Relationships

The Theological and Philosophical Foundations

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Contents

1. Preface

There is a legacy of great Christian thinkers over the centuries. The specific tradition within which I stand is that of John Calvin, who with Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli led the movement in the Sixteenth Century for the reformation of the church based on the rediscovery of the integrity of the biblical message of the good news of Christ's sheer gift of grace in his death on our behalf as the sole basis on which we can be made right with God. Calvin's distinctive contribution was the affirmation of the lordship of Christ is over the whole of life, an insight taken up in the Nineteenth Century by the great Dutch Calvinist thinker, Abraham Kuyper and stated as the principle of 'sphere sovereignty' – that all areas of life are distinctively under Christ's rule. This insight was developed systematically as what is called 'Reformational Philosophy' in the Twentieth Century by the two Christian philosophers, Dirk Vollenhoven and Herman Dooyeweerd, both professors at the Free University of Amsterdam which Kuyper founded.

Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd taken together also provide a systematic account of what I call the transcendental location of human life and experience, such as identified, for example, by the greatest modern Western philosopher, Immanuel Kant – even if the answers that that philosopher provides to account of human experience are not entirely satisfactory because he seek to develop his philosophy not in the light of an integrated Christian worldview (certainly not on with a Trinitarian basis), but on the basis of a dualism between nature as the object of rational investigation on the one hand, and the free exercise of human subjectivity on the other. Nevertheless, Kant identifies for us the necessary elements of human experience, even if, he does not have the basis to account for those elements in a systematically satisfactorily way.

Here the key link provided by Abraham Kuyper and the thinker most directly influenced by him in America, Cornelius Van Til. Central to the thought of both is the inner Triune covenant as the basis for the creation, redemption and transformation of the world. It is this insight which lies behind and made possible Kuyper's enunciation of 'Sphere Sovereignty' ('Souvereiniteit in eigen kring) – the Lordship of Christ over every area of life. The Son is a full and equal participant with the Father and the Spirit in the covenant of creation and has authority as Lord of all, so that his act of redemption on behalf of all humanity has cosmic significance.

2: The Trinitarian basis for relationships

In the late Twentieth Century, there was a notable revival in trinitarian thinking . Jürgen Moltmann (1926-), Wolfhart Pannenberg (1928-) and Robert Jenson (1930-), Colin Gunton (1941-2003) and T.F. Torrance (1913-2007) are Protestant thinkers who have restored the doctrine of the Trinity to a central place in the theological map, together with Roman Catholic theologian such as Karl Rahner (1904-1984), Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988), and members of the Greek and Russian Orthodox churches, such as Metropolitan John Zizioulas (1931).[1]

Considerations of the Trinity arise firstly out of the encounter with Jesus Christ, as we find him witnessed to in Scripture, and through our personal experience. If Jesus is truly God, as is claimed in

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[1] Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God*: 33-116, 131-147, 181-215.

Scripture, most graphically in the Fourth Gospel, but throughout the New Testament, there must be a sense in which he is both the same, and yet different from the Father who sent him to us, and to whom he teaches us to pray. Then there is the Spirit, whom Jesus promises, who again, is identified with Jesus and yet is distinct from him. This is against the background of the extensive use, throughout the Old Testament, of terms such as 'Word', 'Spirit' and 'Wisdom'.[2]

The doctrine of the Trinity is not an optional extra but central to the Christian faith. Calvin argues that God's triune nature is:

> ... a special work to distinguish himself more precisely from idols. For he so proclaims himself the sole God as to offer himself to be contemplated clearly in three persons. Unless we grasp these, the bare and empty name of God flits about in our brains, to the exclusion of the true God.[3]

Without a robust doctrine of the Trinity, there can be no adequate account of God's creation, redemption and transformation of the world.

a. **Perichoresis – The joint work of the three Persons**

The Persons are in relationship with one another – distinct yet mutually interdependent. The term '*perichoresis*' describes the process whereby the Persons of the Trinity indwell one another and are involved with one another, each retaining his own distinctiveness, in their joint 'economy' (their work in the world).[4] In terms of the work of each of the Persons is given equal and conjoint weight, so correcting the distortions which emphasis on one or other of the Persons to the exclusion of the others results in. The operation of the persons is not sequential but joint and simultaneous. The joint operation of the persons is exercised as perichoresis, the interchange and the giving way of one another, and their mutual authorization, realization and empowerment of one another.

The key Trinitarian insight is that only the inner-triune relations, not anything external to God, bind the Persons. Accordingly, from a Trinitarian perspective, God is not subject to the order of the world, although he reveals himself to us sovereignty and definitively in the language of the created order. At the same time, the notion of a discontinuity between the sovereignty of God and the order of the world is also rejected: the order of the world is

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[2] Arthur W. Wainwright, *The Trinity in the New Testament* (1962): 30-234; Ben Witherington and Laura M. Ice., *The Shadow of the Almighty: Father, Son and Spirit in Biblical Perspective* (2002): 1-147; Gerald O'Collins, *The Tripersonal God: Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity* (1999): 11-83.

[3] Calvin, *Institutes*: 1.13.12.

[4] '*Perichoresis*' (περιχωρησις) derives from 'chora' (χωρα), Greek for space, or 'chorein' (χωρειν) means 'to contain', 'make room for' or 'to go forward'. It was originally a Christological notion in which the two natures of Christ are seen in relation to one another. The use of the term '*perichoresis*' with respect to the Trinity seems to have originated with Pseudo-Cyril and was later used in the dogmatics of Maximus Confessor and John of Damascus. In terms of the perichoretic vision, the divine status and distinctiveness of three Persons of the Trinity are each recognised with respect to the immanent Trinity, and, with respect to the economic Trinity, their common action but distinctive roles (Ive, 'Relationships in the Christian tradition': 52-53; Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being, Three Persons*: 102, 170-202; Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God*: 148-150; 174-176; Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity. The Bampton Lectures 1992:* 152-153, 163-179, 212; Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*: 4.93-94). Karl Barth sees a perichoresis of Father, Son and Holy Spirit being worked out in the Christian attitude of faith, obedience and prayer (Barth, *Church Dogmatics, III/3*: 245-6; Oh, 'Barth's trinitarian theology : a study in Karl Barth's analogical use of the pattern of "perichoresis" and the relationship between divine action and human action in the ecclesiastical context' (Ph.D. thesis, King's College London, 2003): 172-208).

determined sovereignly by the Persons acting together, not by abstract fiat of an essentially unitary deity.[5] The constitution of the world is not arbitrary or *ad hoc*; it is consistent with the covenant settled eternally between the three Persons. The love between the three Persons of the Trinity and their joint love for the world is revealed as the basis for one's belief in the original goodness of the world, and holds out to us the hope of redemption.[6] In this way, and only so, can the scholastic dilemma be resolved. In this, Trinitarian basic religious belief is fully consistent with the concern of reformational philosophy to find a genuine alternative to scholasticism.[7]

More specifically, the doctrine of the Trinity sets out for us why God is, as John Calvin puts it, both '*legibus solutus*' ('not subject to laws') and equally '*non exlex*' ('not arbitrary').[8] Calvin's dictum decisively breaks with the antithesis between metaphysical realism and nominalism (the epistemological counterpart of the distinction that has already been made between intellectualism and voluntarism). God is '*legibus solutus*' because laws result from the mutual compact of the three Persons acting out of freedom and love, not out of submission to any external or impersonal law or principle. God is '*non exlex*', since the mutual love of the Father, Son and Spirit gives the universe both stability and settled character.

While the persons of the Trinity work together, they each make a distinct contribution to their common work, and each depends on the each of the other two Persons in carrying out their distinctive roles, as we shall see below: –

b. **The Father**

In the work of the Father, we have the Origin which constitutes individuality of each person or thing. More specifically, it is the Father who is the Origin of creation, redemption and transformation through his decree. As all things are ordained by the Father, and are redeemed

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[5] Calvin's own theology is often seen in these terms. It has voluntarist elements and was indeed presented as such by the voluntarist scholasticism of many of his followers. But this is to ignore the importance for Calvin of 'union with Christ' and the role of the Holy Spirit in the work of election (See Shults, *Reforming the Doctrine of God*; and Gaffin, 'Union with Christ: Some Biblical and Theological Reflections').

[6] In terms of Dooyeweerdian/Vollenhovian modal analysis, love is ethically qualified. But the characterisation of the relations of the Trinity as loving involves all the modalities: the Persons proclaim divine status (pistical or faith modality), they give glory (aesthetic), they deal justly (juridical), effectively (economical), appropriately (social), truly (analytical), etc. with respect to one another. This is not to say that the Triune Persons are bound by laws. It affirms rather than, in their self-revelation, they provide a basis for seeing the world as law-governed and not merely arbitrary.

[7] This is not to say that there is not a reaching out to what is characterised as a genuinely trinitarian approach during the medieval period. See Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*,1.32.1.3 where he argues that the knowledge of the divine Persons is necessary for right thinking about God as creator of the world, since to say that God produced all things by the Word by the procession of love excludes the possibility that he produced things by necessity. However, the dichotomy in Thomas' thought between grace and nature (or between revelation and reason) does not allow him to work this out fully in terms of one's overall understanding or the world, since from his perspective, God can only be known by reason in the world at large as single subject. Nevertheless, Denys Turner argues that distinction between '*intellectus*' and '*ratio*' (inherited from Augustine) points towards an understanding of God as at once transcendent of the world and yet engaged with it, and that, moreover, both *intellectus* and *ratio* are graced, i.e neither is is autonomous (Turner, *Faith, Reason, and the Existence of God*: 80-88; Davies, *The Creativity of God: World, Eucharist, Reason*: 31-36).

[8] Calvin, *Institutes*: 3.23.22; Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*: 10.13, 179.

through his love for the world in general and for humanity in particular, so all as his creatures are called to render him praise

Individuals, be they things or persons or social whole, have their ground sheerly in their relationship to the Origin. Individuality flows from the sheer dependence upon the Origin as being 'thoroughly structured', whether or not that person recognizes or is conscious of that dependence. While it is only human beings who can be conscious of that dependence (and indeed, it is in the possibility of that consciousness that one's humanity consists), *all* individuals as creatures have a dependence upon the Origin that constitutes the uniqueness of each. Who or what they are is grounded finally and at root in their ontic dependence upon the Origin, which integrates what it means to be a human being. The transcendent orientation to the Origin thus opens us both to the naïve experience of individuals, and it also makes possible the theoretical apprehension of individuals in a non-reductive way. Let us explore this somewhat further.

The Idea of the dependence of individuals upon the Origin first of all, regulates the grasp of individuals in naïve experience. In naïve experience, individuals are known as continuous wholes. The perception of a hand, for example, is more than the specification of a given bundle of sense data. To pick out this or that sense-datum as relevant to one's perception of a hand requires that we know first what a hand is and how it is constituted, not necessarily theoretically, but certainly implicitly in an everyday, i.e. naïve, way.[9] A normally functioning human being knows the world not as a disordered mass, but as the engagement with discrete and concrete entities. Even one's encounter with enormous individuals, such as the Sun, or galaxies, or microscopic individuals, such as atoms or quarks, need to be put into middle-sized terms in one's mind for the purpose of apprehending them, for example models of galaxies on the one hand, or of atomic and sub-atomic particles on the other. These individuals or putative individuals need somehow to be represented to us in middle-sized terms in order for us to have an idea of them.[10] But, if one is to avoid distortions, one's

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[9] As O.K. Bouwsma points out, *pace* G.E. Moore (and, one might add, Russell), (Bouwsma, 'Moore's Theory of Sense-Data').

[10] W. V. O. Quine speaks of 'middle sized objects' as the typical percepts. Quine, *Word and Object*. *Note*: these are '*i*deas' (lower-case), the noetic grasp of individuals, as opposed to '*I*deas' (See 3.2.2 footnote and 5.2 introduction footnote). This is a systematic extrapolation of the thinking of D.F.M. Strauss in his revision of Dooyeweerd (Strauss, *P.D.D.*: 176-188, 195, 369, 430, 469). In his doctoral dissertation Strauss, traces the notion of 'concept' (arising from the forms of knowledge specific one or other modality) and 'idea' (the bringing together of many concepts with reference to a concept-transcending whole, i.e. with reference to a specific individual). Concepts are abstracted from the universal relations which bind individuals, but they cannot themselves fully characterise the individuals to which they refer. For example, to have a concept of a chair would be reduce it purely to one function, namely, an abstract notion of something upon which one can sit (Strauss, *P.D.D.*: 12, 151). A concept cannot encompass all the other modal aspects of this or that chair (that is it heuristically isolates the chair as a cultural-formative object from all its other characteristics). Strauss concludes: 'The temporal identity of individual entities expresses itself in the modal diversity of aspects and can only be approximate in a regulative sense in a transcendental idea referring to the meaning-coherence in which every individual entity is embedded' (Strauss, *Begrip en Idee*: 202-203; Strauss, *P.D.D.*: 176). If one sees concepts as intra-modal (i.e. stated in terms of one modality) this could also mean that concepts can refer to individuals (but only in terms of functions specific to one modally-specific function), and to events (but only to one time aspect and at only one moment of time). Similarly, if we see as ideas as trans-conceptual (i.e. as involving a number of modalities at a specific moment) and trans-narrational (i.e. not confined to any specific narrative), so in this sense one can have an idea of a complex of relations between two concrete individuals (at a specific moment), and also an idea of an event (at a specific moment). Finally, if one sees narratives as (diachronically) encompassing several moments, they could also encompass the representation of a specific relation or individual (in both cases over time) as well as the unfolding of a series of events (not merely as a concatenation of moments but as a genuine unfolding). However, this does not been that ideas are 'above' or 'after' concepts (or

account of individuals also needs to be regulated by the sense that each individual is directly dependent upon the Origin, which cannot finally be known, even by that individual. The self-knowledge of any individual persons can only be deepened to the extent, therefore, of their *conscious* dependence upon the Origin. Individuality is a limiting-idea: it forbids one to hold that one's idea of an individual can ever fully comprehend the 'who-ness' or the 'this-ness' of the individual concerned, since each individual finally derives its unique identity and calling solely from their dependence upon transcendent Origin. He, she or it cannot create that unity and integrity itself, nor is that unity and integrity finally derivable from experience. Who or what individuals are is finally ineffable and indescribable.[11] For any experience to be possible, there needs to be persons or things to experience, otherwise experience is entirely devoid of content. Individuality is the sheer, finally indescribable and unconceptualisable who-ness or this-ness of persons or things as we encounter them in 'middle-sized' experience. As we are ourselves individuals, true self-knowledge needs to accord that same status to other human individuals, and indeed, albeit less directly, to non-human individuals as well.[12]

Second, the Idea of the dependence of individuals upon the Origin explicitly provides us with a transcendent basis for the theoretical reflection upon individuals. Theoretical ideas draw together concepts from a diversity of modalities to provide a composite description of the individual concerned. At most, this can only approximate one's grasp of the ontic irreducibility of each individual in itself, i.e. as constituted by its dependence upon the Origin. But no individual can be fully known in conceptual terms alone.

Thus, while individuals can be described, or approximated to in conceptual terms, this needs continually to be revised in the light of the encounter with concrete (and not fully conceptualisable) individuals over time. Individuals as such are finally unknowable be it in naïve experience or theoretical reflection. Individuality as a transcendental is a limiting idea: while we can have an *i*dea (lower-case) of an individual, we need to be aware always that such an idea is provisional and incomplete in the light of the Idea of the Origin, and it is in dependence upon the Origin alone that each individual has its unique identity. The *I*dea of the Origin thus limits and regulates any *i*dea of the individual.

Apart from being at best only provisionally grasped through ideas, individuals should not be seen in isolation. They are necessarily connected with other individuals through a network of

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narratives 'above' or 'after' ideas). While ideas are concept-transcending, and narratives are idea-transcending, concepts (as universals) are also idea- and narrative-transcending, and ideas are narrative-transcending (as referring to concrete wholes through time) as well as concept-transcending.

[11] In *Totality and Infinity*, Emmanuel Levinas speaks of the irreducible 'alterity' ('otherness') of the other, which he ultimately grounds in the infinity of the divine Other (such as Descartes argues for in his 'Third Meditation') (Davis, *Levinas: An Introduction*: 39-45; Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*: 25-37). As Paul Janz points out, Levinas' mistake is then to conflate alterity (which, I have argued, is grounded in the relation to the transcendent Origin) with the generative 'new' (which I shall argue is grounded in the work of the Sprit as transcendent Purposiveness) (Janz, 'The Coming Righteousness': 98).

[12] See Martin Heidegger's insight that art is both a reaching out to, and a recognition of the irreducibility of the thing depicted to any metaphysical or theoretical formulation (Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art'). A similar insight can be seen in the notion of 'instress', the poetic response to the this-ness of which informs the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889, instead deeply influenced by the philosophy of Duns Scotus (for the latter see 1.2): 'I kiss my hand to the stars, lovely asunder starlight, wafting him out of it ... since tho' he is under the world's splendour and wonder, his mystery must be instressed ...' ('The Wreck of the Deutschland': 1.4). P.F. Strawson (1919-2006) shows that the identification of individuals finally depends on the 'presupposition' that there are persons and things so to be identified (Strawson, *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics*: 87-116, 190-213).

relationships. Relationality is limited and regulated by a sense of an overarching Coherence, the second of the Ideas, to which I now turn.

c. **The Son**

If any attempt is made at all to understand the world (and that includes us) there is a need to account, at least implicitly, for how it is that all things hold together in an ordered and harmonious way. Without the presupposition of such a basic coherence, experience and reflection lapse into chaotic irrationalism. From a Trinitarian perspective, that perspective is rooted in the Son, the one through whom all things have been made and in whom all things hold together. This Person is, as Calvin states is *autotheos* (i.e. God in his own right) and *aseitas* (i.e. not dependent upon the created order),[13] the Son, by whose work in creation all things hold together.[14] At the same time, the Person in whom Christians place their ultimate trust, is not a generic abstraction or metaphysical 'essence' but the historically identifiable human being, Jesus Christ, born of Mary in Bethlehem, raised in Nazareth, died in Jerusalem under Pontius Pilate, buried in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb, rose again, ascended on the Mount of Olives, and whose return in power and glory is expected as he promised.[15]

Thus, the Son cannot be identified with any aspect of the created order, but only responded to obediently, as through his work as the Logos, the 'ontic systasis' (the irreducible harmony-in-diversity of the created order) is uncovered. The abolutisation of any sort of created relation as the basis of Coherence is excluded on this basis.[16] This means that the work of the Son in redemption needs to be seen against the much wider backdrop of the work of creation providing a renewed divine 'yes' to all created existence, and the bringing of the creation to the state of its final transformation.

The Son in his incarnation shows us what it is to be in relation to our fellow human beings, and indeed how to be in proper relation with the world (seen archetypically in Jesus calming the storm on Lake Galilee, a rerun of the original act of creation – see especially Psalm 74.12-17 where chaos is replaced by coherence and order). The Lordship of the Son over human affairs, and indeed over the cosmos as a whole, is brought about by the work of the Holy Spirit, which I now consider.

d. **The Holy Spirit**

Thirdly, then, in the work of the Spirit, we have the narrative of God's dealings with the world which relativise all our particular narratives. This is the narrative beyond all narratives, which both provides perspective and which surpasses all our memories, experiences or plans.

The Spirit gives narrative to our lives, and indeed to the world, as its story is unfolded with true purposiveness (*Zweckmässigkeit* as Kant calls it in his *Critique of Judgment*).[17] It is only when one treats events 'as if' they have a purpose, which makes it possible to speak of them

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[13] Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*: 1.13.25; Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*: 4.80-81, 87-88, 324-326.
[14] John 1:3 and Colossians 1:17.
[15] Gunton, '"And in one Lord Jesus Christ ... Begotten not Made"': 69-71.
[16] Clouser, *The Myth of Religious Neutrality: An Essay on the Hidden Role of Religious Beliefs in Theories*: 198.
[17] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*: Part II, §63, pp. 153-154.

in the first place. Even for those who deny any actual purposiveness to events, there is still the need, just for intelligible communication to be possible, to speak 'as if' this or that event has purpose. For example, speaking of an earthquake or volcano, the horror of destruction needs to be placed in a context where attempts are made to save lives and property, and deaths are mourned as if the lives of those lost have significance – horror and mourning makes no sense at all in the face of the insignificant. Even to grasp the event of the treading on an ant, or indeed the microcosmic collision of two sub-atomic particles, one need to invest the death of an ant, or the collision of the sub-atomic particles, with sufficient significance for it to be registered, in the mind of the observer, as an event.

The work of the Holy Spirit provides the expectation of the eschaton, but it should not be confined to the future, but also seen in terms of the working out of God's Providence over history as a whole. Spirit effects creation jointly with the Father and the, and, in redemption, makes possible the incarnation, work, death, and resurrection of Christ and brings about *palingenesis* (i.e. inner religious change and redirection of heart) and the effectual call of all believers. Finally the Holy Spirit brings all things to their final destiny under the Lordship of the ascended Christ in the authority of the Father. While the work of the Holy Spirit flows from that of the Father and the Son, it has equal weight with both that of the Father and the Son and is not reducible to either.[18]

Through the work of the Holy Spirit there is a basis for holding that there is a transcendent Providence: that the present states-of-affairs and one's reflection on what is past can be engaged with truly and with genuine hope, even if only provisionally. Through the Spirit new possibilities are opened up, not in a random way (although it may seem so at the time), but in a way that creates new possibilities for the future. In the narrative of the unfolding of the Triune work in the world, there is true eventfulness: the same states-of-affairs are not simply repeated age after age, but there is genuine movement forward. In concrete situations we see the leading role of the Holy Spirit, but this role is orientated to the transcendence of the Father and is directed towards the greater realisation of the Kingdom of the Son.[19] The Holy Spirit also gives us a longing for that which is to come: the 'greater weight of glory'[20] – that makes everything we do in the light of the Kingdom, indeed everything which happens, worthwhile, no matter how tragic or seemingly futile, since it is proleptic of that reality which is to come.

Thus the Idea of a transcendent Providence, seen in the light of the work of the Holy Spirit, provides us with a link to the third transcendental, that of time and helps one to see time as genuine eventfulness and no mere extrapolation from one moment to another within a universe conceived as a timeless block.[21] This involves the diverse ways in which states-of-affairs (i.e. combinations of individuals in connection with one another) lead to one another,

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[18] Gunton, 'The Holy Spirit who with the Father and the Son together is Worshipped and Glorified': 88-90.

[19] This has been brought out most powerfully by Robert Jenson (Jenson, 'The Holy Spirit': 105-124, 143-178; Jenson, *Systematic Theology; Volume I, the Triune God*:160). Elsewhere, I have pointed to some problems in characterising the role of the Holy Spirit too exclusively as pertaining to futurity. See Ive, 'The God of Faith: R.W. Jenson's critique of standard religion and his temporal account of the Trinity' (M.Phil. thesis, King's College London, London, 1995): 85-86; 89, 93,123, 131-135; Ive, 'Robert Jenson's Theology of History':152-155). However in seeking to nuance my reading of Jenson in his way, I do not wish to lose the crucial insight that it is through the Holy Spirit the future – God's future for us – is opened up and made possible (See also Barth, *Church Dogmatics, IV/2*: 639; Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology 3*: 622-626).

[20] 2 Corinthians 4.17. See Lewis, 'The Weight of Glory': 25-33.

[21] Immanuel Kant in his 'Second Analogy of Experience' calls 'causality' the 'principle of the succession of time according to the law of causality' (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*: A189-211/B232-256, pp. 304-316).

or, to put it another way, the different ways in which states-of-affairs are linked together successively. The passing of time (i.e. diachronicity) needs accordingly to be given weight as a transcendental (i.e. as a necessary condition for experience) in its own right, alongside individuality and relationality in considering experience and human reflection upon that experience. The Idea of a transcendent Providence provides the grounding for the notion of time as a transcendental, which in turn regulates both the one's grasp of naïve experience of and also makes possible theoretical reflection upon its many aspects.

The Idea of a transcendent Providence, provided by being open to the work of the Holy Spirit, regulates one's grasp of events by preventing one's judgement of those events being reduced to any one modality.[22] It also prevents the reduction of time either to relationality (the actuality of specific events cannot fully be captured by the description of all the relations involved) or individuality (events cannot be seen purely within the world-lens of any individual – there is an actuality of events which happens among all the individuals which is not merely the sum total of the experience of all the individuals concerned). The Idea of Providence holds open the possibility of genuine eventfulness, and so provides the grounding for time as a distinct transcendental. More specifically, the purposiveness of events is the work of the Holy Spirit, from the event of creation through the work of the regeneration of human hearts, to the transformation of the universe.

Thus the work of the Holy Spirit completes this account of the work of the three Persons. However, the work of the each Person cannot be considered separately – the work of each Person needs to be considered jointly with that of the other two Persons.

A Christian perspective needs to affirm first of all that we as human beings, as those made in God's image, are called by God to respond to his love for us and to love one another. This basic religious call needs to be expressed in the full range of the different kinds of relation in which we find ourselves This provides us with a different basis for our ontology (that is, for our understanding of what there is); and our epistemology (how we know what here is) of the world. The world is not the extension of God's being, but it reflects and bears the impress of God's Triune action, in its creation, redemption and transformation and indeed, God's presence in and through his incarnate Son. Thus humanity, as the Triune image-bearers, are *dramatis personae* in this great task as they are called to present the whole of who they are, and to have their minds transformed in their world-and-life-view and philosophy, not as an optional extra, but as their appropriate service to their Lord

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[22] Judgement can only be exercised provisionally – there is a narrative about which the judgement can be made, and which can be approximated with ever-greater detail and precision. While we might approximate these, we can never finally know the 'true story', only come to a more adequate judgment about that narrative, on the basis that there is a narrative that has final Providence and comprehensiveness, even if we ourselves cannot finally know it. We know events through the exercise of judgement illuminated by a sense of transcendent Providence. However, this sense of transcendent Providence should be distinguished from a facile optimism. Mature judgement needs to be moderated by a sense of tragedy in the midst of life. The world is not there for one's convenience, nor can the unfolding of events simply be ordered by the smooth execution of one's individual or corporate projects, or be related straightforwardly to the enlargement of one's individual or corporate well-being. However, without the sense that ultimately there a Providence to all things, all judgement is reduced to casual gratuitousness, and, ultimately, to futile inconsequence. All judgements need to be made (whether consciously or not) in the light of the Last Judgement, at which the final verdict on all acts and events will be delivered. This is not to claim an inside track to understanding of the work of God, let alone to penetrate to an understanding of God's being. Rather it is to see such a ground-Idea (alongside those of the Origin and Coherence) in regulative terms – we are forbidden to search for such an 'inside story' only to submit obediently to the Providence of God in the trust, in the words of Dame Julian of Norwich that 'all shall be well' (Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*: 14.63, p. 95).

3: A philosophical framework for relationships

At this point, I would like to relate the preceding reflections to an important and extremely rich tradition in contemporary Christian reflection represented by two thinkers, Dirk Vollenhoven (1892-1978) and Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977), both of whom followed on from Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920). Between them they developed a thoroughly pluralistic understanding of the world. [23] Combining the thought of Dooyeweerd with that of the later Vollenhoven, we find that there are three ways in to our understanding of relationships: firstly, that which has to do with individuals and their functions; secondly, that to do with the relations among those individuals; and, thirdly, that which is about what happens to those individuals and their relations over time.

As we shall see, with respect to individuals, relations and time there are different levels of description or explanation called 'modalities'. Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd start with experience in its rich and irreducible diversity – Vollenhoven speaks of 'non-scientific' while Dooyeweerd speaks of 'naïve' experience.[24] Non-scientific or naïve experience involves encounters with concrete individuals, engagement in specific relationships, and participation in actual events. By contrast, 'scientific' and 'theoretical' refer to rigorously distilled aspects of experience.[25] Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd use various terms for these aspects, but for the purpose of consistency, I use the term 'modalities'. The diversity of the created order is thus grounded on the irreducibility of the modalities to one another, but also in the antecipations[26] and retrocipations which each indicate the continuity of experience without being reduced one to another. Together, Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd identified fifteen modalities ranging from the numerical (quantitative) to that of faith. [27] Each modality takes its character from its appropriate modality; an individual functions arithmetically as a single entity bound by arithmetical laws, in location by spatial laws, etc.; and that individual can function actively or passively in each modality (and similarly there are the appropriate modal laws and norms for the different kinds of relation and kinds of time).[28] Those modalities on which other modalities depend are called 'substrates' for those which they antecipate, while those which

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[23] Dooyeweerd, *N.C.*; Vollenhoven, *Introduction to Philosophy*.

[24] Vollenhoven, *Introduction*: §§148, 193, pp.109,134; Dooyeweerd, *W.d.W.*: 1.91-92; N.C.: 1.127-128.

[25] To remove a possible source of confusion to those already familiar with Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd's philosophies. I shall not be treat the 'modalities' as a 'transcendental dimension' (to use Dooyeweerd's term). Rather, in the way I shall be setting this out, each of the transcendental dimensions, or 'transcendentals' is refracted into diversity of the modalities (as individuality-functions, relation-frames, and time-aspects). These modal distinctions are grasped in the course of 'scientific' or 'theoretical' reflection (noting the special use of the terms 'theoretical' and 'scientific' by Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd respectively. These terms refer specifically to *modal* abstraction, not the theoretical or scientific generally, but as modal *abstraction* is also more wide ranging than can be confined merely to either theoretical or scientific thought with the specific connotations of the latter terms).

[26] Here I shall follow Vollenhoven's (largely) preferred spelling (Vollenhoven, 'Plato's realisme (63a)':/128, p.137; Vollenhoven, 'Problemen rondom de tijd (63b)':173; 181; 193; Vollenhoven, 'Problemen van de tijd in onze kring (68b)': 203), taken up by Strauss (Strauss, *P.D.D.*), including, for the sake of consistency, in the context of discussing Dooyeweerd, 'Ant*e*cipation' (like retrocipation) arises from the ontic ordering of the modalities (what Dooyeweerd calls the 'ontic systasis' (Dooyeweerd, *W.d.W.*: 2.359-361; *N.C.*: 2.429-435)) – it is not to be confused with a noetic reaching forward or yearning.

[27] The two philosophers largely agreed on the identity and ordering of the modalities (even though they jointly revised these over the years, and their followers have attempted may revision). The identification and ordering of them is open-ended and subject continual correction and elaboration (For the criteria for identifying each modality see Strauss, 'The best known but least understood part of Dooyeweerd's philosophy' in *Journal for Christian Scholarship*; Strauss, *P.D.D.*: 77-79). The principle behind it is that no one sort of relation is capable of providing us with a fully adequate description of the world.

[28] Vollenhoven, *Introduction*: §§30-35, 42-69, pp. 25-27, 29-51.

stand on them are called 'superstrates'. Thus the modality of number (or quantity) is the substrate of that of spatiality; and by the same token, the spatial modality is the superstrate of that of number.[29] The fifteen modalities on which Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven eventually agreed were (from 'higher' to 'lower' or from 'later' to 'earlier')[30] are:

> pistical (faith)
> ethical
> juridical/legal
> economic
> social
> symbolic/lingual
> beauty[31]
> historical/cultural-formative
> logical /analytical
> psychic/sensory
> biotic
> physical
> kinetic
> spatial
> numerical/quantitative

 For both philosophers, each modality is governed by its own laws or norms and has distinctive subject matter governed by these laws or norms. For both Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven, 'laws' (which govern what must be or what is necessarily so) pertain up to the logical or analytical modality. From there, they require human mediation to apply, no longer as 'laws' (which apply independently of their being grasped by human subjectivity) but now as 'norms' (which require human mediation for their positivisation). In the analytical modality there is the need for norms to be grasped by the analytical subjèct for them to apply, while from the cultural-formative (or what Dooyeweerd calls the 'historical') modality onwards they need to be 'positivised' (realised concretely) by human formative activity.[32] For each modality, therefore, there is a specific type of law- or norm-conformity. For example, the first modality (numerical or, properly, 'quantitative'[33]) is governed by arithmetical laws, the second by spatial laws, and so on. Each modality has a characteristic nucleus of meaning which makes it irreducible to other modalities – for example, the laws of number and space and their distinctive subject matter are mutually irreducible. Likewise, those of a kinetic kind are distinct from the numerical and spatial, and their 'meaning kernels' are quantity, space,

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[29] Vollenhoven, *Introduction* §§55-63, pp. 36-45.

[30] Vollenhoven tends to speak of the numerical (quantity) as the 'lowest' modality with the pistical (faith) as the 'highest' modality, while Dooyeweerd tends to speak of these as 'earlier' and 'later'. This order starts with the 'leading' modality, that of faith.

[31] Seerveld argues that allusivity rather than beauty should he held to characterise the aesthetic modality (Seerveld, 'Modal Aesthetics: Preliminary Questions with an Opening Hypothesis': 132). But Strauss argues the centrality of beauty in the aesthetic aspect should be upheld (Strauss, *P.D.D.*: 250-253). However, since allusivity is an anticipation of the sign aspect, it indicat that the aesthetic modality should be placed immediately before the lingual modality.

[32] Dooyeweerd, *W.d.W.*:2.175-177; *N.C*: 237-239*; Dooyeweerd, 'Norm en Feit'*:182 *; Strauss, *P.D.D.*: 258-259, 288-289, 297-298, 315-318, 382-383, 389-390, 526-532, 613.

[33] D.F.M. Strauss argues that it should be called 'quantitative' because that is one of the ways the world is and which is then apprehended by the human mind in numerical or arithmetic terms (Strauss, *P.D.D.*: 82-87).

movement etc. Thus we can rigorousley isolate the key factors which can be subsumed under a modal law. [34]

'Reductionism' is any project that takes as its point of departure one or a selection of the modalities as the 'total' way to understand the world. One might mention attempts to describe the world purely in physico-chemical terms, or, in social analysis, attempts to understand human relationships purely in biological terms or in terms of the structure of power, or the operation of a particular economic model.[35] Any attempt to reduce the description of the world to one form of explanation cannot do justice to the many-sided diversity of one's everyday experience; and any attempt to construct society on the basis of any one form of explanation risks undermining that society. As with the story of Midas, if all things are turned to gold, they become lifeless.[36] Reductionism results both in an impoverishment in one's vision of the world, since we have to flatten out those modalities that do not fit into such a reduction. In addition, within the terms of such a reduction, contradictions emerge because the principles applicable in one modality do not have explanatory force across the whole range of modalities.[37] For example, to reduce everything in the world to physical laws cannot do justice to social, aesthetic, ethical, legal or faith norms (to mention a few of the modalities) and the realities which they govern; and to explain the latter is to fall prey to the 'naturalistic fallacy' (i.e. the attempt to derive 'ought' from 'is'). Only by taking into account all the modalities, without reducing one to another, can the full richness of the many aspects which make up a relation*ship* be preserved.[38]

The transcendent vision (that is, the vision given us on the basis of biblical revelation) gives rise to three presuppositions which are necessary for any Christian philosophy, or indeed, Ideas (capital 'I') or presuppositions upon which any philosophy is grounded.
A Christian philosophy needs to take into account our experience of the world. There are three transcendentals (the necessary conditions for any possible experience). These are purely regulative of experience and theoretical thought, i.e. they limit our conceptual claims

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[34] Dooyeweerd, *W.d.W.*: 1.5, 36-37; *Dooyeweerd, N.C.* : 1:3-4; Dooyeweerd, 'De vier religieuze grondthema's in den ontwikkelingsgang van het wijsgerig denken van het Avondland: Een bijdrage tot bepaling van de verhouding tusschen theoretische en religieuze dialectiek': 7. These modalities are identified according to what D.F.M. Strauss calls 'a transcendental-empirical approach', which takes full account of the multi-faceted character of human experience (Strauss, 'The best known but least understood part of Dooyeweerd's philosophy'; Strauss, *Reintegrating Social Theory: Reflecting upon Human Society and the Discipline of Sociology*: 111-119; Strauss, *P.D.D.*: 231, 234, 291, 319, 435). The term seems to have originated from Dooyeweerd's successor, the philosopher of law, H.J. Hommes and the philosopher of science, M.D. Stafleu (Hommes, *Encyclopedie der rechtswetenschap: Hoofdlijnen der rechtssociologie en de materiële indeling van publiek- en privaatrecht*: 41-42; See Strauss, *B & I*: 86. I am grateful to Rob Nijhoff for this point). The identification of these modalities is a theoretical and empirical task. And yet, while the identification of the modalities is an empirical and theoretical task, *that* there are such pluralities is a pre-cognitive insight.
[35] Dooyeweerd mentions the dominance of 'isms' each of which absolutise one or other aspect of concrete experience (Dooyeweerd, *De beteekenis der wetsidee voor rechtswetenschap en rechtsphilosophie.*: 67; Dooyeweerd, *N.C.*:1.46-49 (not in *W.d.W.*); Dooyeweerd, *Vernieuwing en Bezinning om het Reformatorisch Grondmotief*: 37, 39-41; Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture: Pagan, Secular and Christian Options*: 37-38, 40-43). Roy Clouser gives a number of examples of theories which attempt different form of reduction, which gain explanatory power at the cost of narrowing the number of aspects of concrete experience which are taken into account (Clouser, *Myth 2nd edn.*:131-183; See also Strauss, *P.D.D.*: 5-8).
[36] Dooyeweerd, *W.d.W.*: 1.28-9 (not in *N.C.*).
[37] Dooyeweerd, *N.C.*: 1.46-49. For a more recent critique of the reductionist approach from a Dooyeweerdian perspective in terms of a number of case studies in mathematics, physics and psychology see Clouser, *Myth 2nd edn.*: 127-183.
[38] This multi-modal understanding of the world is called 'multiplexity' in Relational terms (Schluter and Lee, *The R Factor*: 80-82; Ashcroft, 'The Relational Lens'*:* Chapter 7).

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in an anti-reductive way. For any experience to be possible there needs to be certain basic conditions, namely:

> a. That there are persons/things/social entities (individuals or individualities).
> b. That these are related according to certain universal ways of relating.
> c. That both a. and b. are subject to a series of changes and development.

Systematic attempts have been made to deny the basic necessity of one or other of these conditions – but only at the cost of serious distortions of life and thought. Individuality has been relativised by monists, from the Bhagavad-Gita (Fifth to Second Century B. C.), Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677), and Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860). The 'externality' of relations has been systematically denied by of Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716). The actuality of time has been questioned by the Eleatic philosophers including Parmenides (c. 510- c. 450 B.C.), and, in modern times, by J.M.E. McTaggart. However, whatever their philosophical views, none of these thinkers, or any other human being, could systematically deny individuality, relationality or time in everyday life without extreme pathological consequences; and my argument is also that the neglect or denial of any of the transcendentals results in systematic problems in theoretical analysis.

If any one of these conditions is not met, we cannot speak of created existence or experience – it is impossible to conceive of created existence or experience without all these conditions being met together. A fruitful correlation can be made with the 'analogies of experience' in Kant's Transcendental Analytic. Slightly changing Kant's order, these are: the principle of succession in time, the principle of co-existence at any one moment in time, and the principle of permanence or continuity through time.

These are the 'transcendentals' – a 'transcendental' is a condition which pertains to all creatures always and everywhere without which any possible experience is inconceivable. Each transcendental provides a distinctive point of entry to the way one experiences and knows the world

Individuality, relationality and time are transcendentally distinct (i.e. each is a necessary, distinct, interdependent yet mutually irreducible condition for created existence and any possible experience). The transcendentals mark out three different elements of experience: individuals, relations and events. Overall, in one's experience is of individuals in relation over time, and in reflecting upon that experience, one needs to appreciate the independent distinctiveness of each transcendental and the need to give each transcendental its appropriate weight and systematic analysis'

The transcendentals are illuminated by totality-Ideas or presuppositions providing a (non-reductive) view of the whole as follows:

a. **Individuality**

The first necessary condition for experience is individuality.For both Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd the individual is a subject (as Vollenhoven terms it, a 'subjèct'), i.e. it is an entity in subjection to God. Vollenhoven tends to stress the work of the Father in 'thoroughly structuring' each individual creature while Dooyeweerd tends to stress the relation of the

human heart to the Origin.[39] However, both Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd see the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the individual as a subjèct.[40] Thus, drawing on both philosophers, we see that an individual is given his, her or its unique identity by the creative fiat of God which, properly acknowledged, prevents that person or thing from being seen as interchangeable with any other. One's knowledge of an individual cannot finally be known in terms of the sum of the different modalities – important as that 'multiplex' grasp of the individual is. An individual needs to be met or encountered and accorded the appropriate respect What finally makes one individual different from another is not properly a list of characteristics but who or what they are in the sight of God.[41] Each individual is constituted by an 'idea', known only to God.[42] In everyday experience as one encounters individuals as wholes and one needs to accord them the respect due to them as beings like us, directly dependent upon God.[43]

However, while it need to be recognized that all individuals need to be treated with the respect due to them as individuals who can only be known fully for who they are by God alone, one can approximate the idea of an individual 'scientifically', i.e., through systematic analysis.[44] All things have an internal unity; they are not collection of random matter.[45] They are 'structured through and through' ('doorgestructureerd') by God the Father's creative decree.[46] Individuals can be identified as falling under different typical descriptions, or, what Dooyeweerd calls, 'individuality structures' governed by what has been called 'type laws'. Individuals can be people or things, and individuality can also be seen in institutions, organic communities or voluntary associations.[47] Each individual is governed by a complex of laws and norms, and that individual's functions are arranged in a coherent order, with later functions building on lower ones.[48] The theoretical idea of an individual is what Dooyeweerd calls an 'individuality-structure' (and which Vollenhoven describes in terms of what he calls the 'thus-so' connection), i.e. the ordering of the *functions* of the individual. Each function

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[39] See Ive thesis (2012).

[40] A 'subjèct' (as we have seen) is an entity which does not take its identity and constitution from itself, but only from the transcendent Other, on whom it is utterly dependent and by whose call it receive its being and distinctive constitution (compare the insights of De Lubac, *Mystery of the Supernatural*, and the *nouvelle theology*, according to whom the very act of bringing things into being is an act of sheer gift (See Dooyeweerd, 'Calvinistische Wijsbegeerte': 15; Dooyeweerd, 'Centrum en Omtrek: De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee in een veranderende wereld': //9-10, pp. 1-2, 12).

[41] Vollenhoven, *Introduction*. The early Vollenhoven had a notion of God's bringing an individual thing into being at a particular time and place (Kok, *Vollenhoven: his early development*: 67-8). However it was still rooted in the notion of substance (Kok, *Vollenhoven*: 225), a notion that Vollenhoven was to reject in his later thinking.

[42] Vollenhoven, 'Levens-eenheid (55ms)': 122-124; Vollenhoven, 'Getuigen in de wetenschap (59d)': /3, p. 138. The faculty according to which individuals are known is that of perception, which is for him not merely a psychic (i.e. sensory) act, but also an analytic grasping of an individual (and indeed an act involving all the other modalities). Perception ('waarneming') is always synchronous with that which is perceived. It is exercised in tandem with recollection and expectation (Vollenhoven, *Introduction*: §§164-169, pp.116-120).

[43] This is called 'parity' in Relational terms (Schluter and Lee, *The R Factor*: 82-86; Ashcroft, 'The Relational Lens': Chapter 8).

[44] Vollenhoven, *Introduction*: §§9, 148, pp. 11, 109-110.
Vollenhoven, 'Hoofdlijnen der logica (48f)': §§41-42, pp. 90-91 (*Hoofdlijnen*: 50-52).

[45] 'Levens-eenheid'; Tol, pp. 123-4; 'Time and Change', p. 102.

[46] For Vollenhoven, the created structure of an individual is not 'modal'; it is 'pre-modal' or 'pre-functional'. This is especially true of the human being, for whom individuality is centred on the 'heart' or 'soul', which is pre-functional (Vollenhoven, 'Problemen van de tijd (68b)'; See 4.1.2).

[47] This is something which Dooyeweerd seems to have revised in the *New Critique of Theoretical Thought,* but voluntary associations nevertheless are examples of 'individuality structures' shaped and governed by what have been called 'type-laws'.

[48] Vollenhoven tends to see the functions arranged 'vertically' so that he speaks of them being 'lower' or 'higher', while, as we shall see, Dooyeweerd tends to speak of the functions are 'earlier' and '.

takes its character from its appropriate modality; an individual functions arithmetically as a single entity bound by arithmetical laws, in location by spatial laws, etc.; and that individual can function actively or passively in each modality.[49]

Individuality Functions (súbject/object)

pistical (faith):	believer/belief
ethical:	ethical agent/good deed
juridical/legal:	legal subject/ legal object[50]
economic:	trader/commodity
social:	social actor/custom
symbolic/lingual:	communicator/ symbol[51]
aesthetic:	admirer/aesthetic object
cultural-formative:	shaper/ project[52]
logical /analytical:	analyser/ proposition
psychic/sensory:	sensor/ sensation[53]
biotic:	organism /food
physical:	particle/energy-packet
kinetic:	body in motion/ trajectory
spatial:	extended figure/location[54]
numerical:	cardinal numeral/sequence[55]

This theoretical ordering of functions involves the identification of the 'founding' and 'leading' function of that individual – the former the 'earliest' or 'lowest' modality germane to the functioning of that individual, and the latter the 'last' or 'highest' germane modality in that respect**).** For example, the theoretical idea of a plant will take into account how that plant is guided by the biotic function, or what it means to be subject to the laws governing biology. For the purpose of analysis, the individual being contemplated is isolated from that individual's context and seen in terms of the laws and norms that govern it, i.e. in terms of its individuality-structure. This individuality-structure needs to be seen as a generalised approximation to one's perception of the individual at a given time. However, it cannot finally capture fully who or what an individual is, only provide a modally-ordered description.

 Individuals cannot exist on their own – they are not self-contained substances or monads (à la Leibniz) but are bound to other individuals by a complex tapestry of different kinds of relation – to which I now turn

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[49] Vollenhoven, *Introduction*: §§30-35, 42-69, pp. 25-27, 29-51.

[50] Dooyeweerd, *N.C.*: 2.371-382.

[51] Dooyeweerd, *N.C.*: 2.371-382.

[52] Dooyeweerd, *N.C.*: 2.371-382.

[53] Ouweneel argues that the psychic modality should be divided into the 'perceptive' and the 'sensitive' modalities (Ouweneel, *De Leer van de mens: Proeve van een christelijk-wijsgerige anthropologie*: 206-217; Ouweneel, *Heart and Soul: A Christian View of Psychology*: 76-81). However a better way of seeing this latter distinction is to see what he calls the 'perceptive' as a psychic expression of individuality and 'sensitive' as a psychic expression of relationality.

[54] Dooyeweerd, *N.C.*: 2.385-386.

[55] Dooyeweerd, *N.C.*: 2.79-83.

b. **Relationality**

The second necessary condition for experience is relationality. Relations need to be recognised as being 'more' than merely the combination of the functions of the individuals concerned. They are universal realities which hold between different individuals having an ontic status independent of the specific individuals they bind together as súbjects and objects – the active or passive functions for each modality which are linked together by the law or norm appropriate to that modality.[56] The subjection of individuals to the Origin can only be exercised in the context of the diversity of the relations which connect them to other individuals.[57] The diversity of relations needs to be seen in turn in the context of other relations held together by a great skein of analogies (antecipations and retrocipations) by which the different sorts of kinds of relation are linked together harmoniously. Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven systematically traced out a number of irreducible relations that there are:

<p style="text-align:center">Relation Frames[58]</p>

pistical (faith):	trust[59]
ethical:	benevolence[60]
juridical/legal:	fairness,[61] retribution[62]
economic:	optimal exchange, stewardship
social:	courtesy,[63] social intercourse,

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[56] Vollenhoven, *Introduction* §§81-84, 103, 105, 163, 164, 168, 201, 210, 212, pp. 55- 56. 66-67, 116-117, 119, 137, 140-141. There are differences in this regard between Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd which I shall not pursue here but which I have dealt with in my thesis (Ive, 'Individuals, relations and events' : 3.1.2 and 3.2.2). This link between súbjects and objects (or súbjects and súbjects) is at variance with the tendency in Western though to see the 'subject' as the thinking or analyzing observer and the 'object' (or another human subject) as the matter of consideration or analysis. This is what Dooyeweerd calls the 'Gegenstand', which is essentially abstract, impersonal and indirect (since like a butterfly pinned to a board, it remains dead and lifeless). Dooyeweerd was deeply critical of the secular Western Enlightenment view of the thinking subject to which the material of cognition (which Dooyeweerd calls the *Gegenstand*) is presented. He rejects the model that has come to dominate Western philosophy with the mind being seen as a *tabula rasa* to which the givens of experience are presented. As Polanyi has shown subsequently, we cannot engage with the world without prior expectations, indeed passionate expectations within what he calls a 'fiduciary framework' (Polanyi, *Personal knowledge: towards a post-critical philosophy*: 267). Marking out of the different areas of analysis is unavoidable in theoretical thought. However even there, the divide between the thinking subject and the subject matter of analytical investigation is misleading and distorting. For him (and indeed for Vollenhoven) the human 'subject' is not to be seen as divorced from his or her situation and the diversity of relationships of which he or she is part. Like Vollenhoven, he understands 'subject' in two senses. The first (Vollenhoven's 'subjèct') is about the subjection of the individual to God – the opposite of the Western Enlightenment view of the human thinking subject to which all the matter of analysis is subjected. The second sense of 'subject' (Vollenhoven's 'súbject') is understood in terms of its objective nexus with the object, but not as thinking subject to the *Gegenstand* but of the active polarity in a law or norm governed relationship or objective nexus. In other words, in both senses of 'subject', it is not a question of knowledge by a detached observer, but all knowledge involves the practical engagement of the knower within the context of a relationship within which that knower is engaged through the process of knowing (*Dooyeweerd, W.d.W.:*2.399-407; 3.46; Dooyeweerd, *N.C.*: 2.466-472, 3.65; Hart, 'Dooyeweerd's Gegenstand Theory of Theory': 143-149).

[57] The linking of súbjects and objects (or in the case of human being súbjects and súbjects) is called 'directness' in Relational terms (Schluter and Lee, *The R Factor*: 72-75; Ashcroft, 'The Relational Lens': Chapter 5).

[58] This is the term suggested by M.D. Stafleu (Stafleu, 'Relations and characters in Protestant philosophy').

[59] Dooyeweerd, *N.C.*: 2.298-330.

[60] Dooyeweerd, *N.C.*: 2.140-162.

[61] Chaplin, *Dooyeweerd's theory of public justice: a critical exposition* argues for 'tribution'.

[62] Dooyeweerd, *N.C.*: 2:406.

[63] Dooyeweerd, *N.C.*: 2.371-382.

symbolic/lingual:	meaning, significance
aesthetic:	aesthetic appreciation
cultural-formative:	formative control[64]
logical /analytical:	non-contradiction
psychic/sensory:	feeling,[65] sensitivity[66]
biotic:	cellular composition
physical:	dynamic system
kinetic:	approaching or receding, speed or acceleration
spatial:	contiguity, comparisons of size or shape[67]
numerical:	more or less than, equal to etc.

What is important is not the precise description of each of these different relations. The identification and ordering of them is open-ended and subject to continual correction and elaboration. The principle behind it is that no one sort of relation is capable of providing us with a fully adequate description of the world. As we have seen, any attempt to do so results in the process called reductionism.[68] For example, our understanding of the world cannot fully be based on physical relation, that is, relations concerning the exchange and conversion of physical energy. Physical relations alone (or biological, psychological, cultural-formative etc.) cannot adequately exemplify for us relations of justice, beauty, love or faith to mention just a few. Any attempt to exclude these latter from the picture gives us an impoverished and distorted world and life view. However, even any of the latter taken on their own cannot provide us with a full and balanced picture either. Only by taking into account the full range of relations that there are, and giving them their proper consideration, can we truly live and think in a way that expresses the richness of the way that God created the world, and, in particular, that he provides for the true flourishing of human relations.

c. **Time**

Time is the third necessary condition for any experience or 'transcendental'. This is about the narrative of everything that happens: how individuals and relations come into being, flourish and develop and go out of being.[69] Vollenhoven calls this the 'genetic' determination (where 'genetic' has nothing to do with biology, but with the Greek for of the word, that is to do with 'coming into being'):[70] it is the process of moving from the past to the present to the future.[71] In the related thinking of Dooyeweerd, time involves the related process of unfolding and enfolding. As in the case of individuality and relationality, time is also governed by the laws or norms appropriate to each modality:

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[64] 'Beheersende vorming' (Dooyeweerd, *W.d.W.*:2.143 ; Dooyeweerd, *N.C.*: 2.203).

[65] Dooyeweerd, *N.C.*: 2.371-382.

[66] See the preceding footnote but one.

[67] Dooyeweerd, *N.C.*: 2.383.

[68] See the introduction to this section.

[69] This is the element of 'continuity' in Relational terms (Schluter and Lee, *The R Factor*: 75-80; Ashcroft, 'The Relational Lens': Chapter 6).

[70] 'Genetic' for Vollenhoven has no biological connotations, but rather refers to the Greek terms which is about becoming or coming into being.

[71] Here I am indebted to the seminal paper, Tol, 'Time and change in Vollenhoven'. See also Tol's introductory remarks in Vollenhoven, 'Plato's realisme (63a, slotgedeelte)': 153-154.

Time Aspects

faith (pistical):	liturgical time,[72] 'time of belief',[73] revelation[74]
ethical:	'right' time,[75] priority of moral obligation[76]
juridical/legal:	length of validity[77]retribution
economic:	interest,[78] rent, profit, wage, economic cycle
social:	conventional time,[79] social priority,[80]
symbolic/lingual :	word order,[81] tense,[82] symbolic moment[83]
aesthetic:	aesthetic moment,[84] dramatic order,[85] rhythm
cultural-formative:	cultural development,[86] periodicity[87]
logical /analytical:	*prius/ posterius,*[88]
psychic/sensory:	tension,[89] *durée*[90]
biotic:	organic development,[91] growth time
physical:	causal irreversibility, physical time[92]
kinetic:	constancy
spatial:	simultaneity[93]
numerical:	succession,[94] ordinality[95]

In the case of individuals over time, there is the notion of the internal opening process. An individual endures *through* time and its individuality-structure (the structured diversity of diverse functions which that individual exercises) is opened up over the course of that duration.

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[72] Vollenhoven, *Introduction*: 33.

[73] Popma, *Inleiding in de Wijsbegeerte*: 75-76.

[74] Dooyeweerd, *Encyclopedia of the science of law, Vol.1 Introduction*: 32.

[75] Vollenhoven, *Introduction*: 33; Popma, *Inleiding*: 75.

[76] Dooyeweerd, *Encyclopedia Introduction*: 32.

[77] Vollenhoven, *Introduction*: 33; Dooyeweerd, *Encyclopedia Introduction*: 31. 'Geldigheidsduur' (Popma, *Inleiding*: 74-75).

[78] Vollenhoven, *Introduction*: 33; Dooyeweerd, *Encyclopedia Introduction*: 31.

[79] Popma, *Inleiding*: 70-71.

[80] Dooyeweerd, *N.C.:*1.33; Dooyeweerd, *Encyclopedia Introduction*: 30; Vollenhoven, *Introduction*: 33.

[81] Popma, *Inleiding*: 68-70.

[82] Vollenhoven, *Introduction*: 33; *N.C.*: 2.126-127.

[83] Dooyeweerd, *Encyclopedia Introduction*: 30.

[84] Vollenhoven, *Introduction*: 33; Popma, *Inleiding*: 72-74.

[85] Dooyeweerd, *Encyclopedia Introduction*: 31.

[86] Dooyeweerd, *Encyclopedia Introduction*: 30.

[87] Vollenhoven, *Introduction*: 33; Popma, *Inleiding*: 67-68; *N.C.:* 2.193.

[88] Dooyeweerd, *Dooyeweerd, W.d.W.:*1.38; *N.C.:* 1.30; Dooyeweerd, *Encyclopedia Introduction*: 30; Vollenhoven, *Introduction*: 33; Popma, *Inleiding*: 67.

[89] Vollenhoven, *Introduction*: 33. 'Gevoeligheidsspanning' (Popma, *Inleiding*: 64-67).

[90] Dooyeweerd, *N.C:*.1.38; Dooyeweerd, *Encyclopedia Introduction*: 30. 'Duurgevoel' (Popma, *Inleiding*: 64-67).

[91] Vollenhoven, *Introduction*: 33; Dooyeweerd, *Encyclopedia Introduction*: 30. 'Groeitijd' (Popma, *Inleiding*: 71-72); *N.C.*: 1.28.

[92] 'Physische tijd' (Popma, *Inleiding*: 63-64).

[93] Vollenhoven, *Introduction*: 33; 2.384; Dooyeweerd, *Encyclopedia Introduction*: 29; Popma, *Inleiding*: 61-62; Popma, 'Successie en gelijktijdigheid'.

[94] Vollenhoven, *Introduction*: 33; *N.C.:*1.28; Popma, *Inleiding*: 60-61. See Popma, 'Successie en gelijktijdigheid'.

[95] Dooyeweerd, *Encyclopedia Introduction*: 29.

d. **Direction – the religious orientation of the whole person**

Direction, the orientation of the heart is the response of the human person from the heart the centre of human experience and reflection. It issues in two possible responses: either obedience to God, or apostasy. These responses respectively shape one's basic worldview, the one's basic expressed stance towards God and the world. One's worldview is worked out both in everyday experience as well as in one's theoretical grasp of the world.[96] The transformational covenant concerns both personal sanctification and the transformation of the world in anticipation of the eschaton.

In palingenesis, God's saving purposes are revealed at the centre of human experience, for each individual. Palingenesis, implies, if not a sudden conversion experience, at least the unfolding of the effects of the Spirit's work in the life of the person concerned and the transformation of his or her character. The Holy Spirit transforms the hearts of redeemed humanity it to the pattern of the Son, as they are directed to the Father in inner rebirth. It is through the power of the Holy Spirit and through the dynamic of prayer that the battle needs to be waged against the spirit of apostasy in human culture. This needs to be worked through in every area of life by building up a community which gives this corporate expression.

There are two 'main springs' (as Herman Dooyeweerd calls them) that operate in human hearts, which orientate the whole person religiously. The first is the dynamic of the Holy Spirit re-directing creation, through Christ, to the Father as true Origin. The second is the spirit of apostasy in the human heart from the true God. The apostate main spring cannot itself provide anything new but only distort creational reality according to the 'law of sin': the religious misdirection of the human heart towards a pretended origin rather than the true Origin. This involves the idolising absolutisation of an aspect, or combinations of aspects, of the created order. Since the whole of created reality is refracted through the human heart, the fall of humanity thus involves the diremption of the cosmos as a whole.

There is thus a need for the transformation of human consciousness within the temporal process of human experience, as a concentration point which unifies the diversity of that experience. Because it is only in Christ that the true connection with the Origin is possible, it is only through self-reflection on one's part with Christ that one can discern the true and irreducible diversity of the created order. This diversity of meaning relates to the central unity of divine law revealed by Christ: to love God and one's neighbour. This is not an escape from temporality, but a call to bring about a 'concrete community of love' through right relationships with one's neighbour. So for the human being to be considered in religious terms, he or she cannot be removed from their context, because that would make the community necessary for the human being to be considered in those religious terms, impossible. But not only is temporality necessary for the community which makes religion possible, it is also necessary for human beings themselves to be considered as whole persons. This vision of God's creative, redemptive and transforming action in the world provides the basis for the way we should understand the world and our life and work in it. Religion in this regard is that which shapes and governs our worldview

Both everyday experience and theoretical reflection require the appropriate exercise of intuition. Naïve or pre-theoretical experience is made possible by the intuitions, exercised

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[96] Developing this shared worldview is called 'commonality' in Relational terms (Schluter and Lee, *The R Factor*: 86-87; Ashcroft, 'The Relational Lens': Chapter 10).

implicitly, first, that there are things and persons which are not simply the product of my own mind, and indeed that I myself cannot be the product of my own mind since I do not relate to the world as a disembodied epiphenomenon but as one who is a full participant in the world (and even were one dreaming it, it would be 'I' who is the participant). Indeed, naïvely, that is, in sheer experience, the question of my possible non-existence does not even arise. Second, there is the presuppositum that others are related to each other as I am to them, or at least in some way – that when I call a rose 'red' I can generally (within the bounds of certain implicitly acknowledged circumstances) expect my neighbour similarly to do so when called upon. In other words, that there are universal connections that implicitly can be taken for granted. Thirdly, there is the presuppositum that one event will follow another in a reasonably anticipatable succession. Again, one does not usually (short of a cosmic catastrophe) have to doubt that the sun will rise in the morning, it having set the evening before. Each of these presuppositions is not simply interesting features about the constitution of the world. Without the continuity of persons or things over time, or the possible of universal relations between persons or things, or indeed the flow of time itself, no experience, let along any reflection upon that experience, would be possible – it would literally be unexperienceable and unthinkable.

Intuition also makes possible theoretical reflection. Theoretical reflection constitutes a second sort of differentiation, as the different *sorts* of things, relations and events are distinguished from one another, and rigorous analysis made of the specific norms and laws by which those persons or things, relations or events are governed, and how the relevant generalisations, functional characterisations and causalities can be defined and specified. As we seek to reflect on and rigorously analyse the different functions pertaining to individuals (persons or thing), the different kind of relations that there are and the different ways there are in which time passes and things happen. Careful reflection uncovers incommensurability in certain respects. For example, the discrimination of a person's moral goodness is not rightly contradicted or confirmed by the claim that they have dark hair or are poor. The understanding of economic marginal utility is not rightly contradicted or confirmed by the understanding of what it means to be a faithful husband. The judgement that it will rain tomorrow is not rightly contradicted or confirmed by the judgement that I deserve a pay rise for all the hard work I have done. And yet, while there is an intuition that there is incommensurability in all these cases, there is also a countervailing intuition that those disparate aspects cohere.

 Intuition is a working out of the covenant.[97] The covenant is about the embodied obedience of humanity to the revelation of God's transcendence in the midst of life. As human beings work out their covenantal obedience to God in this way, so in the Direction of their heart, they respond a right to the experience of everyday life and so reflect and distil its diversity theoretically. The reflection and the action are two sides of the same coin –the working out of what it means to be obedient in every area of the life of the world as God's domain. The unity of the experience, thought and action as the different elements of experience are drawn together overcomes all the dichotomies that have fractured and distorted Western thought. Not least of these dichotomies is that between the thinking subject and the matter of analysis, so that the thinking subject has been seen as divorced from his or her context and freed from the imperatives which the engagement in the life of the world requires

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[97] See above.

4: The three descriptive views

By combing each of these pairs of transcendentals in turn, we arrive at three descriptive approaches: individuals over time, relations over time, and, and individuals in relation. They are complementary with one another, and each is necessary for the full description of a specific state-of-affairs. Together they provide a rounded picture of relationships seen from different viewpoints.

a. **Individuals over time** (principles of **parity** + **continuity**)

Individuals develop over time. This involves the coming into being, reconstitution and going out of being of new individuals (including social wholes) over time; and the joining and separation of individuals as they enter and leave social wholes. This brings together the Relational principle of 'parity', according to which the each individual is respected as having their distinctive individuality, and the Relational principle of continuity, seeing them grow and develop over time. Bringing these two principles together involves character – each individual is respected as having their distinctive story – sometimes won in the face of difficulties and challenges.

Enkaptic relations bind individuals together in a larger whole, in such a way that the individuality of the respective relata is not lost, but each has continuity to the other in the whole that they are placed. Individuals-in-relation form an overall whole (no matter how ephemerally, for example even simply by coming into spatial contiguity with another individual), but not in the sense of the whole and parts but rather in such a way that the individuality of each participating entity is preserved. In 'external' enkapsis, a higher component structure avails itself of the modal functions (i.e. the specific sorts of relation) of the lower structure.[98] In 'internal' enkapsis in which the internal sphere sovereignty of an enkaptic whole is revealed through preserving the integrity of its distinctive character.[99]

An individual can be contemplated over time by tracing ways in which the concreteness of that individual presents itself to one in a way in which all the features of that individual form a continuous whole. It is through the process of 'enkaptic interlacement' (that it the coming into being of new individuals in and through existing individuals without obliterating the integrity of those existing individuals) that we can see the development of individuals over time. This results is a new 'enkaptic whole', i.e. an entity with its own individuality and identity distinct from that of the constituent entities without the constituent entities losing

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[98] Dooyeweerd, *N.C.:* 3.696 (not in *W.d.W.*); *Dooyeweerd, R. & S. 3*: ms p. 6; Dooyeweerd, 'Het substantiebegrip in de moderne natuurphilosophie en de theorie van het enkaptisch structuurgeheel': 68.

[99] Dooyeweerd, *N.C.*: 3.696 (not in Dooyeweerd*, W.d.W.*); R. & S.3: ms p. 6; Dooyeweerd, 'Substantiebegrip ... enkaptisch structuurgeheel': 68.

their own integrity and individuality.[100] Similarly, Vollenhoven speaks of 'life lines' ('levenslijnen') which express the change and development of each individual over time.[101]

A good example of this is the case of human character. Human character for Dooyeweerd is the expression of human individuality over time through concrete acts (i.e. acts integrally involving the whole gamut of the modalities, from quantity through the physical, biotic and sensory modalities to that of faith, and all the modalities in between).[102] Dooyeweerd speaks of the 'genetic process of human life' (where 'genetic', as with Vollenhoven, means the sheer process of becoming), which involves the process of the actualization of 'potentialities already present in the structural principle of human bodily existence'.[103] First there is the structure comprising the chemicals which make up the human body, then there is the biotic structure of the body proper, then, further, there is the way in which the physical structure is interlaced with these and finally, what Dooyeweerd calls the 'act structure', i.e. the exercise of supra-biotic faculties, is bound together with these as well.[104] Each structure is successively bound ('morphologically') by the higher one,[105] so that human bodiliness, although it has no one modally qualified feature, can be bound by the act structure.[106] The human character is opened up in the diversity of different relationships on the one hand, and the elaboration of that person's internal structure on the other.

Human beings are individuals. Each human being is what Vollenhoven calls a 'subject-unity', in covenantal relationship (Vollenhoven) or dependence (Dooyeweerd) upon God. In the working out of the unity of who the human being is, there are the intertwined (or as Dooyeweerd calls them) different 'enkaptic' structures : the physical, biological, sensory and normative (what Dooyeweerd calls the 'act') structures which, woven together as it were with a silver chord (see Ecclesiastes 12:6) , make up the whole human life.

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[100] Dooyeweerd, 'Substantiebegrip ... enkaptisch structuurgeheel': 78-86; Dooyeweerd, *N.C.*:3.13-21,704-713; *R & S 3*: 13-21. Here Dooyeweerd refers to experiments by Walther Kossel (1888-1956) which demonstrated that the structure of a crystal lattice is influenced by the internal structures of the constituent atoms, and yet can be recognized as a distinct identity. Dooyeweerd argues that this insight is in conflict with classical mechanistic physics, which denies entiary status to the lattice and only recognizes the entiary status of the constituent atoms. It is also in conflict with the neo-Thomist account, such as set out by Hoenen (Philosophie der organische Natuur (1940): 408 ff.) which attempts to accord the lattice the status of 'composite form' and regards the atoms as having merely 'virtual form' since the coming into being of the lattice renders their properties dormant.
[101] Vollenhoven, 'Getuigen (59d)':/2, 138; Vollenhoven, 'Problemen rondom de tijd (63b)': 185. A 'younger thing' evolves out of one or more previously existing things, so that whereas the constituents were previously interrelated in an interindividual manner, now they take on an intraindividual interrelation. (Vollenhoven, *Introduction*: §100, pp. 64-65). This can involve two individuals joining to become a new individual, for example two football clubs can merge to become one; or when an individual takes on a constituent of another, for example a plank of wood can be taken from a tree to become part of a fence; or when two or more individuals emit constituents of what then becomes a new individual, as in the case of biological reproduction (Vollenhoven, *Introduction*: §§102-103, pp. 65-66, my examples).
[102] Dooyeweerd, 'De leer van de mensch in de W.d.W.': Proposition XXVI. Dooyeweerd rejects any notion of incorporeal acts. He states that outside of the body, no acts are possible (Proposition XX).
[103] Dooyeweerd, *N.C.*:3.78 (not in Dooyeweerd, *W.d.W.*).
[104] Dooyeweerd, 'De leer van de mensch in de W.d.W.', Propositions X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XVII, XXII; *NC* 3:88 (not in W.d.W.); Fernhout, p. 79.). The act structure manifests itself in three ways or 'directions': knowing, imagining and willing (Theory of Man', Proposition XIV; Encyclopedia of the Science of Law, 1:222-6. Fernhout, p. 78). The three faculties which Dooyeweerd describes mirror the three capacities of judgement, perception and will in Kuyper, although Dooyeweerd himself feels compelled to distinguish these 'ways' or 'directions' from the traditional faculties. 'The human body cannot be identified with any one of these individuality-structures but it spans all the modalities (Proposition XVIII).
[105] 'Theory of Man', Propositions, X and XXIV in Fernhout, p. 78.
[106] *NC* 3:88 (not in W.d.W.) in Fernhout, p. 78.

Human beings themselves do not have any founding or guiding function,[107] and in this sense they transcend all the modalities, but in the working out of the unity of who the human being is, there are the intertwined (or as Dooyeweerd calls them) 'enkaptic' structures of human life: the physical, biological, sensory and normative (what Dooyeweerd calls the 'act') structures.[108] We are not bounded by any purpose in time – our most basic calling is for our hearts to be directed to the eternal Father. We can only find their rest in Him, through Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.

b. Relations over time (principles of **directness** + **continuity**)

Relations can be considered over time. This involves both the widening and deepening of existing relations, but also the discernment of new ones, as well as correspondingly, the expression of new forms of relations as new combinations of relations, and new structural formations express themselves and are recognized in relation to others.

Dooyeweerd describes how the different modalities are successively revealed and distinguished from one another, as society becomes more complex. He calls this the 'opening processes'. Relations come into being and time over time and time needs to be seen in the light of time in permutations and character of relationships. In the case of relations over time, there is a process of 'differentiation' across the modalities, i.e. with the different sorts of relations being distinguished from one another over time.[109]

c. Individuals in relation at a given time (principles of **parity** + **directness**)

 The ramifications of relationships can be looked at as seen at a given time. This includes not only the individuals between two or more individuals themselves, but also the wider ramifications of those relationships with respect to others not immediately focused on. This involves also taking into account all other individuals involved as 'third parties', and all the other relationships so involved. In theory this can extend out indefinitely to encompass the whole of humanity.[110] However, for practical purposes, this probably needs to be confined to second or perhaps third degree relationships. Any relationship needs to be seen as part of an infinite network of other relationships, affecting them and being affected by them.[111]

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[107] The unity of a human being is not grounded in a modally-specified function (not even the exercise of the faith function) but in his or her total dependence upon God – i.e. it is a religious unity, whether they recognize it or not. But the human being is also an enkaptic unity, through the interlacement over time of the physical, biotic, psychical and (normative) act structures.

[108] Human beings are governed by a number of individuality structures (as described above). But is not appropriate to treat, for example, our bodies as a distinct individuality structure while we are alive, or to treat one another just as a collection of chemicals – there is a religious unity which binds the different structures together.

[109] Dooyeweerd, 'The criteria of progressive and reactionary tendencies in history': 224-227.

[110] This is the 'the human web' originally described by the Hungarian author Friges Karinthy in 1929 in his stories Everything is Different and popularized in the play *Six Degrees of Separation* (1990) written by John Guare (Wikipedia).

[111] Here Davidson notion of 'triangulation' (Davidson, 'The Emergence of Thought': 128-134) might helpfully be extended. For Davidson, the triangulation which secures a common world of discourse between two individuals consists in the relationship between those two individuals and their common context in which those two individuals find themselves. One might see triangulation as the continual expansion of relationships continually drawing in others so that shared world of experience and interaction is built up making solipsism and pure subjectivism impossible.

This view will be a snapshot at a given time (chosen, perhaps, because at that point in time the range and diversity of relations can be seen most clearly), but it could be extended to any point in time, either along the path mapped out by the 'lifeline' of a specific individual (as in **a**. above), or else in terms of the diverse permutations of the different relations (as in **b.** above).

d. Towards a 360 degree view of relationships

These descriptive approaches (providing combined views respectively of relations over time, and individuals over time, and individuals in relation) are complementary, and each is necessary for the full description of a specific state-of-affairs. Together they provide a rounded picture of relationships seen from different viewpoints.
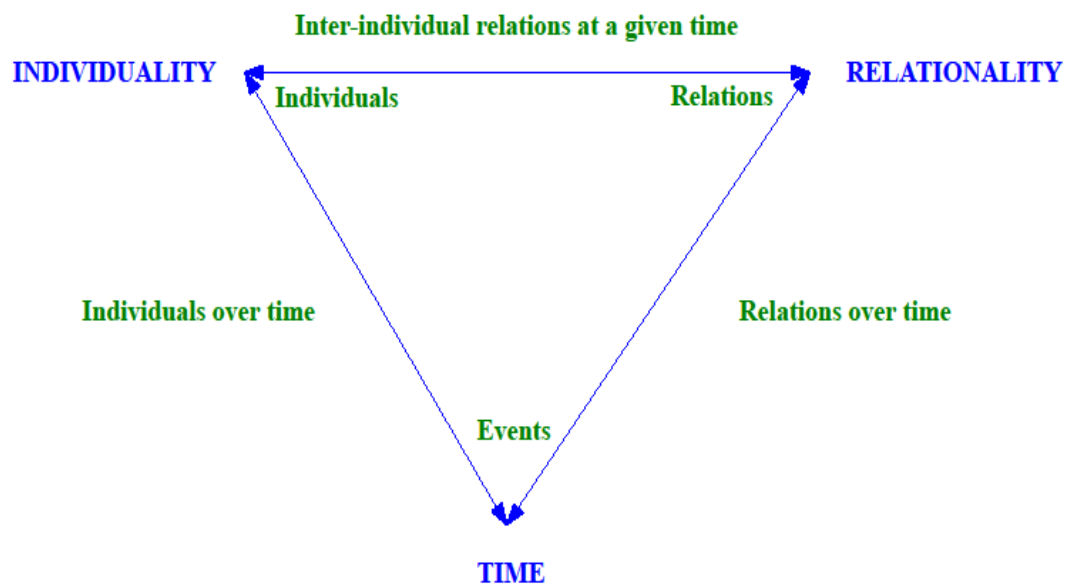
5.   *Implications for social theory*

In social theory, this fully-rounded picture helps one avoid the various impoverishments of seeing society either purely in terms of individuals (as in laissez-faire capitalism), or purely in terms of collective structures (as in a command economy), or purely in terms of the historical process (as in different forms of extreme nationalism).

The variety of institutions and associations which make up society each has its distinctive individuality is linked internally and externally by a network of relations. We can trace both the individual life-stories of the institutions and in the unfolding of their relations internally and externally.

With respect to society there are three philosophical questions: How is individuality possible? On what are true relationships based? In what does the historical process consist? Each of these disjunctions can only be overcome by re-founding our understanding of the world based on the distinct yet joint work of the three Persons of the Trinity. We need a fully developed Trinitarian understanding of society.

The dilemma at the heart of our corporate existence is that we depend for our identity on functions assigned to us by others, and yet in the mutual assignment of functions there is also the potential for our mutual enslavement. Freedom is only possible through an address which transcends our mutual relationships. Ethics, that is, communication based on law-like utterances, takes place among members of a community in that, as a community, they share the obligations and values according to which that community is constituted. This is true for all aspects of the corporate life of community, based as it is on the possibility of communication. This communication requires 'plausibility structures' (to use Peter Berger's phrase): a range of lexical, semantic and syntactic rules embedding shared values which together form a common ethical language and mark out a 'plausibility sphere' within which the discourse of that community can take place.

The plausibility structures of a genuine community cannot simply be the extension of the private concerns of the members of the community, but in some sense needs to be transcendent of them if they are to be genuinely common and not the means for domination by any individual or faction. This transcendence is the spirit of that community. In a community, as opposed to a collection of individuals (or 'collective'), each member finds his or her own reality from and with the others.   Every community has spirit (lower case) in that it arises out of shared possibilities which members make available to one another (which is what being members of a community means). That to which the members respond corporately is a spirit that focuses beyond itself. It is this 'vertigo of freedom' created by the Spirit, which brings a community into being and makes its continued existence possible.

A purely unitarian conception cannot cope with this: either it is seen as a decree handed down unilaterally, or, alternatively, creation itself is vested implicitly with divinity as a partner or correlative of God. By contrast, a Trinitarian basis for our understanding of society neither sees it as a decree handed down from God, nor an extension of God's being, but rather founded on the covenant among the Persons and so for the social order. The Father calls, the Son embodies and the Spirit draws forward. The possibility of societal diversity flows from the diverse nature of the world as God created it, and that in turn reflects the diversity within the threefold personhood of God. Through the Father we have diverse callings, and are

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bound together in relationship through the Son and are drawn forward by the power of the Holy Spirit.

As we open ourselves to that joint operation of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, so society is opened up and enriched. This is the process by which we are drawn into the household of God, supremely through the redemptive sacrifice of Christ on our behalf. Christ took all the hurts and evils of the world upon himself. He presents the world so redeemed to the Father for its transformation through power the Holy Spirit. Our experience in society is diverse and many textured; but through our encounter with God we are given the basis to live coherently with others created, like us, in the image of God.

We need to see human society not as a conglomerate of atomistic individuals, nor as a collectivistic whole, nor mere flux. The individualist, collectivist and historicistic tendencies were present in unstable combination in the ideas of the French Revolution and the developments to which it gave rise, to say nothing of the extreme aberrations which came in its wake in the Twentieth Century and which afflict us today. Against individualism, collectivism and historicism we have out a vision of society in which there are clearly differentiated social structures, arising from the order of creation but unfolded in history, each with its own appropriate sphere of responsibility and competence.

The transcendental framework worked out in the light of the transcendent Trinitarian vision accords each transcendental element its proper weight by affirming individuals in relation over time, i.e. relationships, in all their richness and diversity the whole diversity of social structures (be is state, church, family, business or any other) without undue emphasis on any at the expense of others and recognising the appropriate place of each. This is the distinctive characteristic of a Christian social method.

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