*Journal of Markets & Morality*
Volume 25, Number 1: 23–43


# The Analogical Concepts of Economics and Theology

## A Reformational-Philosophical Perspective

*Joost Hengstmengel*
*Erasmus Economics & Theology Institute*

Economics and theology share a long history of interaction and mutual influence. In the nineteenth century, their ways parted. In the past few decades, there is a new interest in the combination of both sciences. A promising new approach focuses on concepts that are at the heart of both economics and theology. By studying and relating them, economists and theologians may develop a richer language and reach a higher level of realism. According to the tradition of reformational philosophy, conceptual similarities across different academic disciplines are indeed to be expected. They point to the limits and interrelatedness of the individual sciences, and hence to a deeper coherence and meaning of reality. This article discusses what the neo-Calvinist philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd, Dirk Vollenhoven, and their followers has to say for the relationship between economics and theology. Focusing on the theory of analogy as developed by Dooyeweerd, it shows that reformational philosophy offers a rich framework to clarify their intersections and interdependences.

## Introduction

Economics and theology does not seem the most obvious combination. For while economists study man as "an animal that makes exchanges," as bishop-economist Richard Whately had it, theologians are interested in the spiritual rather than the material, zooming in on man as a religious being. And yet, both academic disciplines share a long history. The ties between theology and economics stretch back all the way to the patristic and medieval period. Economic thinking was the province of bishops and theologians for nearly a millennium. Even in the

early modern ages of rationalism and enlightenment, natural theology informed the emerging science of economics. It was only in the nineteenth century that the ways of economics and theologians parted. Due to a broader secularization of academia, mainstream economics gradually dispensed with theological assumptions and notions. For the last fifty years or so, economists and theologians have engaged in a process of reconciliation. Witnessing the emergence of new institutes, journals, and special chairs in economics and theology, both disciplines increasingly aim at cross-fertilization. Their relationship can and has since then been studied from various angles and perspectives.[1]

A promising new approach focuses on concepts that are employed in both disciplines. According to theologian Paul van Geest, a mutual *terminologische Begriffsklärung*—clarification of terms and concepts—may foster interdisciplinary research between economists and theologians. Inspired by Daniel Kahneman's suggestion of developing a "richer language" to reflect on economic processes, he argues that theology is useful, or even indispensable, to enrich economic concepts and vice versa. Theology can help "to develop a language that is more sensitive to the complexity of human beings as economic actors."[2] Van Geest mentions such concepts as gratuity, trust, and inner drives or motivations that theologians have studied for ages and now also receive attention from leading economists. He himself takes a theological, mostly Augustinian-inspired look at bounded rationality, bounded morality, and bounded willpower, concluding that theology may be helpful to better our understanding of the complexity and implications of these economic notions.

The search for analogies between economics and theology is one of the focal points of "economic theology." This new academic field, which has intellectual roots stretching back to Karl Marx and Max Weber, needs to be distinguished from religious or theological approaches to economics—such as Neo-Calvinist economics. It can be defined as "the study of the forms of interaction between theological imaginaries on the one hand, and economic thought and economic–managerial practices on the other, both past and present. It identifies explicit and implicit theologies inherent in economic concepts, institutions and practices as well as the role of economic terminology within theological thought, both past and present."[3]

Economic theology has both an archeological component, as it retrospectively studies the theological underpinnings of modern economic thought, and a genealogical one, which follows the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben in studying the development of the idea of economic order from late antique theology onwards. Its practitioners distinguish three methodological entry points of economic-theological research: analogies ("striking family resemblances"),

homologies ("moments of coemergence"), and resonances ("affective affinities") between theological and economic concepts.[4] *The Routledge Handbook of Economic Theology*, from which these definitions are taken, accordingly devotes one part to theological concepts and their "economic meaning" and one to economic concepts and their "theological anchoring." Examples of the former include faith and trust, justification and salvation, and guilt; examples of the latter are profit and interest, debt and credit, and property and ownership.

In this contribution, the idea of analogies as starting point for economic-theological research will be considered in the light of reformational philosophy. This neo-Calvinist philosophy was developed in the 1920s and 1930s by the Dutch legal philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd (1894–1977) and theologian and historian of philosophy Dirk Vollenhoven (1892–1978), and came with its own theory of analogy. Dooyeweerd claimed that the Greek *analogia* (proportionality), which played an important role in scholastic logic, was for the first time fundamentally criticized in reformational philosophy.[5] Rather than forming the foundation of conceptualization, the idea of analogy required a "deeper unity of meaning" to acquire any philosophical relevance. Earlier, he wrote that one problem sticking to all academic disciplines had up to then largely been ignored, namely that there exist "elementary basic concepts which the various special sciences employ without giving an account of their peculiar meaning and mutual connections."[6]

Dooyeweerd and his brother-in-law Vollenhoven were no professional economists. However, existing studies of Dooyeweerd's economic thought show that he developed a unique, neo-Calvinist approach to economics.[7] What is more, Dooyeweerd exerted a direct influence on several trained economists, including T. P. van der Kooy, Jan Ridder, J. Wemelsfelder, Bob Goudzwaard, A. Kouwenhoven, Roelf Haan, Bas Kee, and—outside the Netherlands—A. B. Cramp (England), F. C. van Niekerk Fourie (South Africa), Alan Storkey (England), and Adolfo Garcia de la Sienra (Mexico), who all employ(ed) Dooyeweerdian elements in their economic theories.[8] For this reason alone, Dooyeweerd's philosophy must be addressed in a special issue on Neo-Calvinism and economics. The idea of analogy that is central to his and Vollenhoven's philosophy particularly deserves more attention. In the 1950s, Dooyeweerd gave a lecture in which he argued that the analogical moments in economics still demanded further study.[9] Some work has been done since. This article is meant as a new step in that direction.

## Reformational Philosophy on Economics and Theology

Reformational philosophy (or Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea, as it was formerly known) as developed by Dooyeweerd in collaboration with Vollenhoven broadly speaking consists of three parts. These are discussed in the respective volumes of Dooyeweerd's magnum opus *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought.* It first offers a critique (in the Kantian sense) of theoretical thought; second, a theory of the "modal aspects" of reality; and third, an account of the "individuality-structures" (things, events) of nature and society. Throughout, it attacks the pretended autonomy of reason in philosophy and science, and argues for the superiority of the Christian idea of creation, fall, and redemption over the Greek, scholastic, and humanistic religious presuppositions of Western thought. All these ideas cannot and need not be discussed here.[10] For our purposes, Dooyeweerd's "General Theory of the Modal Spheres," as the second volume of his *New Critique* is titled, forms a good entry point that will take us along some key notions of reformational philosophy.

Meaning, as a characteristic Dooyeweerdian phrase reads, is the (mode of) being of all that is created. Thanks to creational diversity, people experience the world around them in a multiplicity of ways. For example, things and beings have a numerical aspect (they are quantifiable), a linguistic aspect (they can be described in language), and an economic aspect (they have a value and price). Dooyeweerd distinguishes fifteen of such modal (from the Latin *modus*: mode or manner of doing or being) aspects or modalities, including an economic aspect and aspect of faith. All fifteen, from the numerical aspect to the "pistic" aspect (from the Greek *pistis*: faith or trust), are listed below in table 1. They are irreducible and have their own "meaning kernel" or "nucleus" characterizing their peculiar nature. Arguing that they are also manifestations in time, Dooyeweerd calls the lower-numbered aspects "earlier" and higher-numbered "later" aspects. Rather than a hierarchy, the aspects form a succession in that earlier aspects enable for ("found") the increasingly complex later ones, and later aspects allow earlier ones to deepen ("open") their meaning.

**Table 1**
**The Modal Aspect of Reality and the Corresponding Special Sciences**

| | *Modal Aspects* | *Core Meaning* | *Special Sciences* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | numerical | quantity | mathematics |
| 2. | spatial | extension | geometrics |
| 3. | kinematic | movement | chemistry/physics |
| 4. | physical | energy and matter | chemistry/physics |
| 5. | biotic | life (vitality) | biology |
| 6. | psychical | feeling | psychology |
| 7. | analytical | distinction | logic |
| 8. | historical | formative power | history |
| 9. | linguistic | symbolic representation | linguistics |
| 10. | social | interrelation | sociology |
| 11. | economic | frugality | economics |
| 12. | aesthetic | harmony | aesthetics |
| 13. | juridical | retaliation | law |
| 14. | ethical | love | ethics |
| 15. | pistic | faith | theology |

In our everyday experience, the world is not an aggregate of different aspects but a *kosmos* or ordered whole. All things and events display all fifteen modalities—if not as part of their own being, then as a way they can be experienced. Human beings too have all aspects, in the form of functions. It is only in the theoretical attitude of thought, in which they establish an antithetical relation or *Gegenstand* by opposing the analytical function of observation and thinking to their experience, that reality splits up in different aspects. They then make an abstraction of the economic, pistic, or any other aspect of the phenomena around them, and start to acquire an analytic insight into them. This is also the point where the various sciences—both the natural sciences and humanities—come in. As Dooyeweerd sees it, the different modal aspects as well delimit the unique viewpoints under which the special sciences examine the empirical world (see table 1 again). Whereas philosophy investigates the nature, structure, and relationship of the various aspects, the special sciences ideally focus on how the single aspect in question manifests itself in reality.

What about economics and theology? To begin with the former, from a reformational-philosophical perspective, the science of economics is bound to

study the economic aspect of empirical reality, and more specifically the variable phenomena that are particularly qualified by this aspect.[11] It sees economics as a normative science because the economic aspect entails a distinction between economic and uneconomic behavior. The founders of reformational philosophy define the meaning core of the economic aspect as *waarde-afwegende besparing*,[12] which literally means value-balancing saving or frugality. According to Dooyeweerd, economy in its scientific meaning is "the sparing or frugal mode of administering scarce goods, implying an alternative choice of their destination with regard to the satisfaction of different human needs." The terms sparing and frugal in this definition "refer to our awareness that an excessive or wasteful satisfaction of a particular need at the expense of other more urgent needs is uneconomical. Economy demands the balancing of needs according to a plan, and the distribution of the scarce means at our disposal according to such a plan."[13]

Various economists in the reformational-philosophical tradition have criticized Dooyeweerd's characterization of economy.[14] They have pointed out that it is very close to Lionel Robbins's scarcity definition of economics from his 1932 *Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science*, and hence insufficiently distinctive from neoclassical economics. For example, Dooyeweerd's student Haan criticized the idea of economics as the science of scarcity on multiple grounds, including the fact that it erroneously assumes infinite human needs. Since the economic aspect directly presupposes the social, he believes it can better be described as the aspect of intersubjective valuation. Economics then becomes the social science of exchange relationships. It actually studies "the formation of values as they emerge in the traffic between valuating subjects."[15] Others have highlighted Dooyeweerd's distinction between the technical principle of efficiency, "the striving after the highest result at the smallest costs," and economy proper that involves an "alternative destination of scarce goods for the different needs *after a scale of urgency*."[16] For example, Ridder argued that the idea of urgency is only partly determined by natural causes. It is as much the result of human decision-making and hence involves a moment of will and, ultimately, faith. This is why in Christianity also man's scale of needs has to be sanctified.[17]

Even more controversial than Dooyeweerd's definition of economy is his view of theology. Dooyeweerd, Vollenhoven, and most of their followers regard theology as a theoretical, special science.[18] Theology does not give us a philosophical total view of reality but stands in an antithetical relation to the pistic aspect. Its theoretical object is not the divine itself, which transcends all modal aspects of our experience, but its manifestation or embodiment in Holy Scripture and the way it presents itself as doctrine and norm of faith. In one of the most comprehensive studies on theology in the reformational-philosophical tradition, theologian

Andree Troost argues that actually the term "science of faith" is to be preferred over "theology," since knowledge of God (*theos-logos*) cannot be a scientific object in the modern sense of the term. The science of faith studies the life of faith, and has three research objects: (1) concrete religious life, (2) the modal aspect of faith that characterizes its manifestations, and (3) the core meaning of the pistic aspect that qualifies the concrete entities of religious life.[19]

Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven stress that the pistic aspect cannot be identified with the act of religious belief. While religion is a supertemporal relationship and denotes a practice, faith is a subjective function of man as well as an objective aspect of everything in reality. Faith as (1) an *aspect* of reality should thus be distinguished from (2) man's subjective function of belief, (3) the actual content of one's faith, and (4) the fact that all things function in the aspect of faith objectively.[20] Dooyeweerd defines the core of the pistic aspect as the "ultimate mode of certitude within the temporal order of experience which refers to an indubitable revelation of God touching us in the religious center of our existence."[21] Vollenhoven, in turn, interprets the pistic (or "pisteutic") aspect as "accepting the Word-revelation of God or," he adds, "what one considers to be such as Word-revelation."[22] The latter implies—and Dooyeweerd subscribes to this view—that faith can be (transcendental) certitude of any kind, whether religious, agnostic, atheist, and so forth. Everyone possesses faith because believing belongs to the structure of human life.[23] As the last or boundary aspect of temporal reality, faith also gives direction to the way culture develops. In reformational-philosophical terms, it shapes the cultural process of opening or "disclosure" of the pre-pistic aspects.

Seeing that economics and theology are both special sciences that deal with a specific modal aspect of a multifaceted reality, they may enter into a dialogue as equal partners. As reformational philosophy sees it, the science of faith is not more important than the science of economics, nor is economics more scientific than theology. They are on an equal footing. That said, the aspect of faith does presuppose the economic modality. Faith requires economy—as will be seen in the fourth section. This means that economics may also serve as an auxiliary science to theology. However, the fact that faith has an economic foundation, Dooyeweerd argues, does not mean that it can be reduced to it.[24] This precisely is the problem with the Marxian view of history. Its main error is not that it assumes an economic substructure of religious life but that it disregards the cosmic complexity of reality by explaining faith away. By employing the rhetorical device of *hysteron proteron*, Marxist historians reverse the order of reality. Faith, it is true, is dependent on earlier aspects, but as the most complex modality cannot be adequately explained in terms of those aspects alone.

## The Theory of Analogy and Economics

The economic and pistic aspect, in Dooyeweerd's and Vollenhoven's ontological reading of Kuyper's notion, are sovereign in their own sphere. Sphere sovereignty here means that they cannot be reduced to each other nor to any other modality and have a unique meaning core. But how can we be sure that they are irreducible and that frugality and faith are their respective cores? The answer lies in analogies. Focusing on the economic aspect in this section, the very idea of economy is also employed outside the realm of economics. For example, there is such a thing as "economy of thought" in logic that demands the simplest possible explanation of a phenomenon. In aesthetics, one speaks of "aesthetic economy" that eschews the superfluous. In both cases, "economy" has a qualifying adjective (of thought, aesthetic) to indicate that the term is used in a loose, unoriginal sense. These and other analogical uses of the term *economy* show that there must also be an original sense of frugality with a corresponding economic aspect. Its core meaning (economy, frugality, saving) is determined by studying the common denominator in all economic analogies.

Dooyeweerd's theory of analogy seeks to solve a problem that in his view had largely been ignored.[25] Namely, whence this analogical use of fundamental concepts in the different branches of science? At first sight, it seems that this state of affairs simply expresses the unity of scientific thought. Logic, economics, and aesthetics study the same empirical reality and do so by employing a partly overlapping terminology. However, on a closer look, the specific meaning of these analogies differs with the scientific viewpoint in question. The term *economy* in economy of thought and aesthetic economy strictly speaking has a different meaning than what economists understand by it. So apparently analogies are "analogical principles, which in itself are multivocal, because they are used in other special sciences as well, but in each of these receive a different meaning without breaking the interrelationship between these meanings."[26]

According to reformational philosophy, all fifteen modal aspects have "analogical moments." They refer to earlier—a feature called "retrocipation"—and/or later aspects—"anticipation."[27] Thus economy of thought is an anticipation and aesthetic economy a retrocipation to the economic aspect. By virtue of this analogical structure, there is not only sphere sovereignty but also "sphere universality." In his 1954 publication "The Analogical Concepts of the Special Sciences," Dooyeweerd summarizes this phenomenon as follows:

> every aspect of experience expresses within its modal structure the entire temporal order and connection of all the aspects. Only the central moment of its modal structure, what we may call the modal nucleus of the aspect,

> manifests here an original and univocal character. But it can express this irreducible nucleus of meaning of the aspect only in connection with a series of analogical moments of meaning, which, on the one hand, refer back to the nuclei of meaning of all the earlier aspects and, on the other hand, point forward to the nuclei of meaning of all the later ones [anticipation]. It is to these analogical moments in the modal structure of the various aspects of our experience that the analogical concepts of the various special sciences are related.[28]

This dense, typically Dooyeweerdian quotation respectively introduces the ideas of sphere universality, core meaning, retrocipation, and anticipation. It also states that the core meaning of a given modal aspect is determined in connection with the whole series of analogical concepts referring to that aspect. Therefore, what is unique for the economic aspect can be grasped from studying economic analogies. Such a "method of confrontation" studies all retrocipations and anticipations from and to the economic modality.[29]

In the same 1954 lecture, Dooyeweerd enumerates various economic analogies himself. First, there are analogical concepts in economics referring to earlier aspects. For example, economists speak of "economic space," "economic mobility," and "economic life," which pertain to the core meaning of the spatial (extension), physical (movement), and biotic (life) aspect. They come with the adjective "economic" not only to avoid misunderstanding but also to indicate a shift of meaning. In the analogical use of extension, as in the case of economic space, something different is meant than pure mathematical spatiality. Next to analogical moments in the vocabulary of economists, there are examples of the concept of economy being employed outside economics: "Logical economy of thought, technical economy, lingual economy, aesthetic economy, economy in the forms of social intercourse, juridical economy, are separate analogies of the original economic aspect of our experienc[e]."[30]

Dooyeweerd's pupil Popma has calculated that based on the number of fourteen modal aspects—as the reformational-philosophical tradition initially assumed—there are 910 analogies of which 182 are primary, directly between two aspects.[31] Assuming the existence of fifteen modal aspects, there exist ten anticipations and four retrocipations to the economic aspect. That is, there is one anticipation to economics in each of the ten preceding aspects and one retrocipation to economics in each of the four succeeding aspects. At the same time, the economic aspect in itself has ten retrocipations to each of the ten earlier aspects and four anticipations to each of the four later aspects. Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven identified some of these analogies, as did their students. We can tabulate the various economic analogies and analogical concepts in economics as follows:

**Table 2**
**Economic Analogies and Analogical Concepts**[32]

| | ***Modal Aspects*** | ***Economic Analogies in Other Sciences*** | ***Analogical Concepts in Economics*** |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | numerical | | |
| 2. | spatial | | economic space |
| 3. | kinematic | | economic mobility; price movement |
| 4. | physical | | market equilibrium; economic causality |
| 5. | biotic | | economic life |
| 6. | psychical | | |
| 7. | analytical | logical or analytical economy | economic rationality (Haan) |
| 8. | historical | cultural economy | economic power (Haan); economic organization (Haan) |
| 9. | linguistic | linguistic or symbolic economy; linguistic value (Popma) | |
| 10. | social | conventional or ceremonial economy | economic traffic |
| 11. | economic | | |
| 12. | aesthetic | aesthetic economy | |
| 13. | juridical | juridical economy, interest, compensation, etc. | just price in scholastic economics (Goudzwaard) |
| 14. | ethical | economy of love | |
| 15. | pistic | *(to be discussed in section 4)* | *(to be discussed in section 4)* |

*Other analogical concepts in economics might be easily added to the right column.

What is striking is that Dooyeweerd and his followers neglect to mention any economic analogies for the first six aspects, which together form the so-called natural side of reality. Judging from the "system" of reformational philosophy, these must exist. In a general sense, one might think of the "economy of nature" idea that God the Creator arranged and deposed all things in an all-wise manner. The famous taxonomist Carl Linnaeus used the phrase in his natural-theological thesis *Oeconomia naturae*, thus suggesting that the natural world is organized analogously to a well-ordered household (recall that economy derives from *oikonomia*, household management).[33] More specifically, the ancient maxims *natura horret superfluum* (nature abhors the superfluous) and *natura nec abundat in superfluis, nec deficit in necessariis* (nature abounds not in what is superfluous, nor is deficient in what is necessary) can be mentioned. As shall be seen in a moment, to Dooyeweerd eschewing the superfluous is typical for economic analogies.

With regard to the cultural side of reality, Dooyeweerd does discuss some of the analogical uses of the term *economy* in detail. He explains that logicians apply logical or analytical economy (economy of thought, *das denkökonomische Prinzip*). Among historians, there is such a thing as the normative principle of cultural economy, meaning that "the different cultural factors ought to be prevented from expanding their power in an excessive sense." Linguists, in turn, speak of linguistic or symbolic economy (economy of speech) that "wards off the superfluous in symbolic signification." In social theory, there is the phenomenon called ceremonial economy. An economic retrocipation in the aesthetic aspect is aesthetic economy or economic harmony (cf. *meden agan*, nothing in excess). According to this principle, the "aesthetically superfluous, the 'piling it on,' 'the overdoing it,' ought to be warded off in harmonic sobriety." Next, legal or juridical economy expresses itself in "a well-balanced harmony of a multiplicity of interests, warding off any excessive actualizing of special concerns detrimental to others." It also implies the prevention of excessive reactions against crime (cf. the ancient *lex talionis*) and thus is the opposite of orderless revenge. Finally, ethics demands an economy of love, "the just distribution of the sacrifices demanded by love with respect to the different moral duties."[34]

The fundamental meaning moment in all anticipations and retrocipations to the economic aspect is frugality, "the avoidance of superfluous or excessive ways of reaching our aim."[35] And yet these analogical moments cannot be said to belong to the economic aspect. Economy of thought, for instance, is not an economic concept but ultimately an analytical one. Rather than simply applying the economic principle of a sparing administration of scarce goods to analytical problems, it uses "economy" in an analogical sense. Whenever this is forgotten, the modal boundaries get blurred, and theoretical antinomies occur. The same

holds for analogical concepts *in* economics. Economic causality is an economic rather than a kinematic moment, and thus cannot be reduced to the kinematic aspect or analyzed in purely kinematic terms. Dooyeweerd himself gives the example of price theory, in which economists tend to forget that the numerical and mechanical concepts that they use are in the end analogies, resulting in theoretical antinomies. To avoid these, the analogical concepts *in* economics require further study.[36]

We now return to the question raised earlier in this section: Whence these retrocipations and anticipations? According to Dooyeweerd, the phenomenon of analogies is not simply a linguistic coincidence. It has ontological significance. Analogies basically give expression to two states of affairs in reality. First, they are proof of a cosmic time order:

> A modal analogy is qualified by the original meaning-kernel of the aspect in whose structure it occurs. But in the order of time it is inseparably interwoven with the original meaning-kernel of the aspect to which it ultimately points back. Hence, an analogy is founded in the entire modal structure of temporal reality. It has an intrinsically ontological character, and therefore it is not allowed in scientific philosophy to use it indiscriminately in a mere metaphorical sense.[37]

In other words, analogical concepts show the interrelatedness of the various aspects and their corresponding special sciences. They are a safeguard against reductionist "isms" in science. Dooyeweerd argues that since there are analogical references from each aspect to all other aspects, they are a true "mirror" of the entire creational order. Vollenhoven uses the ancient book metaphor: all aspects are different chapters in God's book of creation.[38] Second, analogies express

> the deeper root-unity of all modal aspects in the religious center of temporal reality. The relation between an analogy and the modal meaning-kernel to which it ultimately points back presupposes this deeper unity, which must transcend time precisely because the modal diversity of the aspects exists in virtue of the order of time. The religious root-unity of all temporal aspects is itself the creaturely expression of the absolute unity of the divine Origin of all creation.[39]

Put more simply, analogies exist because of a deeper unity of reality that binds all aspects together. This unity, according to the reformational-philosophical tradition, is of a religious nature.

## Economic-Theological Analogies

Returning to the relationship between economics and theology, the foregoing discussion raises the question of whether Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven happened to identify any economic-pistic analogies.

To begin with pistic anticipations within the economic aspect, reformational philosophy leaves no doubt that these do exist. In a lecture on the law idea in economics, Dooyeweerd explicitly states that in the "structure" of the economic aspect there are anticipatory moments to the aesthetic, juridical, ethical, and pistic aspect, which in case of the latter "aim the theoretical view at the religious root of the whole of economic life."[40] Unfortunately, he does not explain here or elsewhere in his vast oeuvre of what such an anticipation to faith looks like. From his discussion of other modal aspects, however, it can be concluded that pistic anticipations more generally "qualify" the meaning kernel in question "by a relation of faith." For example, the psychical aspect of feeling anticipates the aspect of faith "in the feeling of confidence and certainty in the faith in God's revelation or in the feeling of unbelief, respectively."[41] Similarly, the economic aspect can be said to anticipate the pistic aspect if economy acquires a positive relation to faith. Then the sparing or frugal mode of administering scarce goods, as Dooyeweerd defines it, is being directed at the faith in God. Such a faith-based or faith-driven economy can possibly be best summarized as "stewardship."

*Stewardship*, of course, is a popular metaphor in Christian economic ethics. It gives expression to the belief that humans are responsible for God's creation and should take care of it, first and foremost in an economic sense. In modern translations of the New Testament, the term is used at places where the original Greek has "economist" (*oikonómos*). In the parable of the unjust steward, the master calls his economist who was accused of wasting his possessions and asks him: "give account [*logon*] of your stewardship [*oikonomias*]" (Luke 16:2). The master's question, which symbolizes our economic responsibilities to God, is central to economy guided by faith. Various writers in the reformational-philosophical tradition have accordingly placed stewardship in the center of Christian economic theory.

The best-known economist in this tradition, Goudzwaard, went as far as to claim that stewardship is the actual meaning kernel of the economic aspect. Already in his dissertation, he writes that "the economic aspect of human actions that can be analytically distinguished in reality is based on a God-given task or mandate; namely the mandate to utilize and manage all scarce means of creation as a good steward."[42] According to Goudzwaard, sound economics does not start from scarcity but "entrustedness," that is, the conviction that God has entrusted

his creation to us and our task is to care for it and preserve it. Economists should return to the original meaning of the term *oikonomia* and engage in preservation (careful administration of all aspects of creation) and fruitful disposition (preservation of human life and provision for the social and cultural needs of society).[43] From a Dooyeweerdian point of view, one may wonder if Goudzwaard does not dissolve the boundaries between the economic, ethical, and pistic aspects. By reinterpreting the meaning kernel of the economic as stewardship rather than seeing stewardship as an anticipation, other anticipations and retrocipations such as logical economy and aesthetic economy become senseless.

Needless to say, the stewardship approach to economic problems is often missed in real life. The way in which the economic anticipates the later aspects, including the terminal aspect of faith, depends on the prevailing set of beliefs in a given society. Goudzwaard prefers to speak of "ideologies" and modern "idols." In Dooyeweerd's terminology, the economic law-sphere discloses or "unfolds" itself under the guidance of faith. Assuming that one's conception of the economy depends on one's "religious starting point and theoretical view of reality rooted in it,"[44] he argues that this disclosure process will be either harmonious or disharmonious. Whereas under the guidance of true Christian faith all economic analogies would gradually manifest themselves, historically speaking this development has often been frustrated by unchristian beliefs. Particularly the Enlightenment's unbounded faith in reason and science led to a disharmonious economic development.[45] Due to the economic theories of the French Physiocrats and classical political economy, economic life was strongly individualized, rationalized, and technicized. The rise of economic individualism and the natural-scientific conception of economic laws led to an "excessive development of certain anticipatory moments of the economic aspect, at the expense of all the others." As such, the disclosure of the economic sphere under the guidance of Enlightenment faith meant a negation of the principle of cultural economy as discussed above. Goudzwaard calls the economic theories involved in this process instances of "closed science" maintaining a restrictive interpretation of the economic aspect and ignoring nearly all of its disclosure potential.[46]

Having identified stewardship as possible economic anticipation, we finally turn to economic retrocipations within the pistic aspect. The example that Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven give is the idea of sacrifice. The former writes, "The economy of faith requires a sacrifice of the relative for the absolute, weighing value and countervalue and saving the temporal for the eternal." This, Dooyeweerd reasons, is why in Ephesians 5:16 Paul the apostle speaks of the "buying of time" (*exagorazomenoi ton kairon*) and likewise in Romans 8:18 calls the sufferings of the present time "not worthy" (*ouk axia*) to be compared with the

eternal glory. "Without this economic analogy no real faith is possible. Precisely in the willingness to sacrifice, in which ethical and juridical analogies intertwine themselves with economical ones, faith reveals its great resilience."[47] Elsewhere he puts it as follows: "Faith also reveals a structural, inner coherence with the economic aspect of reality. True faith is always accompanied by a readiness to sacrifice. Even among pagans, sacrifice is an essential expression of faith life. True sacrificial readiness of the [C]hristian faith rests upon man's evaluation of either temporal or eternal treasures." He now illustrates this economic analogy within faith with Christ's discussion with the rich young man (Matt. 19:16f) and the parable of the pearl of great price (Matt. 13:45–46). "Again, the valuation that occurs in faith is not economic, but it is inseparably interwoven with economic valuation."[48]

One may wonder if the idea of sacrifice is the only economic analogy in the life of faith. Debt and trust, for example, are central to theology and also have an economic counterpart. In the context of reformational philosophy, however, they do not qualify as actual analogies since they lack the element of frugality. A better candidate would be the very idea of economy in Christian theology.[49] Ever since the early church, Christian theologians have used the term *oikonomia* (*oeconomia*) to denote such diverse but related things as the counsel and government of God, the order of creation, the plan of salvation, and the interplay within the Trinity. In each of these cases, the term *economy* gives expression to God's effectiveness and efficiency. It aligns with Dooyeweerd's remark that economy comes down to the "balancing of needs according to a plan, and the distribution of the scarce means at our disposal according to such a plan." Thus understood, the idea of divine economy can be seen as another economic retrocipation within the sphere of faith and theology.

## Conclusion

This article connects to the renewed interest in the combination of economics and theology. It dealt with their relationship in Dooyeweerd's and Vollenhoven's neo-Calvinist philosophy while focusing on its theory of analogy. It first explored the general theory of modal aspects, and subsequently zoomed in on the economic and pistic aspect and the science of economics and theology. It then presented Dooyeweerd's theory of analogy, taking economics and economic analogies as an example. The article finally discussed some economic-theological analogies identified in the reformational-philosophical tradition. One of the findings of this article was that this tradition sees both economics and theology as special sciences that study man and his institutions from different perspectives and, it

should be added, by employing different methodologies. They may therefore be seen as equal partners in a scientific dialogue. As Haan has it, the fact that economics and theology are interrelated benefits both of them and prevents from reductionism. It as well leads to a "new language" in both disciplines, "which relates analogously."[50] The question that remains is indeed what the theory of analogy implies for the envisioned cooperation between economists and theologians. What is in it for the new field called economic theology?

As I see it, the importance of the reformational-philosophical theory of analogy lies in its incentive to study analogical concepts in the various special sciences. As such, it also provides a philosophical stimulus for investigating economic-theological analogies. As we have seen, Dooyeweerd believes that the phenomenon of analogies is not just a linguistic coincidence. Analogical concepts prove sphere universality and hence show the interrelatedness of the different aspects of reality and their corresponding sciences. They not only underline the great diversity of God's creation but also form a safeguard against all kinds of attempts at reductionism in science. According to reformational philosophy, economic-theological analogies not only are to be expected, they necessarily exist. As essential elements of a meaningful reality, the economic and pistic aspect refer to each other. The study of analogical concepts helps define what is central to the various special sciences. As said, Dooyeweerd argues that the various aspects can only express their core meaning in a series of analogical moments. In the case of the economic and pistic aspect, this would imply that studying economic-theological analogies may help pinpoint the subject matter of economics and theology. Most important, perhaps, is that analogies give expression to a deeper, basically religious unity of reality. This makes their study close to a spiritual enterprise.

## Notes

1. A. M. C. Waterman, "On Economics, Theology, and Religion," *Journal of Economics, Theology and Religion* 1, no. 1 (2021): 13–24.

2. Paul van Geest, *Morality in the Market Place: Reconciling Theology and Economics* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 69.

3. Stefan Schwarzkopf, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Economic Theology* (London: Routledge, 2020), 4.

4. Schwarzkopf, ed., *Routledge Handbook of Economic Theology*, 4–5. As Mitchell Dean, "What Is Economic Theology? A New Governmental-Political Paradigm?," *Theory, Culture & Society* 36, no. 3 (2019): 3–26 shows, the idea of analogy as a method goes back to Carl Schmitt's 1922 book *Politische Theologie*. To Schmitt, *political* theology denotes the awareness that "all significant concept of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts," not only because of their historical development but also because of their systematic structure. Hence the importance of studying "fundamentally systematic and methodical analogies," in his case between political-juridical and theological concepts of a given period. See Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Cambridge, MA/London: MIT Press, 1985), 36–37.

5. Herman Dooyeweerd, "Analogie, analogia. I. Wijsbegeerte," in F. W. Grosheide and G. P. van Itterzon, ed., *Christelijke encyclopedie*, 2nd ed. (Kampen: Kok, 1956), 192–94.

6. Herman Dooyeweerd, "De analogische grondbegrippen der vakwetenschappen en hun betrekking tot de structuur van den menselijken ervaringshorizon," *Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen* 17, no. 6 (1954): 171 (trans. Robert D. Knudsen).

7. B. Kee, "Filosofie van de economie," in R. van Woudenberg, ed., *Kennis en werkelijkheid. Tweede inleiding tot een christelijke filosofie* (Amsterdam/Kampen: Buijten & Schipperheijn - Kok, 1996), 267–92; Adolfo García de la Sienra, "The Modal Laws of Economics," *Philosophia Reformata* 63, no. 2 (1998): 182–205; Adolfo García de la Sienra, "The Economic Sphere," *Axiomathes* 20, no. 1 (2010): 81–94; Joost Hengstmengel, "Dooyeweerd's Philosophy of Economics," *Journal of Markets & Morality* 15, no. 2 (2012): 415–29. Note that while the early Dooyeweerd explicitly called his philosophy "Calvinist," he later preferred "ecumenical-Christian" instead.

8. On the Neo-Calvinist and Reformed tradition in economics more generally, see Bob Goudzwaard, "Christian Social Thought in the Dutch Neo-Calvinist Tradition," in Walter Block and Irving Hexham, eds., *Religion, Economics and Social Thought* (Vancouver: Fraser Institute, 1986), 251–65; John Tiemstra, "Every Square Inch:

Kuyperian Social Theory and Economics," in James M. Dean and A. M. C. Waterman, eds., *Religion and Economics: Normative Social Theory* (New York: Springer, 1999), 85–98; Bob Goudzwaard and Roel Jongeneel, "Reformed Christian Economics," in Paul Oslington, ed., *Oxford Handbook of Christianity and Economics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 206–23.

9. Herman Dooyeweerd, 'Wijsbegeerte en economie', *Correspondentiebladen van de Vereniging voor Calvinistische Wijsbegeerte*, 20.2 (1956), 19–20 (p. 19).

10. For English introductions from his own pen, see Herman Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1960); idem, *Roots of Western Culture: Pagan, Secular, and Christian Options*, ed. Mark Vander Vennen and Bernard Zylstra (Toronto: Wedge, 1970). For a summary, see Joost Hengstmengel and Bas Hengstmengel, "Dooyeweerd, Herman (1894-1977)," in *Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of Philosophers* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021).

11. Herman Dooyeweerd, 'De sociologische verhouding tussen recht en economie en het probleem van het zgn. "economisch recht,'" in idem, ed., *Opstellen op het gebied van recht, staat en maatschappij* (Amsterdam: S. J. P. Bakker, 1949), 221, 256.

12. Herman Dooyeweerd, *De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee. Volume 2. De functioneele zinstructuur der tijdelijke werkelijkheid en het probleem der kennis* (Amsterdam: Paris, 1935), 90; D. H. Th. Vollenhoven, *Isagoogè Philosophiae* (Amsterdam: Filosofische Instituut, Vrije Universiteit, 1967), 24.

13. Herman Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, vol. 2: *The General Theory of the Modal Spheres* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1969), 66.

14. Kee, 'Filosofie van de economie'.

15. R. L. Haan, "Wegen in de economische wetenschap (II)," *Philosophia Reformata*, 39, no. 1/2 (1974): 10–13, 22.

16. Dooyeweerd, *New Critique*, vol. 2, 66, 122. T. P. van der Kooy, *De zin van het economische* (Kampen: Kok, 1950); idem, "Methodologie der economie en christelijke wijsbegeerte," *Philosophia Reformata*, 40 no. 1/2 (1975): 5–6, 8–9 defines economy as "efficiency" (*doelmatigheid*) as distinguished from technical effectiveness (*doelgerichtheid*). Whereas technics is concerned with the effective choice of means for the attainment of one given aim, economy deals with multiple ends and means. From a Dooyeweerdian point of view, efficiency can be seen as an economic analogy within the historical modality.

17. J. Ridder, "Het geloof als datum," in F. de Vries, ed., *Economische opstellen* (Haarlem: Bohn, 1944), 440–48; idem, "Wijsbegeerte en economisch leven," in H. J. Spier and J. M. Spier, eds., *Wijsbegeerte en levenspractijk* (Kampen: Kok, 1948). Cf. Bob

Goudzwaard, "De economische theorie en de normatieve aspecten der werkelijkheid," in W. K. van Dijk and J. Stellingwerff, ed., *Perspectief. Feestbundel van de jongeren bij het vijfentwintig jarig bestaan van de Vereniging voor Calvinistische Wijsbegeerte* (Kampen: Kok, 1961), 310–24.

18. Herman Dooyeweerd, "De verhouding tussen wijsbegeerte en theologie en de strijd der faculteiten (I)," *Philosophia Reformata* 23, no. 1 (1958): 1–21; idem, "De verhouding tussen wijsbegeerte en theologie en de strijd der faculteiten (II)," *Philosophia Reformata* 23, no. 2 (1958): 49–84; *Twilight of Western Thought*, ch 6; J. M. Spier, "Het veld van onderzoek voor de theologie I," *Philosophia Reformata* 15, no. 1–4 (1950): 169–78; idem, "Het veld van onderzoek voor de theologie II," *Philosophia Reformata* 16, no. 1–4 (1951): 1–15.

19. A. Troost, *Vakfilosofie van de geloofswetenschap. Prolegomena van de theologie* (Budel: Damon, 2004), 149–55.

20. Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture*, 91.

21. Dooyeweerd, *Twilight of Western Thought*, 138.

22. D. H. Th. Vollenhoven, *Het Calvinisme en de reformatie van de wijsbegeerte* (Amsterdam: H. J. Paris, 1933), 38.

23. D. H. Th. Vollenhoven, "Het geloof, zijn aard, zijn structuur en zijn waarde voor de wetenschap," in C. Bronkhorst, ed., *Levensbeschouwing en levenshouding van de academicus* (Utrecht: Dekker en Van de Vecht, 1950), 71.

24. Dooyeweerd, *New Critique*, vol. 2, 293.

25. Dooyeweerd, "Analogische grondbegrippen," 171; idem, *New Critique*, vol. 2, 55.

26. Dooyeweerd, "De verhouding tussen wijsbegeerte en theologie (I)," 15–16.

27. In his early work, Dooyeweerd distinguished between retrocipations *or* analogies, on the one hand, and anticipations, on the other.

28. Dooyeweerd, "Analogische grondbegrippen," 172.

29. Dooyeweerd, "Wijsbegeerte en economie," 20.

30. Dooyeweerd, "Analogische grondbegrippen," 179.

31. K. J. Popma, *Inleiding in de Wijsbegeerte* (Kampen: Kok, 1956), 25–26.

32. Unless stated otherwise, the examples are Dooyeweerd's. The others are taken from Popma, *Inleiding*, 23–24; R. L. Haan, "Wegen in de economische wetenschap (I)," *Philosophia Reformata*, 37, no. 3/4 (1972): 138; "Wegen in de economische wetenschap (II)," 30–31; Bob Goudzwaard, "Economie tussen afbraak en doorbraak. Verleden en toekomst van een gesloten wereldbeeld," *Philosophia Reformata*, 36, no. 1–2 (1971): 46.

33. The thesis *Specimen academicum de Oeconomia Naturae* was defended by Isac Biberg on March 4, 1749 at Uppsala University. Following the custom of those days it was largely written by his supervisor Linnaeus.

34. Dooyeweerd, *New Critique*, vol. 2, 66–68, 122–40, 153, 161, 286–93.

35. Dooyeweerd, *New Critique*, vol. 2, 67.

36. Dooyeweerd, *New Critique*, vol. 2, 344–45; idem, "Wijsbegeerte en economie," 19.

37. Herman Dooyeweerd, "The Theory of Analogy in Thomistic Philosophy and in the Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea," *Philosophia Reformata* 85 (2020): 92.

38. Vollenhoven, *Calvinisme*, 30.

39. Dooyeweerd, "Theory of Analogy," 92; cf. idem, "Analogische grondbegrippen," 192.

40. Herman Dooyeweerd, "Het wetsbegrip in de economie," *Mededelingen van de Vereniging voor Calvinistische Wijsbegeerte*, August 1946, 2.

41. Dooyeweerd, *New Critique*, vol. 2, 115.

42. Bob Goudzwaard, *Ongeprijsde schaarste. Een onderzoek naar de plaats van expretiale of ongecompenseerde effekten in de theoretische economie en de leer der economische politiek* (The Hague: Van Stockum, 1970), 11.

43. Bob Goudzwaard, *Toward Reformation in Economics* (Toronto: Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship, 1980), 15, 28–29.

44. Dooyeweerd, "Wetsbegrip in de economie," 2.

45. Dooyeweerd, *New Critique*, vol. 2, 360–262; idem, *Roots of Western Culture*, 195–206; idem, *A Christian Theory of Social Institutions*, ed. John Witte (La Jolla, CA: Herman Dooyeweerd Foundation, 1986), 52–53; cf. A. Kouwenhoven, *Vrijheid en gelijkheid. Bijdrage tot de critiek op de immanentie-filosofie als de grondslag van de economische eetenschap* (Kampen/Leiden: Kok/Stenfert Kroese, 1965).

46. Goudzwaard, "Economie tussen afbraak en doorbraak."

47. Dooyeweerd, "Verhouding tussen wijsbegeerte en theologie (II)," 52.

48. Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture*, 95. Troost, *Vakfilosofie*, 199–200 quotes Willem Ouwenee, who lists as examples of "faithful willingness to sacrifice," citing Luke 14:25–33, 18:22; Romans 12:1; 2 Corinthians 4:16–18; and 2 Timothy 4:2. His own example of an economic analogy, to wit summarizing statements in Scripture (e.g., 1 Cor. 2:2), is less convincing as this seems to be an instance of linguistic economy instead.

49. Gerhard Richter, *Oikonomia. Der Gebrauch Des Wortes Oikonomia Im Neuen Testament, Bei Den Kirchenvätern Und in Der Theologischen Literatur Bis Ins 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005); cf. Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

50. Roelf L. Haan, "Economische theologie en economische toerekening," in Herman Noordegraaf and Sander Griffioen, ed., *Bewogen realisme. Economie, cultuur, oecumene* (Kampen: Kok, 1999), 64.