistent misinterpretation of central notions in this philosophy, Troost’s response is characterized by calmness, patience, and clarity. In spite of their common creedal allegiance — both Douma and Troost are members of Reformed churches, albeit of different denominational stripe — and their similar academic professions — both are teachers of ethics, Douma in Kampen and Troost in Amsterdam — the differences between them concerning the nature of reality, theory, theology, and philosophy are not peripheral but central. The differences between them come from basically conflicting religious ground motives, namely, a spirit of reformation with its demand for fundamental reformulation of key ideas in philosophy and theology, and a spirit of scholasticism with its acceptance of the validity of certain basic notions in thinking about these two disciplines. This conflict affects every point and turn in the discussion between these two men, and this conflict has a direct bearing on such practical issues as the role of church, the nature of education, and the structure of society.

To enhance his dialogue with Douma, Troost follows the (Schil- dynamic) theological, not philosophical, sequence of thought used by Douma, namely confession (*Theol. of Filos.*?, 11–16), church (16–22), pistical function (22–27), creational revelation (27–35), heart as concentration point of the cosmos (35–40), supratemporality/ prefunctionality of the heart (41–52), ground motive (52–62), sphere sovereignty (62–70), and philosophy and theology (71–83).

Throughout his discussion, Troost explains, corrects, questions, and challenges Douma’s interpretation of the *wijsbegeerte der wetsidee*. In
criticism of Douma’s own position and in defense of cosmonomic philosophy, Troost constantly calls attention to the need to make a clear distinction, not separation, between confession and philosophy, confession and theology, Christian philosophy and theology, religious commitment and creedal allegiance, and entity and modality.

Troost faults Douma for failing to see the fundamental difference between a value-analysis, which is hierarchical, structure-analysis, which is theoretical, and he cautions Douma not to confuse the creational principle of sphere sovereignty with the classical theory of part/whole relationships. He also points out Douma’s tendency to confuse confession and concept, method of theology and method of philosophy, religious ground motives and theoretical schemata, the function of faith and the content of faith, the confessional dimension of (Christian) philosophy and a theological formulation of a confession, and what is implicitly present in a structural analysis and what is explicitly derived from Scripture. Finally, Troost gently chides Douma for surmising the presence in cosmonomic philosophy of A. Kuyper’s speculative theology of regeneration; for suggesting that stressing the importance of creational revelation undermines the need for such things as creed, church, preaching, faith, Scripture, and theology; and for making the theological proposal that the task of Christian philosophy is to repeat and order or systematize the content of Scripture.

It is clear from Troost’s response that a scholastic ground motive has so influenced Douma’s thought pattern that notwithstanding his serious efforts and good intentions, it has become very difficult, if not impossible, for him to understand fully the philosophy he criticizes.

Five crucial ideas have surfaced in this instructive debate of Troost with Douma on the nature and role of philosophy and theology. (1) The debate is not really a conflict between theology and philosophy but between two conflicting philosophies. (2) The pistical is inherent in any theory, and the analytical in any confession. (3) Limiting God’s revelation to His supernatural relationship with creation and verbal communication with man implies a yielding to a scholastic ground motive and invites a unbiblical understanding of creation. (4) The refusal to acknowledge the inner dynamis of created reality makes it impossible to recognize the revelatory character of the disclosure of this dynamis. (5) Acknowledgement of the unique law-subject correlation makes possible abandoning a dualistic view of the God-creation relationship.

I find it of some significance, particularly for our ongoing discussion in North America, that Douma’s limiting the use of religious ground motives to only historical and polemical, not systematic, matters bears a close resemblance to the use Cornelius Van Til has made of this idea in Dooyeweerd’s philosophy. The reason for this limited use lies, perhaps, in Douma’s idea, shared by J.M. Frame, a colleague of C. Van Til at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, that the relationship between theology and faith ought to be thought of in terms of a continuum (cf. 75). Implied in such a continuum-idea is, of course, the tendency to think of theory confessionally and of confession theoretically. I would suggest that the combination of this limited use of ground motive and this notion of a continuum prevents one from seeing