THE dialogue between Dooyeweerd and Van Til (it seems) began and ended with Van Til’s *Festschrift, Jerusalem and Athens*. There were, however, relevant articles previous and subsequent to the printing of the *Festschrift*. In order properly to compare and evaluate these two great Reformed thinkers, it will be helpful to look at the relevant article that formed the basis for Dooyeweerd’s critique of Van Til in *Jerusalem and Athens*. As far as I can tell, the first criticism of Dooyeweerd by Van Til appeared in Van Til’s article, “Bavinck the Theologian.” Though it would be helpful to look at that article, it is only minimally significant for our purposes. The primary thought in Van Til’s criticism of Dooyeweerd is that the latter has yet to escape “scholastic tendencies” in his thought. In the interest of economy, however, we must move on to a more relevant critique.

I. Christianity in Conflict

It was Van Til’s syllabus, “Christianity in Conflict,” to which Dooyeweerd responded in *Jerusalem and Athens*. Contained in this syllabus is the subsection “Biblical Dimensionalism.” This subsection is written primarily as a critique of Dooyeweerd’s cosmonic philosophy. Van Til concentrates on two aspects of Dooyeweerd’s dimensionalism: “The Antithesis,” and “Communication.”

Though the section dealing with the antithesis is not too helpful for our purposes, it is important to notice that Van Til wants to reject a hard-and-fast distinction between naive experience and theoretical thought. Such a distinction is nec-

essay to Dooyeweerd’s philosophy. Apart from such a distinction, the “first question” in Dooyeweerd’s transcendental critique, i.e., “From what has abstraction been made?” cannot be answered. Apart from the naive/theoretical distinction Dooyeweerd’s definition of the transcendental method is destroyed. It is no small matter, therefore, that Van Til denies the distinction as formulated. For example, in this section Van Til writes about the “simple believer.” The simple believer (one suspects Van Til means the “naive” believer) knows about common grace. He knows that the unbeliever suppresses the truth of God. Yet as the simple (naive) believer is confronted with antitheistic interpretations of life, he becomes more fully aware of the strongholds and speculations of the enemies of Christ. He begins to articulate in a more technical (theoretical) manner what he has said all along. Says Van Til: “It is all a matter of degree. In his naive experience the simple believer was using concepts and in his more articulated experience he is using the same concepts.”

Thus, Van Til asserts his essential disagreement with Dooyeweerd’s naive/theoretical distinction, and remember, to deny this distinction is to do away with the corpus of Dooyeweerd’s philosophy. Without naive experience there is no basis for theoretical thought. If theoretical thought is only different from naive experience by degree, then Dooyeweerd’s modal scale is of little value in our understanding of the “more articulated” (theoretical) concepts. This is the case because theoretical thought is dependent upon both the modal scale and the specific thought-structure defined in terms of that scale. To reject the formulated distinction is to reject the main tenets of Dooyeweerd’s transcendental critique.

Turning now to the section entitled “Communication,” Van Til is troubled by the outworking of Dooyeweerd’s attempt to find common ground. The problem of communication becomes most pronounced as we consider the radicality of the antithesis between believer and unbeliever. The problem itself, however, is answered biblically. The prodigal could never forget the fact that it was his father’s wealth that pro-

2 Cornelius Van Til, Christianity in Conflict (unpublished syllabus) 3.
3 Ibid.
vided for the opportunity of running away. Thus, wherever the prodigal went, his father's influence could not be escaped.

The believer need, therefore, never to worry about the question of the point of contact with the unbeliever. The only thing that he needs to avoid like death is to seek for a point of contact with the unbeliever in terms of the basic interpretive principle of the unbeliever. So long as he avoids doing this, then he need not be concerned even with respect to the most violent ridicule that is poured upon his position.4

Having said this, Van Til considers how Dooyeweerd engages in dialogue with certain neo-Thomistic philosophers and others.

The conclusion of the matter, argues Dooyeweerd, is that a genuine philosophical contact is possible on the basis of transcendental criticism. After all, is it not true that every philosophy must give itself a theoretical account of the same reality being bound to the same structure of thought...? And must they not all submit to undeniable states of affairs in reality?

It has been said that in his praiseworthy desire to engage in dialogue with those who do not share his biblical approach Dooyeweerd has softened the antithesis between his own position and theirs.5

The one thing to notice in the above quote is Van Til's implied dissatisfaction with Dooyeweerd's position regarding common ground.

The problem itself is illustrated as we see Dooyeweerd in dialogue with unbelieving systems. For example, in one of Dooyeweerd's articles in *Philosophia reformata* entitled "Het Wijsgeerig tweegesprek tusschen de Thomistische filosofie en de Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee" (The Philosophical Dialogue between Thomistic Philosophy and the Philosophy of the Law-idea), the dialogue consists of the possibility of communication between Prof. J. Robbers, a neo-Thomist, and Dooyeweerd. Dooyeweerd pleads with Prof. Robbers to accept the discovered states of affairs *(standen van zaken)* themselves in order better to understand the validity of the philosophical interpretation *(wijsgeerige interpretatie)* given them. While this is an attempt on Dooyeweerd's part to affirm the biblical framework with regard to the states of affairs themselves, problems arise when Dooyeweerd assumes that Robbers can discover such a framework.

4 Ibid., 33, emphasis mine.
5 Ibid., 36.
Prof. R. supposes . . . that the W.d.W. [Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee] has rejected the "analogia entis".

This is a misunderstanding on his part. It is not the analogy as an undeniable state of affairs that is rejected by this philosophy.\(^6\)

Doooyeweerd himself, therefore, sees the analogia entis as an "undeniable state of affairs." The question then becomes how Doooyeweerd can accept the notion of analogia entis and remain within his Christian framework. In answer to this question Doooyeweerd refers us to a previous article in Philosophia reformata dealing with Thomistic ontology. He then continues, "I have there [in the previous article to which he refers] tried to demonstrate that this theory of being, precisely because of the overemphasis on theoretical thought, can give no satisfactory explanation of the discovered states of affairs in reality."\(^7\)

This is a curious quote in light of the above discussion. Doooyeweerd has said that he will set aside his own philosophical interpretation in order to discover the states of affairs themselves. Now, however, it seems that Doooyeweerd, while wanting to maintain an ever-present distinction between his own philosophical interpretation and the discovered states of affairs themselves, claims that Prof. Robbers' problem is due to an "overemphasis on theoretical thought." Such a criticism presupposes Doooyeweerd's own construction of theoretical thought, its dependence on naive experience, and thus, again, the corpus of Doooyeweerd's philosophy.

Is it true that the problem with the analogia entis in neo-Thomism is simply one of theoretical overemphasis? Perhaps, if one's sole perspective is that of the W.d.W. The problem, however, runs much deeper than mere theoretical overemphasis.

The very notion of the Thomistic analogia entis presupposes (1) a univocism, for instance, in the use of the word "being" such that either God and man participate in the same existence (rationalism) or God and man are totally and absolutely separate from one another (irrationalism) and (2) the Aristot-
telian potentiality-actuality scheme of Thomistic metaphysics as the principle of limitation and therefore individuation. This, it seems, is far from an overemphasis problem. Dooyeweerd himself has criticized Thomism for its nature/grace antinomy. Yet in the interest of communication he seems to want dialogue worse than truth. The problem with Thomism is not overemphasizing the theoretical but rather it is a problem of starting point. Thomistic metaphysics, by definition, could not start with the Bible. Thus, the Creator-creature distinction is denied at the outset.

The question might be posed in this discussion as to whether or not Dooyeweerd wants simply to set his position aside for the sake of argument. Such an approach, according to Van Til's position, would carry some warrant because of its presuppositional emphasis. Dooyeweerd himself, in his discussion with Robbers, says this, "I . . . am prepared for a moment to set my whole philosophical line of thought aside in order to obtain with Prof. R. real intellectual contact in approaching the undeniable states of affairs themselves."

Yet, according to Van Til, this "setting aside for a moment" provides for a problematic distinction. Says Van Til,

But, you object, Dooyeweerd is merely saying that he will set aside his framework of thought for a moment in the interest of the possibility of spiritual contact. This is well. Then does he mean that he is setting aside his framework for the sake of argument. . . ? This does not seem to be Dooyeweerd's view. He makes a definite distinction between objectively, existing states of affairs and his own philosophical view. It is . . . a distinction that he says is always present.

In other words, it is always the case, according to Dooyeweerd's philosophy, that one can set aside philosophical interpretation and consider, with anyone, the "objective states of affairs." Van Til sees Dooyeweerd's "setting aside for a moment" as an attempt to consider that which is, according to Dooyeweerd, always structurally the same. The "setting aside for a moment," then, does not seem to be a setting of one's self on the position of the other for argument's sake. Such a position as the latter is part and parcel to Van Til's presup-

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8 Ibid., 53, translation mine.
9 Van Til, *Christianity*, 44.
positional approach. Dooyeweerd's own distinction between states of affairs and theory has caused problems in the midst of this dialogue. Dooyeweerd's primary criticism of Robbers is not presuppositional but rather it assumes the correctness of the W.d.W. Dooyeweerd sees Robbers as one who neglects to see the "root-unity" (worteleenheid) of the cosmos. Such an idea of root unity carries with it a view of transcendence, inter-modal synthesis, etc., all of which are necessary to Dooyeweerd's own philosophy.

In summary, then, we see that Van Til has problems not only with Dooyeweerd's naive/theoretical distinction, he also sees in Dooyeweerd an unconscious attempt to assume neutrality and thus common ground (autonomy) with Professor Robbers. The basic discussion concerning these issues could be surveyed in more detail, for example, as Van Til critiques Berkouwer's approach to Fr. J. Marlet, Van Peursen's criticism of Dooyeweerd, Mekkes' response to Conradi, and others. Yet we have seen sufficient evidence to show that the dialogue in Jerusalem and Athens between Van Til and Dooyeweerd began with each one attempting to defend his own approach. We turn now to that dialogue.

II. Jerusalem and Athens Revisited

Before moving directly into the dialogue between Van Til and Dooyeweerd, it will be helpful to look briefly at the elucidation of Van Til's epistemology by another Calvinistic philosopher, Hendrick G. Stoker. Because Stoker is, like Van Til and Dooyeweerd, a Calvinistic philosopher, we will look at the discussion and mention material that will be relevant to the dialogue itself.

Though it is impossible sufficiently to explain the vast differences between Van Til and Dooyeweerd, Stoker seems to get at the root of the problem in his article. The primary difference is one of method (which might seem strange when we consider that both men sought to be transcendental in method). Van Til's method is labeled by Dooyeweerd as "transcendent," meaning dogmatic. Dooyeweerd labels his own method "transcendental," i.e., given any fact, what are the presuppositions behind that fact, and which make the fact itself possible? Van Til himself, in his syllabus on Christian
epistemology, calls his own method transcendental, not transcendent!

Of special concern to us is Stoker’s discussion of science in relation to a Christian theory of knowledge.

(i) **Transcendent criticism** of knowledge proceeds from one’s own presuppositions (or standpoint) and (a) demonstrates the implication of these presuppositions for the understanding of knowledge (or of science) or other. This method is necessary, it may in a certain sense be called dogmatic, but it need not be dogmatistic insofar as one is willing to responsibly account for one’s presuppositions.10

Any student of Van Til’s apologetic will readily realize that Stoker has just described a Van Tillian presuppositional approach. Not only does Van Til’s approach begin with Christian presuppositions, it properly accounts for those presuppositions as well. Such an accounting avoids dogmatism (as well as fideism). It is not important at this point whether one labels the approach transcendent or transcendental.

Stoker then continues,

(ii) **Transcendental criticism** of knowledge (a) starting from acts or functions of knowing proceeds to its basic presuppositions or (b) investigates some theory of knowledge (or of science) and exposes the presuppositions on which it is based. The transcendent and transcendental methods of criticism follow opposite directions, respectively proceeding from or proceeding towards the basic presuppositions concerned.11

Again we can readily see in Van Til’s approach the combination of what Stoker calls transcendent and transcendental approaches. Dooyeweerd’s transcendental criticism starts from the distinction between the analytic and nonanalytic modal aspects, proceeds to the self, which brings to the fore the character of man’s heart. This is an attempt to begin with a function or act of knowing. Furthermore, Dooyeweerd, according to Stoker,

... critically investigates philosophic theories ... exposes the presuppositions on which they are based, proceeding to the religious ground-motives of the systems concerned; he furthermore demonstrates how systems, mo-


11 Ibid.
tivated by non-Christian “ground-motives” fall into antinomies and dialectical tensions.\textsuperscript{12}

This is an accurate explanation of Dooyeweerd’s method. The serious problems, too complex to discuss here, of the supra-temporal heart, the naive/theoretical distinction, and the \textit{Gegenstand}-relation are all implicit in the above description.

After defining Van Til’s approach as \textit{both} transcendent \textit{and} transcendental (according to his own definitions of the terms), Stoker goes on to explain that both methods complement one another and are necessary. He explains the limitations of Dooyeweerd’s own method as due to his hard distinction between philosophy and theology. Speaking of Dooyeweerd, Stoker says, “... should he proceed ... to an exposition of God and His counsel (\textit{something that he can hardly do with his transcendental method}), his theory of knowledge would become theological.”\textsuperscript{13} Stoker then goes on to affirm Van Til’s penetrating analyses as “original and of unique significance ... in our Calvinistic community.”\textsuperscript{14} Furthermore, \textit{and this is highly significant}, due to the fact that Van Til is transcendent/transcendental (as Stoker defines them) and not merely transcendental (as Stoker defines Dooyeweerd’s approach), Van Til, according to Stoker, “has attained a depth (or should I say a height) that the transcendental method of Dooyeweerd—from the nature of his procedure—does not attain.”\textsuperscript{15} This is a telling comment. Not only is Stoker, like Dooyeweerd, called to be a philosopher in the Calvinistic tradition, both men are concerned primarily (though Dooyeweerd would not phrase it this way) with what Stoker calls the “fourth type of revelation,” namely, the revelation of the universe to man \textit{by} God. It is for this reason that Stoker (contra Dooyeweerd) defines theology as the “\textit{scientia prima inter pares}.”\textsuperscript{16} To think of theology, as Dooyeweerd does, as a “mere particular science” is to relegate the truths of God to a mere “part” or “aspect” of the created universe.\textsuperscript{17} Dooyeweerd must, by vir-

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 36.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., emphasis mine.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 37.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 39.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 456 n. 26.
tue of his transcendental method, avoid theological conclusions in his method. Thus, he is unable fully to penetrate any position. Because of this, his method negates its own proper use. Furthermore, according to Stoker, because epistemology is an interscienctific discipline, designed to form a unitary procedure among all sciences, apologetical contributions to a theory of knowledge should not be seen as a crossing of boundaries between sciences (as Dooyeweerd would perceive Van Til) but rather all sciences should fully take into account and presuppose theology’s contribution to a theory of knowledge in all research. Stoker, the Calvinistic philosopher, is Van Tillian in his method rather than Dooyeweerdian.

Though it would be interesting to discuss Stoker’s further criticism of Dooyeweerd’s application of sphere-sovereignty and the latter’s relation to the intersciences, we must move on. For further study on the above-mentioned discussion, see Stoker’s book, Die Wysbegeerte van die Skeppingsidee.

III. Transcendent and Transcendental

Having had at his disposal the section on biblical dimensionalism by Van Til, Dooyeweerd now seeks to reply to the objections Van Til has lodged against his position, especially as concerns the distinction between transcendent and transcendental criticism. Says Dooyeweerd,

I am afraid that you have misunderstood what I mean by this distinction. You think that by transcendental critique I understand a critique that starts from the (transcendent) “fullness and unity of truth accepted on the authority of Scripture.”

For the sake of clarity, Dooyeweerd’s quote of Van Til above is slightly misrepresented. Van Til does not see Dooyeweerd’s transcendental method as starting from Scripture but rather he is making the point, in the context of the above quote from Van Til by Dooyeweerd, that the transcendental method should start from Scripture. Nevertheless, the issue is that

18 Ibid., 41.
19 Ibid., 42.
20 Herman Dooyeweerd, “Cornelius Van Til and the Transcendental Critique of Theoretical Thought,” Jerusalem and Athens, 74.
21 Van Til, Christianity, 48.
the two men are in basic disagreement as to the critical starting point. Dooyeweerd then explains what he does mean by transcendent criticism.

I meant by transcendent criticism, the dogmatic manner of criticizing philosophical theories from a theological or from a different philosophical viewpoint without a critical distinction between theoretical propositions and the supra-theoretical presuppositions lying at their foundation.22

Dooyeweerd wants to guard against the idea that one may simply critique another position, without even critically taking into account one's own position. This, of course, is correct. We must never simply criticize a position or system of philosophy, theology, etc., without at the same time giving due account of the place on which we stand. This means that we must, in our critique, give due account of what Dooyeweerd calls the "supra-theoretical" assumptions from which we operate. That is, in Dooyeweerd's own terms, we must not simply operate "inter-theoretically" but must ask as to what lies behind the theory itself. Transcendent criticism, as defined by Dooyeweerd, fails to give due account of its own assumptions and the assumptions of the theory critiqued.

Dooyeweerd's example of this is the scholastic notion of the dualistic nature of man,

Valentine Hepp . . . was of the opinion that rejection of the traditional scholastic view of human nature was a deviation from the Reformed Confession. . . . We are confronted here with a transcendent critique in optima forma.23

One will readily note that Dooyeweerd's example and criticism here are valid. We must not think that our own position, be it confessional or otherwise, is simply true but rather we must be critical of that which lies behind the body/soul dichotomy (to continue with Dooyeweerd's example) in order to bring our ideas more in line with Scripture. Transcendent criticism, as defined by Dooyeweerd, fails to ask as to the presuppositions behind any fact. Dooyeweerd is concerned, and rightly so, that unbiblical philosophical ideas not be uncritically accepted and accommodated into the church. Only a transcendental critique, according to Dooyeweerd, is able

22 Dooyeweerd, "Cornelius Van Til," 75.
23 Ibid.
to ask as to the presuppositions behind the body/soul dualism, along with the Greek metaphysical background behind such a conception. 24 Dooyeweerd assumes, and rightly, that Van Til would agree with such a general application of the transcendental critique.

The primary purpose of the transcendental critique, according to Dooyeweerd, was to “institute a radically transcendental inquiry into the inner nature and structure of the theoretical attitude of thought.” 25 In so doing, one is required to show the inner point of contact between theoretical thought and its supratheoretical presuppositions. 26 This idea of the inner point of contact is calculated to lead one’s opponent from the inner nature and structure of theoretical thought to the necessity of religious presuppositions as correlative to theoretical thought and experience as such. According to Dooyeweerd, one must in any transcendental inquiry begin with an inquiry into the inner nature and structure of theoretical thought and experience, not with a confession of faith.

In this first phase of critical investigation such a confession would be out of place. Not because the first question raised by our transcendental critique might be answered apart from the central religious starting-point of those who take part in the philosophical dialogue, but because the necessity of such a dialogue has not yet come up for discussion. 27

One must, therefore, in the “first phase,” begin with thought and experience itself. This starting point is asserted by Dooyeweerd in the interest of dialogue.

For, so long as the dogma concerning the autonomy of theoretical thought has not been subjected to a transcendental critique, adherents of this dogma who enter into dialogue with the Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea might rightly confine themselves to the simple statement that theoretical philosophy has nothing to do with questions of faith and religion. In other words the dialogue would be cut off before it could start. 28

A couple of observations are in order in response to the above discussion. Dooyeweerd wants to begin with the structure of theoretical thought. Only by beginning with such a

24 Ibid.
25 Ibid., 76.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid., 76-77.
structure can one dialogue with non-Christian philosophers and scientists. At least that is Dooyeweerd's contention. According to Dooyeweerd, as one begins with theoretical thought in dialogue, it is determined that the structure of theoretical thought itself is of an abstractive character. *Given Dooyeweerd's system* this is all well and good. Suppose then that one asks as to the origin of that which is abstracted? Dooyeweerd would then want to press for the transcendental idea of coherence. Presupposed coherence must be the answer to the "first question" (From what has abstraction been made?) in a transcendental critique. Yet this idea, it seems to me, like the so-called "questions of faith and religion," could easily cut off the dialogue at the outset. One need only respond that theoretical philosophy can have no part in some sort of "given," "intact," "irrefutable" experience. The very nature of philosophy, it could be asserted, is to theorize reality in order to gain proper perspective on the same. Dooyeweerd uses, as an example of failing to see theory based upon naive experience, Aristotle's idea of the active intellect (*nous poïëtikos*), which was thought by Aristotle to be independent of the material body. 29 Such an idea was accommodated by Thomas Aquinas into the doctrine of the church, so that man was viewed as a dualism of material body and rational soul. Concerning this dualism, Dooyeweerd writes,

> A direct conclusion is here drawn from the purely intentional antithetic structure of the attitude of theoretical thought to a real separateness of the logical function from all pre-logical aspects of the body. This conclusion was directed by the form-matter motive which impeded an integral view of empirical reality. 80

It is Dooyeweerd's contention that Aquinas' antithetic relation is the premise to the conclusion of real separateness. According to Dooyeweerd, though the conclusion was *directed* by the form-matter motive, the conclusion itself is the result of the fundamental antithesis made between the theoretico-logical activity of thought and matter. The problem for Aquinas and Aristotle, however, runs much deeper than a so-called

80 Ibid.
“theoretical antithetic relation.” Had Aquinas himself seen naive experience as intact, as Dooyeweerd would want it, the problems for him and his philosophy would have remained the same.

In employing Aristotle’s potentiality-actuality scheme as the principle of participation (thus seeing Aristotle’s form-matter idea as a metaphysical principle of individuation), Aquinas’ fundamental problem was not a Gegenstand problem but rather a problem, as it were, of the universal. Because Aquinas assumed that Being necessitates correlative essence as a limiting principle, he failed, as a philosopher-theologian, to make the fundamental distinction between Creator and creature. Such a failure left Aquinas with the perennial problem of the Ding an sich. That is to say, according to Thomism, one can only know the form of an object but not the matter. If Aquinas would respond (as I am sure he would) that the form which is abstracted from the matter is the same both in the intellect and in the matter itself, he only maintains, given the form-matter scheme, that the form is known. The matter itself remains a “thing in itself.” Furthermore, Aquinas would never have separated the nous poëtikos from the material body had he seen, quite apart from Aristotle, the fundamental unity of man as taught in Scripture. This, of course, harks back to Aquinas’ “religious basic motive” which it seems Dooyeweerd is unwilling at this point to discuss because of its religious character. It is not, therefore, religion per se that could end a dialogue, but any proper (biblical) notion of coherence, unity, etc., could end a dialogue once the content of such is discussed. Bare coherence as well as bare unity are indeed non-entities even in their abstractive, structural, theoretical character due to the exhaustive implications of the doctrine of creation. The inner point of contact between any science and religion may be discussed and explained in diverse ways simply because life itself is religion. To see the opposition of soul and body in Aquinas as a conclusion from a previous Gegenstand is, it seems, “eisegetical,” i.e., Dooyeweerd’s reading into Aquinas his own system.

Aristotle and Aquinas themselves, it must be said, had a view of reality such that the abstractions and universals themselves (as well as the method of separation as distinguished
from abstraction in Aquinas) were all dependent upon some sort of "naive experience." According to them, it was only as one experienced (naively), for example, several knives that one could acquire a theoretical (abstractive) knowledge of a knife. Again, Dooyeweerd's Gegenstand is not the problem.

We cannot agree, therefore, that bringing faith and religion into the dialogue necessarily cuts it off before it could start. Rather, the fact that man actually knows God already gives little reason to doubt that bringing religion into the discussion at this point does not meet man where he is! Furthermore, is there more than an arbitrary basis to Dooyeweerd's assertion that the third transcendental question regarding the "Origin" (the so-called deeply religious question) is to be brought in last? Why could one not, given Dooyeweerd's system, start with God and show the relation of God to man's knowledge, and then to the coherence of the cosmos? Is the discussion any less dogmatic, as Dooyeweerd maintains, if one brings in the dogma of God's existence thirdly instead of at the outset? Moreover, to discuss the transcendental idea of God thirdly can be seen as closely akin to the inductive aspect of Van Til's transcendental method, wherein Van Til asserts that one may start anywhere in one's discussion because God has created all things. One may not, however, according to Van Til, speak endlessly about facts and more facts.

We shall pass over the brief discussion of the terms "religious" and "dunamis" as discussed by Dooyeweerd in this article. The general problem, it seems, is inevitable, due to the necessary ambiguity of Dooyeweerd's idea of transcendence and of the term "dunamis" itself.

It is to the problem of states of affairs, objectivism, that we now turn. Dooyeweerd explains, "... I wonder how you could ascribe to me the opinion that the states of affairs would have an objectivity which gives them a neutral position over against the biblical presuppositions of my transcendental critique." 31

Dooyeweerd's reply, against Van Til and Van Peursen, is that the states of affairs are of a "dynamic meaning-character." 32 This is to say that as one views the states of affairs

31 Dooyeweerd, "Cornelius Van Til," 79.
32 Ibid., 80.
one should realize that they point and lead above and beyond themselves to root unity (which, in Dooyeweerd, is only attributed to the supratemporal) and to the “Origin.” One should, therefore, recognize the self-insufficiency of the states of affairs themselves. Dooyeweerd’s insistence on consideration of the states of affairs independent from any philosophical interpretation

... was nothing but a result of my biblical conviction that the “states of affairs” in which the transcendental meaning-structures of our temporal horizon of experience reveal themselves are not founded in our subjective consciousness, but in the divine order of creation to which our subjective experience is subject. For this very reason, they also cannot be dependent upon the religious conviction of the investigator, so that they may be discovered in a particular context by both Christian and non-Christian thinkers.\(^{35}\)

What Dooyeweerd is pleading for here is a suspension of any philosophical interpretation of the states of affairs “until we conceive them in a philosophical total view.”\(^{34}\) We can appreciate Dooyeweerd’s attempt at this point to set aside all philosophical interpretation, and to view the states of affairs “in a particular context.” The attempt itself is calculated so that one begins philosophically neutral in order to be truly critical of one or both of the philosophies involved in the dialogue. The problem, however, is again due to the rigid distinction that Dooyeweerd has made between philosophico-theoretical and naive experience. Even if one Christian and one neo-Thomist, for example, suspend all philosophical interpretation, there still remains interpretive activity on the part of both. Such activity, given the personal structure of the universe (because controlled at every point by God) and the personal character of all knowledge, is either rebelliously against God or lovingly for God. However, if it is Dooyeweerd’s intent to discover, for example, the uniformity of nature with a non-Christian philosopher, once the uniformity itself is “discovered” by both, although both might “function” according to this uniformity, Dooyeweerd still is, at every point, while the non-Christian is not, at every point, holding to such uniformity in ethical obedience to God. Herein the transcendental ap-

\(^{35}\) Ibid.

\(^{34}\) Ibid.
proach (in its Van Tillian form) should be seen again in its inductive element. Having discovered together the fact of uniformity, the Christian must either jump to the non-Christian's position to show him how, even though his philosophical interpretation is denied, the non-Christian is unable to account for, much less properly interpret, such uniformity, or, the Christian must give an account of such uniformity himself. The "particular context" to which Dooyeweerd refers must, therefore, be the context of (1) God's created world, (2) the image of God in both men, one renewed and the other still suppressed, and (3) common grace—all three of which the non-Christian, as he discovers the states of affairs, is in hearty disagreement! Thus the simple fact that one can dialogue with the unbeliever is in its essence fundamentally opposed to the unbeliever's own principles. It seems Dooyeweerd could have quite a long wait if he desires that the communicating philosophers suspend their philosophical interpretation of the states of affairs until, as Dooyeweerd says, "we have so many of them at our disposal, relating to all the modal aspects of our temporal experiential world which until now we have learned to distinguish, that we can try to conceive them in a philosophical total view." It is not as though the latter quote were theoretically impossible, it is only that the discovery itself by two opposing positions depends entirely upon effectual common grace in the non-Christian and the "bare description" of that which is discovered. The believer and unbeliever would have merely to analyze the fact and, if possible, not contextualize it. Thus, due to the fact that any fact, to be truly seen, must be seen within its context (creation), the facts themselves could never really be known. Moreover, whereas the unbeliever and believer can in most cases agree that two plus two equals four, the unbeliever and believer both, because even that analytical meaning moment is taken up within the "context" of the person, fit such a knowledge into their own respective dogmas. The unbeliever's agreement, therefore, is based on the as-

35 Ibid., emphasis mine.
36 Stoker, "Reconnoitering," 44-45.
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Dooyeweerd claims that the states of affairs are founded in the divine order of creation and not in our subjective consciousness. With this, any Christian would agree. It would seem, however, that Dooyeweerd wants to go a step further in his application of this truth and insist that because all men have the order of creation in common, the states of affairs do not depend upon religious conviction. One can readily see here the subordination of the personal to the structural such that the idea itself becomes an abstraction. While it is true that the states of affairs are indeed founded in the order of creation and therefore that the states of affairs themselves have an "objectivity" apart from any human interpretation, it is also true that such a statement as the above is a human interpretation entirely dependent upon religious conviction for its human articulation. To put the matter more theologically, we would say that only by virtue of God's regenerating Spirit are we then able properly to see and account for the irreducible objectivity of the states of affairs. Having seen and accounted for such, we are also duty-bound to see the states of affairs as in essence revelation. The non-Christian, on the other hand, will see what we see, will, perhaps, describe uniformity as we describe it, but will also, all the while, falsify such a description because even as he breathes, he constantly suppresses his knowledge of God. We must say, therefore, that Dooyeweerd is right in his ascription, but not his application, of the objectivity of the states of affairs. Because the antithesis pervades so fundamentally since the fall, all knowledge, due to its personal character, is either for or against God. One either acknowledges that any fact is what Christ says it is or one supposes that uniformity is such because man has so established it. There is no other option. Furthermore, we must keep in mind the necessity of the relation of a fact to its context apart from which no fact can be known. One may start with a specific relevant context in analyzing a fact (deductive) or one may approach a fact in order to gain proper insight into its context (inductive). In both cases the fact and the context must be accounted for. Therefore, whereas states of affairs are not "dependent upon" the religious conviction of a per-
son, they are, like all else, dependent upon God alone. Because of this dependence, true knowledge of such states of affairs, without which we would merely have states of affairs in the abstract, are indeed dependent upon the renewal unto knowledge of man's corrupted image, without which one cannot know such states of affairs.

Turning away from Dooyeweerd's defense, we look now at his offense to see how it is that he perceives Van Til's position. Dooyeweerd thinks that he is confronted with "a typical scholastic tendency" in Van Til's theological thought. This tendency, which, according to Dooyeweerd, goes even further than either Robbers or Conradie, expresses itself in Van Til's insistence that philosophical ideas are to be derived from Scripture. Dooyeweerd observes that not only his concept of time, but the transcendental ground-ideas of the Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea, are all not to be derived from the biblical basic motive. More specifically, Dooyeweerd is saying that time, coherence, deeper anthropological unity, and the Origin are not derived from the religious basic motive of creation, fall, and redemption in Jesus Christ. The latter ground-motive is not derived from but controls the concept of time and the three transcendental ground ideas.

It is somewhat frustrating that Dooyeweerd does not take the opportunity to clear up this obvious misunderstanding. Rather, his reply comes in the form of a counter-question as to how it would be possible to derive from the biblical revelation a philosophical idea of cosmic time with its diversity of modal aspects, of which it does not speak in any way.

The Bible does not provide us with philosophical ideas, no more than it gives us natural scientific knowledge or an economic or legal theory.

Obviously, it seems both Van Til and Dooyeweerd would agree that that which we hold to be true, we base on our reception of the revelation of God. Thus, any idea of control is based on that which God has given to us and which, by his grace, we have received (derived).

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38 Dooyeweerd, "Cornelius Van Til," 81.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid., 82.
It is important at this point, before moving on to the word/concept problem, to emphasize the importance of these issues in relation to the transcendental method. Van Til and Dooyeweerd both agree that, given any fact, any experience, one must ask as to the presuppositions behind such a fact and ascertain their character. To this point Van Til's criticism of Dooyeweerd as to, e.g., states of affairs, and Dooyeweerd's answer to such criticism is dependent upon an acceptance or rejection of Dooyeweerd's notion of theoretical thought and naive experience. Such a notion is only acquired by one's supratemporal transcendence so that a totality view of the cosmos might be gained, according to Dooyeweerd. The issues involved in our discussion, therefore, as to the antithesis and dialogue, states of affairs, and philosophical interpretation all directly bear on one's proper application of the transcendental method. For Dooyeweerd, the conditions that make theoretical thought possible are naive experience, dependent as it is upon the doctrine of creation, the self as supratemporal (and thus able to view the cosmos from a proper perspective), and God who is the ultimate condition for all things. Therefore, as we move finally into Dooyeweerd's analysis of Van Til's rationalism, one must understand that here, as well as in all past discussion, not only is the transcendental method at work, but the criticisms involved significantly affect one's own employment of such a method. In Dooyeweerd's own words, "...the point at issue is whether, and if so how, the transcendental critique meant in the sense of the Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea is able to join issue with philosophical trends which do not share its radical biblical starting point."\(^41\)

Thus, both Dooyeweerd and Van Til know the implications of the antithesis and want, while maintaining the necessity of a transcendental method, to be biblical in their employment of the method itself with regard to dialogue with the unbeliever.

The "bottom line" of Van Til's rationalistic tendency as seen by Dooyeweerd is the former's absolutization of conceptual thought. This is exemplified, according to Dooyeweerd, "Cornelius Van Til," 76.\(^41\)
weerd, in a number of ways, the first of which is how the distinction is to be made between word and concept. According to Dooyeweerd, it is Van Til's rationalism which causes him to see conceptual knowledge and religious knowledge in Dooyeweerd as separate rather than distinct. In viewing the above as separate, it becomes natural for one to see a dialectical tension between the two (conceptual and religious knowledge). The crux of the matter for Dooyeweerd is that Van Til has failed to recognize the analogical concept-formative task of the special sciences such that we cannot say, according to Dooyeweerd, that man must "think God's thoughts after him." This, it seems to Dooyeweerd, fails to recognize the essential element of regeneration.

Now this is, at best, a puzzling line of reasoning. Whenever Van Til speaks of thinking God's thoughts after him, he always speaks either with reference to those who are already regenerate or those who must, in the first place, become regenerate before such an obedient thought-structure can take place. Dooyeweerd, on the other hand, sees obedience as resulting "from the heart in the pregnant biblical sense." Dooyeweerd then goes on to point out that Van Til does not share the former's views with regard to human nature. It is curious, however, to note Dooyeweerd's substantiation of this charge. In *The Defense of the Faith*, Van Til is referring to Hodge's conception of regeneration which involves re-creation. Such a re-creation is a re-creation of the heart, here also called the self, the new man, the whole soul. In reference to this discussion which Dooyeweerd uses as substantiation for disagreement between him and Van Til, it is hard to see the difference between the above description of the heart and Dooyeweerd's elucidation of the heart as the self, the selfhood, the I. The disagreement, however, more precisely, is that Dooyeweerd has been hesitant to ascribe such qualities as

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42 Ibid., 83–84.
43 Ibid., 84.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
thinking, imagining, and willing to the heart because of the supratemporal character of the self (heart).

Dooyeweerd wants to view man in a duality fashion (not a dualism). This is not a dualism between substances (body/soul) but simply a duality-in-oneness. The human body, according to Dooyeweerd, is qualified by the so-called "act-structure." It is this act-structure which not only gives the body its character but also is the immediate, temporal expression of the self, the heart, which is supratemporal. This act-structure manifests itself in three different ways: knowing, imagining, and willing. It is this act-structure which permeates man in his totality and therefore makes him unique. Dooyeweerd himself, though he wants to see Van Til's mention of the soul in the discussion of human nature as a remnant of scholasticism, nevertheless uses the same terminology (soul) in a discussion of the root unity of man. In our attempt to ask as to the fundamental difference between Van Til's and Dooyeweerd's view of human nature, therefore, the primary significant difference again lies in Dooyeweerd's notion of and Van Til's rejection of anthropological transcendence! It is this idea of transcendence that again, in an attempt to avoid scholasticism, has caused significant problems in Dooyeweerd's philosophy. Not only problems of the nature/grace antinomy, but problems as to the reality, for any Christian philosophy, of life after death. Thus, Dooyeweerd could be misunderstood in his insistence that nothing of man remains after death. Due to the fact that the four anthropological manifestations (the physico-chemical, the organic, the psychical, and the act-structure) are temporal expressions and given the fact that in Dooyeweerd's philosophy "time is for a time" (thus the necessity of the supra-temporal), the act-structure (thinking, imagining, and willing) could all be thought of as ceasing at

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death. What remains, therefore, is the heart which, according to Dooyeweerd, can partake of none of the above *temporal* expressions. This attempt to escape scholasticism has caused more problems than it has solved. It merely pours new content into the same antithetic structure of nature/grace. Again, the view of time and consequently of man is in need of renovation in Dooyeweerd if true anthropological unity is to be maintained (and in a Christian philosophy it must).

But Dooyeweerd's analysis of Van Til's scholasticism is much bigger than the isolated problem of human nature. It is the fundamental problem of the immanent *logos* as Dooyeweerd supposes it is found in Van Til. Simply put, the immanent *logos* rears its ugly head whenever an attempt is made, whether consciously or unconsciously, to "logicize" or rationalize reality. It is this that Dooyeweerd sees Van Til attempting to do. This comes out most clearly in Dooyeweerd's concluding remarks to Van Til.

I am afraid that you have not realized that a theological reduction of the truths of fact to Leibniz's truths of reason would make even the simple facts of creation, fall into sin, and redemption a consequence of logical necessity in virtue of the principle of contradiction. This would result in an extreme logicistic view of "God's world-plan" which would leave no room for the sovereign freedom of God's will. For God's will can, in your view, only carry out the plan of God, not determine it.53

In this latter sentence, Dooyeweerd refers us to Van Til's discussion in *The Defense of the Faith* wherein

> It is not the knowledge of God that produces the facts of the created universe, it is rather the will of God as carrying out the plan of God. I hold God's counsel or will to be carried out by means of his work of creation and providence.54

Is it true that the above quote demonstrates that Van Til sees God's plan as determined itself by logic and only carried out by God? One who has read Van Til carefully knows that such is not the case. Due to the influence of idealism on Van Til's thought, he was much concerned in his writings to combat its teaching. In so doing, he has much too often been misunderstood by those who have not taken the time to understand, not just what he says, but what he *means* by what

53 Dooyeweerd, "Cornelius Van Til," 89.
54 Van Til, *Defense*, 38.
he says. Indeed, the very discussion to which Van Til responds
in the above quote centers around those who disagreed with
Van Til and publicly responded to his approach in a series
of articles in the *Calvin Forum*. The above quote is in response,
specifically, to Van Halsema’s criticism that Van Til has fallen
prey to phenomenalism. In the context of Van Halsema’s
discussion, he makes reference to the fact that Van Til’s
phrases (e.g., “the real is the rational and the rational is the
real,” and “the only way that Christianity can meet Kantian
thought is by setting over against its creativity of human
thought the creativity of divine thought”) are to be rejected as
“idealist aberrations.”55 The problem is that Van Til is seek­
ning contact with idealist philosophers by using their lan­
guage.56 There is no other way to effectively seek contact with
men unless we speak their language.

Now the primary problem of language as point of contact
is explained well by Stoker (especially as regards Van Til’s
use of the same).

By calling God a *concrete universal* you [Van Til] mean nothing but our
living triune God; and when you speak of the *rational* relations between
God and us, the absolute *rationality* of God and of Christianity being in the
last instance absolute *rationalism* or of the *rational* being *real* and *real*
being *rational* you want these expressions to be understood in a genuine and
thoroughly biblical sense. *To do you full justice, we, of course, have to do so; we
may not misunderstand what you really intend to convey.*

But there is a deeper issue at stake. The distinctive old terms concerned
may have been formed in answer to . . . false problems. For instance, the
interesting and complicated history of the term *universal* . . . presupposes
the . . . (false) problem, whether or to what extent reality can or may be
grasped in terms of general concepts of thought, *thereby implying . . .* that
reality should conform to the “nature” of general concepts of human
thought; and the terms “rational”, “rationality”, and “rationalism” pre­
suppose a . . . (wrong) special stress on reason . . . as distinct from un­
derstanding.57

Herein concessions must be made on both sides of the
argument. While it is true that Van Til uses the terms that
are a result of false problems in some cases, the *terms themselves*
have come to mean, by and large, a supposed resolution to

55 Franklin Van Halsema, "Van Til in Review," *Calvin Forum* 29 (1953) 84.
some understanding of reality. The terms "universal," "ra­
tional," et al., carry with them the context of that through
which reality is understood and grasped. Therefore, as a
Christian understands that man and his world could never be
understood apart from God the Creator-Redeemer of both,
one may, it seems, speak of God to the idealist as the "concrete
universal" or "absolute rationality." However, Stoker is cor­
rect that even if one speaks of God in this fashion, the prob­
lems posed to which those terms are "answers" are
themselves based upon false presuppositions. We see this in
Dooyeweerd as well where, for example, the *epoche* (a term
used by Dooyeweerd and borrowed from phenomenology)
 stems from the false ideal of neutrality.

Coming back to Dooyeweerd's charge that Van Til has "log­
icized" reality we would say that *with regard to terminology only*
Dooyeweerd could be right. However, is it not obvious, in
the quote from Dooyeweerd above, that if *God* carries out
*God's* plan, that, by virtue of the fact that it is *God's* plan, *he*
also determines it? To put the matter another way, it seems
that it is Dooyeweerd's distinction of the naive/theoretical
that causes him to see in Van Til a separation between truths
of fact and truths of reason as employed by Van Til. Had
Dooyeweerd seen the close connection of Van Til's own anal­
yses and a *Christian* philosophy, he would have seen that the
plan of God itself, as an analogical representation of "theo­
retical" thought, is also carried out (put into practice, ex­
perienced) by virtue of God's creation and providence. This
is foundational for any proper distinction and application of
theory and practice. It is God, who in his very speaking, put
into practice, into experience, what was, in a sense, theoretical
(i.e., the plan as in the mind of God). Dooyeweerd could not
see this because of his unwillingness to derive his "theoretical" ideas from the "naive" Scriptures! Such is the case in
Dooyeweerd's assertion that Van Til has subordinated truths
of fact to truths of reason in the manner of Leibniz. 58 Indeed,
to do so would "logicize" reality. Yet in the very context from
which Dooyeweerd quotes, Van Til affirms that the Christian
"must maintain that the truths of fact presented in Scripture

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must be what Scripture says they are or else they are meaningless.”

All “truths of fact,” says Van Til, are subordinate to Scripture, which, when viewed within the context of idealist logic and when viewed as the very Word of God, can be said to be the very “rationality” of God.

IV. Conclusion

If we can cut through the trees in order to see the forest, we will notice at least three things:

1. Van Til is concerned because of Dooyeweerd’s objectivism, i.e., his emphasis on suspending philosophical interpretation in order to discover the states of affairs. This emphasis leads, at least, to a misapplication of the principle of common grace.

2. Dooyeweerd is concerned because of what he perceives to be Van Til’s scholasticism.

3. Stoker, whose concerns are in line with both Dooyeweerd and Van Til, sees Van Til’s approach as proper to a consistently Calvinistic philosophy as over against Dooyeweerd’s approach.

In answer to the problem of objectivism, it must first be said that Van Til, in another context, condemns such approaches.

It will be found upon careful scrutiny that all three of these characteristics just enumerated (a) a tendency to identification of the human mind with the laws of the universe as a whole, (b) a tendency toward depersonalization and abstraction, and (c) a tendency toward intellectualism will be found to be characteristic of all non- or antitheistic thought.

On the other hand, Michael Polanyi has succinctly stated the problems inherent in objectivist thought.

Mathematical science is widely accepted as the most perfect of sciences, and science as the most perfect of all feats of intelligence. While these claims may be excessive or even altogether mistaken, they express the

59 Van Til, Defense, 134.
inescapable ideal of formalized intelligence, which would eliminate from its manifestations every trace of personal commitment.  

Polanyi has correctly seen the problem in formalized, objectivized intelligence. Further on he says, "Epistemology has traditionally aimed at defining truth and falsity in impersonal terms, for these alone are accepted as truly universal. The framework of commitment leaves no scope for such an endeavor."  

While Van Til would see the framework of commitment in a radically different way than Polanyi, the point is clear. One may not correctly view reality or its processes in simply structural, objective terms. One must consider the essentially personal element both of knowledge (contra a structural definition) and of "objective" reality (with God as its personal environment).

We have already dealt with Dooyeweerd's charge of scholasticism in Van Til.

In summary, Dooyeweerd's philosophy allows for no covenantal analyses. Had he seen, with Van Til, that all men are either covenant-keepers or covenant-breakers, he would not have rested with a mere description of objective, structural states of affairs. He would, in the last analysis, have seen the states of affairs for what they are, revelation, and therefore always and everywhere calling men to acknowledge their God. Thus, creation itself imposes covenantal obligation on men. Van Til has seen this because he has self-consciously started with the Bible. Dooyeweerd has not because he has sought to begin his inquiry with supposedly "purely structural" considerations.

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62 Ibid., 303.