

PERICHORESIS AS A HERMENEUTICAL KEY TO ONTOLOGY:
SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM, KIERKEGAARD, AND
TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

GREGORY SCOTT GORSUCH*

Azusa Pacific University

ABSTRACT. If humans are created in the image of a trinitarian God, then we might consider that the fundamental ontology of humans would be relational, furthermore to some degree perichoretic. If *perichoresis* is somehow reflected in human relations (notwithstanding all Creation), *perichoresis* should be evident analogically in our social relations, theology, and various disciplines of thought. This relational concept of the Church Fathers failed to be further developed because the concept of the Trinity fell from theological focus over the centuries. Today subtle but radical changes are occurring in the field of social psychology and communications theory. Whereas it was once common for modern paradigms to dominate the field, social constructionists have begun to react against the preponderance of typically modern themes as the primacy of the subject or ontological discourse framed exclusively in the language of subject-subject. On the other hand, their work offers a unique opportunity for Christian theology to expand its understanding of *perichoresis*. For Kierkegaard the relationship itself becomes a positive third term that intensifies the polarities and therefore suggests an alternative tripartite consideration: subject-relationship-subject. From this tripartite relational structure of humanity as differentiated-unity, I am positioned to develop a logic of spirit and explore the possibility of *analogia spiritus*—the non-reflexive transformational dynamic facilitating holistic change and meaning—as the essential dynamic within *perichoresis*. This in turn reveals that these dynamics active as human spirit can be analogically correlated in *mutual co-conditioning reciprocity* in relation to the Trinity and the *Eternal activity* of the Spirit and Christ.

KEYWORDS: *perichoresis*, *analogia spiritus*, trinitarian ontology, pneumatology, interdisciplinary theology

Introduction

Subtle but radical changes are occurring in the field of human development and communications theory. Whereas it was once common for modern paradigms to dominate the field, social constructionists have begun to react against the preponderance of typically modern themes as the primacy of the

* GREGORY SCOTT GORSUCH (PhD 1999, University of Edinburgh) Adjunct professor Azusa Pacific University and Mars Hill Graduate School (Seattle). This essay is a distillation of his original PhD thesis, currently updated, expanded, and pending publication as *Jacob—The Night of Faith: Analogia Spiritus*. Email: peridoc33@gmail.com.

subject or ontological discourse framed exclusively in the language of subject-object or subject-subject. And while social constructionists implicitly challenge some of the central tenets of modernity by proposing alternative relational paradigms, their work poses unique opportunities for Christian theology, especially in anthropology and the relationship between the divine and human. What, for example, would relational dynamics look like within a postmodern theological context? To address this implication, I examine in the following essay one particular social constructionist claim, *viz.*, that all knowledge and meaning emerge within what appear to be specific relational dynamics, which suggest both a tripartite structure and yet unitary nature. I contrast this claim with Søren Kierkegaard's notion of human as spirit and with the relational dynamics of *perichoresis* suggested in the work of various trinitarian theologians [Jürgen Moltmann, human developmentalist James Loder, social theorist Alistair McFadyen, *et al.*]. If the full force of social constructionism is brought to bear on traditional understandings of Christian doctrine, and in contrast Christian understanding and tradition are allowed to condition our growing understanding of social reality, what emerges is nothing less than a new vantage point from which to understand social reality, and deepen our knowledge, understanding, and experience of Christianity as well.

Introduction to the Concept of *Perichoresis*

Understanding the structure of reality as inherently relational is not foreign to the Christian Scriptures or early Christian tradition. This is evident in the theological dynamic of *perichoresis*. In an attempt to describe the relational structure and unity of the Trinity, John Damascene and other Church fathers employed the concept of *perichoresis* to signify the mutual interanimation and dynamic reciprocity of the divine persons. This relationship can only be understood as an *irreducible* relational dynamic that simultaneously affirms *both* individuality and mutuality. Furthermore, some are beginning to understand this dynamic as the force that constitutes and sustains all Creation and, *a fortiori*, human beings themselves. In this respect, Colin Gunton has noted:

Because it has long been taught that to be human is to to [sic] be created in the image of God, the idea that human beings should in some way be perichoretic beings is not a difficult one to envisage. The sad truth is, however, that the notion has rarely been taken seriously, ... the individualist teaches that we are what we are in separation from our neighbour, the collectivist that we are so involved with others in society that we lose particularity (Gunton 1993: 168-9).

The anthropological hypothesis of this inquiry is that humans indeed are what they are 'in perichoretic reciprocity' (170), and furthermore, that much of the traditional polemics in theology, even the concept of God, result from underdeveloped anthropological considerations that force unilateral and

shortened characteristics within God in order to compensate for the shortened understanding of the communicative structures and dynamics within basic human sociology. A renewed look at the constitutive nature of human persons as perichoretic, informed by various developments within contemporary thought, provides alternative and often innovative structures for understanding the divine-human interaction. The hope is that further investigation along this line would begin to deepen our understanding of age-old polemics like divine providence and human freedom, and theodicy. The growing sentiment is that such issues arose and were framed inadequately in the past, and therefore, in confusion set aside. Greater understanding, I believe, necessitates a paradigm shift in our thinking concerning relational dynamics and indeed reality as perichoretic.

In short, *perichoresis* represents an irreducible relational dynamic that affirms the distinctiveness of persons in relationship while at the same time constituting them *qua* persons from within the formative matrix of the unique and all-inclusive relational unity itself. To help develop this understanding I turn to recent work in social constructionism and Søren Kierkegaard, for whom this mutuality becomes a positive third term that creates the space of the relationship, facilitating the transforming of each in respect of the other, yet simultaneously intensifying the polarities. For the latter, that Power that constitutes relationship is He who is ‘before all things, and in Whom all things hold together’ (Colossians 1: 17). This understanding of relational dynamics challenges the conventionally understood dual structure of relationality, subject-object or subject-subject, and posits instead an alternative tripartite dynamic of subject-relationship-subject.

Significant or not, it is worth noting that the ancient Greek language, through which Western civilization and the New Testament emerged, lacked an explicit term for *relationship*, something distinct between. Something too ‘simple’, too ‘familiar’, that which was still most ‘powerful’ [allusion here to Wittgenstein 1953: 50e] had yet to arise as a clearly demarcated term within Greek focal awareness. [For example, typical of the New Testament, when the author of Matthew in 19: 10 attempts to express the generic concept of relationship and the relatedness of one person to another, Εἰ οὕτως ἐστὶν ἡ αἰτία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μετὰ τῆς γυναίκος... (‘If the *cause* of the man with his wife...’), he is reduced to employing the Greek concepts of cause and effect (αἰτία, cause). The idea of the relationship as we know it had not yet developed into an explicit concept—something between. The Greek concept of *koινωνia* generally meant a sharing of something and was differently oriented than ‘e.g., φίλος where the bond is that of relationship or love’ (Hauck 1965: 797). The Ancient Hebrew term of covenant at least had the groundwork for the holistic emergence of relationship in its notion of Creation *ex nihilo*, which transcended the Greek metaphysics of ‘cause and effect’.] This may have had

serious consequences, regarding the growth in understanding of our Christian faith. Though the concept of relationship was evident in many broader forms of life and expressions and has since explicitly emerged throughout the history of ideas, it is not surprising that the immanent ponderings of recent social constructionism have begun to focus upon the importance of this middle dynamic as an ontological key within developmental and communicational theory.

By positing a tripartite relational structure, we will be able to draw upon aspects of the logic of spirit developed in recent Trinitarian theologies, namely Moltmann, McFadyen, and Loder. Loder specifically explores the fundamental dynamic within *perichoresis*—*analogia spiritus*, the non-reflexive transformational dynamic facilitating and creating personal *holistic* transformation and meaning from *within* the dynamic of relations. In essence, I am proposing to draw upon recent social constructionist theory in order to better understand human being as differentiated unity. This begins to present us with a human dynamic of spirit and relationality that can be analogically correlated to God's reciprocal trinitarian and Eternal activity as Spirit.

Social Constructionist Theory

In the Cartesian view of the mind, the subjective mind is central. The mind receives sensory and linguist data through the body that then primarily refer to previously developed meaning located solely within the mind. Meaning becomes the exclusive property of the mind, and language becomes the sole vehicle for re-presenting one's construction of it. In his primary concern over the connection (veridicality) between ideas and what they represented, Descartes, took for granted the certainty and constancy of meaning and ideas within the individual. By reducing the philosophical project as such, the idea, the consciousness, the self, subtly became the indubitable perspective 'outside' of all things. Over time this one safe loft of certainty evolved into a detached perspective, which then helped to bring about the category of 'objective' truth. Observing became the act of categorizing. Knowledge (*episteme*, theoretical knowledge) was used to *reference* reality. This, however, began to separate knowledge and the individual from the holistic dynamics involved in the creation of meaning. The indubitable soon became associated only with the re-presentable, which began to erode the fullness of the moment and the uniqueness of each specific occurrence.

In response to the Cartesian-inspired subjectivism endemic within Modernism, postmodern ventures have begun to emerge which attempt to breach the growing isolation of the subject. These are many and diverse, but it seems their common quality and goal is a growing attempt to understand holistic dynamics within the knowing and communicative act. Recently, social constructionist and communication theorists have begun to dislodge the

processes formerly understood as happening solely within the Cartesian ‘psyche’ and have begun to recognize the contingency of personhood upon a greater constituting dynamic at play within relationality that lies both outside *and* inclusive of the self. As our insights grow, we are becoming more and more aware that knowledge and meaning are never the sole property of the subject, but to some degree the emergent property of the immediate and specific relationship, as well as the contributing sociality and culture. In this respect, metaphysics is also being forced to incorporate both time and relational movement. Kenneth Gergen suggests: ‘If we can grant the preeminence of relationship in fostering human intelligibility, we are positioned to reconsider the foundational assumptions within the humanist tradition.’ This attempts ‘to reconceptualize these concepts in terms of a relational ontology’ (Gergen 1998b: 8). I wish briefly to introduce and contrast this emerging literature, which posits the dynamic relationality itself as the matrix of reality, with the ancient theological dynamic of *perichoresis*, which is currently re-emerging with more sophistication and evolved structures than its historical predecessor. Such literature is beginning to present alternative scholarly trajectories in social relations that approximate, and therefore allude to contingency upon, what was formerly an exclusively a theological dynamic.

Wittgenstein (and Ricoeur): Dialogical Holism

Wittgenstein argued that the dominance of the subject (Rationalism and Empiricism) risks underdetermining various supporting or unseen aspects of ‘grammar’ (actions) which make up and contribute to our communications and meaning construction. These fundamental developments within our relations and practices become for Wittgenstein the unseen ‘familiar’ foundations upon which various language games and ‘rational thought’ are constructed. Wittgenstein thinks, says Fergus Kerr,

the meanings that establish the house of reason are not inside our individual minds. They are out in the open, constituting the space, wherever two or three gather to exchange gifts or threats or stories and songs... The claim of reason is so exorbitant in our metaphysically inflated self-understanding that it is hard for us to acknowledge what is obvious: the phenomena, including the language games that give rise to the possibility of rational thought in the first place (Kerr 1986: 118).

All rational and intrasystematic ‘truths’ are relational meanings, manifested *within* a specific transaction, and contingent upon a host of developed skills (language games) and uniquely occurring events. Many of these skills are ‘hidden’ phenomena within the relationship. Wittgenstein notes,

the aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something—because it is always before one’s eyes.) The real foundations of his inquiry do not strike a man at all. Unless that fact has at some time struck him—And this means: we fail to be struck by what, once seen, is most striking and most powerful (Wittgenstein 1953: 50e).

Concerning such ‘hidden’ ‘foundations’ (of ‘reason’) of which Wittgenstein wrote, Kerr points to a ‘*natural* order that pervades and sustains our culture’, a relatedness to the world which underlies all human ‘perception’, ‘cognitive construction’, ‘knowledge’ and ‘interest’ (Kerr 1986: 118). For him any concept of reason (isolated ‘causal’ relatedness) made distinct from the whole of active human relatedness to the world is the illusion of the idealist, who is

for Wittgenstein, the man who has to have a reason for accepting the existence even of his own hands. All that we do and say has to rest upon some assumption or hypothesis, some view or belief, or more generally, some web of beliefs. Our relation to the world, on this account, is essentially cognitive. What is primary and foundational, according to Wittgenstein, is, however, neither ideas nor beliefs nor any other class of mental events, but human beings in a multiplicity of transactions with one another (Kerr 1986: 119).

Therefore, if Wittgenstein and Kerr are right, and in this respect, I believe they are, then the intrasystematic order of adequacy (truth) becomes incomplete and immediately distorted when it is cognitively differentiated in any way from the full dynamic of the interaction. The temptation by some post-liberals (e.g., N. Murphy and R. Thiemann) to bifurcate first- and second-order language games within various forms of discourse results from the failure to recognize the holistic unity of the ‘conceptual’ and ‘experiential’ within meaning. This is like the fish in respect to water, which, oblivious to the existence of water, never ceases to experience the force and presence of this basic phenomenon. [The old philosopher once said, ‘I don’t know who discovered water, but I’m certain it wasn’t a fish.’] We never completely separate these aspects within the irreducibility of meaning within relationship. Our expressions and actions toward one another are developed complexities of synthesized experiences, which are socially organized into whole acts of meaningful communication and relational interactions. There is never just a communicated ‘belief’. There is more; there is a shared or communicated *believing*, which is contingent upon a whole host of immediately contingent factors within each specific occurrence. In a Kierkegaardian manner, *one’s belief does not refer to a God as much as the whole transaction communicating one’s own believing in a God, then refers to a God*. [Kierkegaard (CUP) sharply emphasizes the preeminent nature of the *how* of belief over the *what* of belief, i.e.

it is not the word that refers, but the entire confluence of relational action in which the word or belief emerges that refers.]

In a similar manner, this is consonant with Ricoeur's conviction that more lies within the actor's language and action than the focal intention of the author. Philip Clayton informs us, 'Ricoeur denies that ascertaining what the actors meant by their actions is all we aim for in trying to understand them.' The intended meaning is not the whole story we engage. 'Explanations in social science [as well as theology] need not be tied to the self-understandings of the agents involved' (Clayton 1989: 72). In this respect, we can never exclusively constitute or situate meaning solely by or within ourselves or solely within the author, but by and within each unique occurrence and transaction. This also implies that more is in the text than what the author focally intended. Yes, there is an intended meaning in the author, but it dies with the act of writing to be constantly resurrected and re-incarnated with each new reading, each new telling, memory or relational occurrence. Because of the infinite algorithms of potential interactions, each new meaning arises with the relational act of *sunesis* (understanding) and yet never conflicts with the infinite possibilities of felicitous readings, even when the perceived and evolving 'intent' has long since left the local meaning-frame and specific context of the author. A reader from outside the immediate context might later learn things from the text that eluded the focal and original understanding of the author. [For example: (please allow me this playfulness) A classic written by an old fish was read centuries later by flying fish who had since developed focal awareness and knowledge of water (because they discovered air—*différance*—and thus water). The flyers, nevertheless, still learned much about water from the old one's writings simply because the logic of water played an obvious though tacit role in the author's experience and narrative. Though he had no focal knowledge of water, nor was it properly within the *sensus literalis* of his text, it was, nevertheless, within his tacit and practical experience, which backgrounds his focal awareness and knowledge. If, however, we object by claiming that the tacit is indeed implicit within the '*sensus literalis*', and that we, the flyers, have felicitous connection with that *sensus literalis* (*compositus*), then what are we to say of the future fuller interpretations of the 'walkers' in relation to the flyer's meaning? What is the 'literal sense'—the authorial intention—when a thousand various cultures in one age of humanity might exegete the Scriptures with a thousand slightly different 'literal' meanings, all of them potentially right, all of them latent within the original communicational occurrence, and none conflicting!? In this sense, if all of what was 'literally' contained within the authorial intent of Scriptures 'were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written'. Cf. also (Marion 1991: 156).] Each new reading (occurrence) creates the possibility and necessity of appropriate knowledge

and specific meaning arising within the specific occurrence respective to the whole of the text. Each new progressive relationship (communitive reading) draws out more of what was formerly tacit within the author's 'intended' (focal) meaning. In this respect, authors and texts may experience revolving historical episodes of honor and villainization.

Social Constructionism

Developmentalist Kenneth Gergen is convinced that this new literature, which he feels continues the spirit of Wittgenstein, increasingly places the 'locus of meaning within the process of interaction itself. That is, *individual* subjectivity is abandoned as the primary site from which meaning originates and understanding takes place; attention moves from the within to the between' (Gergen 1998a: 4). Though he recognizes this literature is not yet able to present a comprehensive account of how this may be fully understood, it is becoming increasingly clear that 'the enormously rich language we have for depicting inner states is itself not a product of such [mental] states but of relational coordination. The language does not thus 'depict', so much as it constructs what we take to be the character of subjectivity' (6). He goes on to say:

Each new form of 'saying' is simultaneously a new form of relating, and with potentially different consequences... Relying on the work of Vygotsky and Bakhtin, many developmentalists have begun to reconceptualize thought as internal language. On this account, cognitive processes are not the possessions of single individuals so much as their relationships speaking through them... We may conceptualize emotions as elements within relational scenarios, actions that gain their intelligibility and necessity from patterns of interchange. Here it is possible to view anger or depression not as a personal event, but as a constituent of a particular relational dance (Gergen 1998a: 7).

Meaning itself is realized only within the supplemental action of the other in relation to our speech. The hermeneutical dynamic and construction of meaning emerge from within the term or unity of the emerging interaction. Citing research on the evolving structure and focus of women's magazine articles from the 1950s to the 1980s, Gergen notes a move from 'taking care of either the relational partner or the self' to a new vision 'found in which 'the relationship' is created as an object for the readers' (Gergen 1996: 12).

The individual alone can never 'mean' anything. Without the required supplemental action of another-in-response, the act is reduced to nonsense. This involves two distinct living worlds coming into dialogical contact. 'At this moment', says John Shotter,

when a speaker in one world turns from addressing those in another and invites their creative bridging of the gap thus created in their responsive rejoinders, a

new world is created between them, with influences from both worlds at work in it... The special unity or wholeness that emerges when two or more different worlds, or different ‘freedoms’ (Steiner) meet, exists only in the fleeting moment of their meeting. It is in their sustained focus on, and their articulation of, the details of the present moment, of what occurs in fleeting interactive or dialogical moments—without the need to step out of such moments as if to observe and to describe them from a distance—that is so special in their approach (Shotter 1998: 4-5).

Unlike Cartesian subjectivism, here the point of convergence is centered upon an emergent world of the relationship being created by the respective elements, responses, expectations, and dynamics from which the immediate relationship is constructed. It is as if a whole new creation or mediational background emerges when any two or more persons begin to relate or intend one another.

According to Shotter, this displays specific characteristics. The first is that ‘we cannot not be responsive to each other’ (Shotter 1998: 5). The force within us to relate is greater than we can resist. When addressed, we must consider even our effort to ignore as active response *in* relationship. In normal relations, the listener always assumes an active and dynamic ‘responsive attitude’ toward the speaker. M. M. Bakhtin tells us, the listener ‘adopts this responsive attitude for the entire duration of the process of listening and understanding’ (Bakhtin 1986: 68). On the other side,

[the speaker] does not expect passive understanding that, so to speak, only duplicates his or her own idea in someone else’s mind (as in Saussure’s model of linguistic communication...). Rather, the speaker talks with an expectation of a response, agreement, sympathy, objection, execution, and so forth (69,91).

This suggests more of a *relational-responsive* communicative dynamic in contrast to the *representational-referential* Cartesian understanding. In this respect, we are offended when the ‘response attitude’ of the listener is not open, spontaneous, and authentically constituted in relation to our speech. ‘Here’, Bakhtin suggests, ‘in a component of non-rational impulsiveness—not only tolerated but actually demanded—we find an important way in which the interactional order differs from other kinds of social order’ (Bakhtin 1986: 115). The speaker expects an open ‘response attitude’, which does not predetermine the meaning, or (under- or) overdetermine the interaction.

Shotter tells us such spontaneous openness in response is ‘very different from either naturally *caused* activity, or from actions done by individuals for a *reason*. It is activity, so to speak, *distributed* between us; it is *joint action* in the sense that it is action we do as a group, as a collective, as a ‘we’ or an ‘us’ (Shotter 1998: 6). Though ‘response attitude’ takes place within a particular social background and is a culturally structured activity, the complexity of

influences which produce the *entire* communicative activity warrant that such a dynamic of awareness remain open and spontaneous. This demands no foundational ‘reason’ that is not authentically re-constituted from out of the immediate relationship. ‘The performed act’, says Bakhtin,

concentrates, correlates, and resolves within a unitary and unique and, this time, final context both the sense and the fact, the universal and the individual, the real and the ideal, for everything enters into the composition of its answerable motivation. The performed act constitutes a going out once and for all from within the possibility as such into what is once-occurrent (Bakhtin 1993: 29).

Therefore, though the listener’s ‘response attitude’ is open and spontaneous, a decisive response is expected. It becomes *the* response, in *that* moment, *all* things considered.

Shotter goes on finally to characterize the *dialogical structure* of this complex active confluence as having a ‘dynamic, continually changing, oscillating, pulsating character, such that its structure at any one moment is very different from its structure at another’ (Shotter 1998: 7). Bakhtin describes this dialogical structure as constituting us a ‘plurality of unmerged consciousnesses’ (Bakhtin 1984: 9). Shotter further describes this dialogical dynamic (not necessarily just linguistic) as a pulsation between unity and plurality within the relationship.

It is only in each unique interactive moment, as one individual ceases to address him- or herself to the others and becomes him- or herself an addressee, that a unity is formed. In each uncertain once-occurrent event of Being, in which we encounter others radically different and distinct from ourselves, they call out from us responses which we are incapable of calling out from ourselves. But it is in these moments also, that we are joined with them and present to each other as the distinct individuals we are (Shotter 1998: 7).

If I begin to read aloud a paper I have been working on to a friend for constructive comment, I never cease to be amazed how poorly it reads in their presence despite the countless hours I might have spent alone on it beforehand. Direct personal relationship constitutes us more intensely and responsibly than when we are merely in relation to our ‘internal social audience’. Here, we are caught up into an emergent activity bigger than the sum of both. In these moments an interactive and instantaneous dynamic is going on both inside and between us. Knowledge and meaning, though in one respect our own, are always contingent upon forces and persons within the relationship outside of us. ‘Even if I know a given person thoroughly, and I also know myself’, says Bakhtin, ‘I still have to grasp the truth of our interrelationship, the truth of the unitary and unique event that links us and in which we are participants’ (Bakhtin 1993: 17-8). These descriptions begin to

present a relational dynamic that, as we shall see, approximate those within perichoretic dynamics in Trinitarian theology, and furthermore surprisingly corroborate the currently expanding understanding of Kierkegaard.

These theoreticians have suggested, like Piaget before them, that whether personal reflection or active social relations, all human consciousness is constituted in the *activity* of an immediate dialogical relationship. Volosinov tells us:

Each person's inner world and thought has its stabilized social audience that comprises the environment in which reasons, motives, values, and so on are fashioned... Orientation of the word toward the addressee has an extremely high significance. In point of fact, word is a two-sided act. It is determined equally by whose word it is and for whom it is meant... Each and every word expresses the 'one' in relation to the 'other' (Volosinov 1986: 86).

In this way, our responsive reason, desire, motive, memory and even personal reflection is never completely 'our own'. It is a complex momentary juxtaposing of influences from many directions—past, present and future (as desire, expectation and possibility)—constituting and conditioning our experience and the relationship according to our own unique character of organizing. It is this personal style and manner of *how* we enter the relationship and allow such constituting action to take place that presents us uniquely to the other as the person we are. Likewise, language, experience and even knowledge are relationships; they are never the sole property of the individual proper, or the dictionary. They are always shapes or forms of the immediate relationship, never completely re-presenting the past, nor demanding universal or *literal* expectation of its present meaning upon the future. Language itself is as alive and mysterious as persons.

Convinced of needed change, these social constructionists are suggesting we radically reconfigure metaphysics toward a relational ontology in which human existence is constituted, not completely within the self, but within relationship and the self. In some way or another, they would have us reconsider relational dynamics themselves as the primordial, yet dynamic, 'essence'.

'Relational Sublime' and 'Social Poetics'

Such radical shifts in understanding our relational world have grievous consequences for our consideration of method, how indeed we assess truth and progress. 'Traditionally', Shotter suggests,

we have always been concerned with patterns and order, with what is stable and repeatable, with what can be calculated and measured, with understanding things by finding the hidden laws or principles determining their nature. We are quite

unused to the idea that the events of importance to us in our investigations, are unique, novel, unmeasurable events, not repetitions (Shotter 1998: 11-2).

If the certainty of re-presentation has begun to erode, as is suggested within the postmodern critique, how then are we to determine the continuity, equity and morality of relationship? Gergen, for example, is convinced we must 'reduce the tendency to place moral judgment on the other (or the self). We are, instead, invited to spread the concern to the network of relations from which issues of conflict or wrongdoing arise' (Gergen 1998b: 11). He is not delimiting the moral judgement of the individual, but merely expanding it in wisdom. We need to understand that every decision is one that, though intensely personal and responsible as such, is also interwoven into a complexity of interpenetrating relations and cultural conditions. I will briefly present two responses to this problem currently offered within this literature.

Gergen is suspicious of the permanent effectiveness of a 'continuous renegotiation of meaning' found in many narrative accounts, which anticipate eventual conceptual uniformity through ever progressing dialogue. To begin with, the range of communications inclusive in such activity is limited; and finally, we must consider the ability of such communicative theories to function effectively in ever-changing structures of relationship. [This reflects Piaget and Loder's concern that such attention overlooks the more important transformational matrix which operates *between* the stages of progressive morphological structuring, the latter being a primary focus within most narrative concerns.] Therefore, he suggests we begin to reconsider an ancient concept, which he resurrects as the 'relational sublime'. We must move 'beyond narrative as the center of our interest to the relational matrix from which narrative understandings emerge' (Gergen 1998a: 10). We can envision this condition as 'pure relatedness', resulting in a relational sublime. Similar to an ocean,

all the individual waves are given form by each other, and we must recognize with awe the potential of a singular movement of the entirety... We cannot articulate the character of the sublime, for our languages are themselves only local manifestations of the whole (10).

He simply seeks to 'resuscitate' and 're-signify' this Western idea born eighteen centuries ago. He begins this resurrection by summoning forth the first century writings of Greek critic Dionysus Longinus who acknowledges a dynamic source in the 'great writings' which bring 'power and irresistible might to bear' in the written word, a power which Gergen traces to nature's blessing for the 'inward greatness of the soul'. He traces its presence in history through Edmund Burke, Kant, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Schiller on to Emerson. They present us with something beyond our words that give them

their force, ‘something beyond reason which causes reason to leap up’. Though we cannot articulate it, it can be appreciated. It is the ‘primordial processes of relationship—the pulsing coordination’.

Its not the ‘inward greatness of the soul’... but the process of relatedness which enable such passages to carry us with them. Likewise, the source of ‘awe’, ‘inspiration’, or ‘terror’ is not to be found in nature (with Wordsworth), or in the person (with Emerson), but within unfathomable processes of relatedness which make meaning possible. The capacity to give life to words, and thus to transform culture, is not usefully traced to internal resources, but to relatedness—which serves as the source of all articulation, and which simultaneously remains beyond its reach (Gergen 1996: 11).

This radically suggests a relational ontology, and the ‘relational sublime’ as its qualitative criterion of fit-ness and progress (in contrasting things and themes). This relational dynamic is the source of all transformation and sustains the dynamic life of human existence. The relational sublime emanates from every relationship to the degree it is constituted in association with the dynamic nature of that force creating it and its environmental fitness. Such a dynamic and criterion is not only what ultimately establishes the structure of genuine relationship, but the sense of rightness and the source of goodness and virtue we experience within its logic. In consideration of a criterion for truth and adequacy of relations, Gergen calls for a shift in emphasis from the *what* of truth to the *how* of truth.

Shotter similarly suggests a form of ‘social poetics’. Utilizing Bakhtin and George Steiner he presents a dynamic in human occurrences, a movement, beyond the collective sums, which takes up the moment or event and presents it in its own time, in a ‘new’ way. Speaking of the artistic or poetic moment ‘happening to us’, Steiner observes:

That which comes to call on us—that idiom, we saw, connotes visitation and summons—will very often do so unbidden. Even when there is a readiness, as in the concert hall, in the museum, in the moment of chosen reading, the true entrance into us will not occur by an act of will... But each and everyone of us, however bounded our sensibility, will have known such unbidden, unexpected entrances by irrevocable guests (1989: 179-80).

Such a poetic dynamic, which is to some degree resident within all discourse and dialogical activity, ‘strikes’ and ‘arrests’ us from pre-patterned response to engage responsively the freedom of the other. This is necessary for an authentic ‘meeting between freedoms’ (Steiner 1989: 152). Next, we search for appropriate ways of talking, structurally generating what we can to provide an ‘inner relational landscape’. Then, through *contrast* (relation), we allow the ‘*creative understanding*’ to give rise. The order within things and activities

become manifest in *active* tension to other things and actions. They emerge in coinherent, co-conditioning relation. It happens both in us and yet outside of us. It is not completely within our control and is better thought of as ‘gift’. This dynamic criterion of relational adequacy transpires *between* us, and *through* contrast and difference. Steiner tells us:

Creative understanding does not renounce itself, its own place in time, its own culture; and it forgets nothing... In the realm of culture, outsidership is a most powerful factor in understanding. It is only in the eyes of *another* culture that foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly... A meaning only reveals its depths once it has encountered and come into contact with another, foreign meaning: they engage in a kind of dialogue, which surmounts the closeness and one-sidedness of these particular meanings, these cultures. We raise new questions for a foreign culture, ones that it did not raise itself; we seek answers to our questions to it; and the foreign culture responds to us by revealing to us its new aspects and new semantic depths (Steiner 1989: 7).

No ordering, knowledge, nuance or historical event rendering remains the same when it is analogically ‘called up’ for immediate service; it is always brought up in contrast to the immediate situation and within that situation. Our method, says Shotter, must never lead ‘to a final, fixed account of what something ‘really’ means’. Reflecting the earlier mention of Wittgenstein, Bakhtin tells us,

At any moment in the development of the dialogue there are immense, boundless masses of forgotten contextual meanings, but at certain moments... they are recalled and invigorated in renewed form (in a new context). Nothing is absolutely dead: every meaning will have its homecoming festival (Bakhtin 1986: 170).

It is important, however, to note that social poetics and the transforming moment into mutually shared meaning and unity takes place in a transitional moment between the opening of the self in awareness and the cognitive gestalt of *self-in-relation*. Bakhtin says:

When I experience an object actually, I thereby carry out something in relation to it; the object enters into relation with that which is to-be-achieved, grows in it—within my relationship to that object. Pure givenness cannot be experienced actually. Insofar as I am actually experiencing an object, even if I do so by thinking of it, it becomes a changing moment in the ongoing event of my experiencing (thinking) it, i.e., it assumes the character of something-yet-to-be-achieved. Or, to be exact, it is given to me within a certain event-unity (Bakhtin 1993: 32).

Within such ‘event-unity’ all existing structures, knowledge, memory, and so forth *resurrect* and *incarnate* into ‘a certain, living, concrete, and palpable

(intuitable) once-occurrent whole—an event’ (Bakhtin 1993: 32). In concert, Shotter indirectly presents us with two basic aspects of and criteria for genuine relationship, which parallel the broader categories of prereflexive awareness and reflexive conceptualization. *How* we open in awareness to the world establishes how we will experience life. From within this posture and within the forming relational engagement we ‘articulate our language entwined activities more clearly to ourselves, so that we can come, not to a theoretical, but to a more elaborate and refined practical grasp of how to make sense of them’ (Shotter 1998: 15). I would associate this latter aspect of ‘practical grasp’ and making ‘sense of them’ with our explanatory capacity and understanding. By explanatory capacity I mean a practical as well as conceptual configuring of all that is perceived from *within* the *immediate* relationship, however, Shotter is insistent that all of what moves towards this conceptual gestalt must be free from ‘indubitable’ pre-established foundations and ossified theory that pre-determines the outcome without itself being open to being affected by the new, the other within the relationship. There must be a mutual spirit of *sunesis* in which the constituent entities co-conditionally emerge within the relationship.

These theorists suggest that a universal relational dynamic ultimately beyond articulation enables the collating of the relative aspects of all things and events into any number of other possible relational unity-occurrences. This dynamic capably interrelates all things through time and enables change, even transformation, of the person. Within a given frame of reference or experience, transformation occurs whenever alternate orders of coherence and meaning emerge replacing or altering the axioms of the existing meaning-frame, reordering and transforming its elements accordingly (Loder 1992: 316). All knowledge, to some degree, arises in such a manner, and its value is assessed not by ‘reason’ *per se*, but by that from which reason emerges—the holistic character and intentionality of the individuals toward that Dynamic which constitutes and creates the relationship. This ultimately suggests a ‘living structure’ within us and in our relations that ultimately transform us accordingly, which must include but take asymmetrical priority over our existing structures. With many of these theorists, however, it seems the self is in danger of being completely sacrificed into a Hegelian sea in which the self dissolves into the ontology of the community. If one, however, listens carefully to certain intonations within the literature, a unique and redeemable dialogical pattern begins to emerge.

The insights within this literature, which are compelling, begin to present us with not only suggested criteria for, but also a shape of, felicitous relationship. In a description of Dostoevsky’s writing, Bakhtin indirectly and adventitiously provides us with a potential relational structure to reality, ‘a *plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world*, combine but are

not merged in the unity of the event' (Bakhtin 1984: 6). This, I maintain, suggests an irreducible shape to relationship in which consciousnesses are somehow able to interpenetrate without loss of personal identity and distinction. The ground (background), upon which these consciousnesses 'combine', and the dynamic itself is not yet clearly delineated by Bakhtin and the others. Their description of this dynamic, however, closely reflects that which has struggled for full expression over the last seventeen centuries in the Christian relational dynamic of *perichoresis*. In this respect, the relational dynamics of social constructionism are similar to certain logics of word and spirit that have progressively emerged within various Christian traditions.

Within such dynamics, we are transformed within the intersubjectivity of the communicative act without losing our personhood into a sea of single consciousness or Absolute Spirit. If such is the case, however, the human social and relational dynamic must be analogically and mutually related to that same configurative dynamic inherent in what Gergen refers to as the 'sacred' (Gergen 1998a: 10)—that constituting dynamic establishing all relationships, that which ultimately constitutes and creates the 'world' of the relationship *'from me and yet from beyond me and over me'* (Heidegger 1962: 320). If there is to be *any* continuity in human epistemological development, *some level of synergy must exist between the transformational dynamic between the structural levels within human development and social dynamics and those dynamics which universally facilitate all relations respectively*. By use of the word 'sacred' Gergen acknowledges a universal dynamic constituting all relations, which indeed is both in us and between us. Before moving into the concept of *perichoresis*, let us first consider Kierkegaard's notion of spirit and the subjective.

Kierkegaard's Concept of Spirit

You send forth Your Spirit, they are created.

Psalms 104: 29, 30

Then the dust of the earth will return to the earth as it was,

And the spirit will return to God who gave it.

Ecclesiastes 12: 7

He is before all things, and in Him all things are held together.

Colossians 1: 17

In his ever-present dialogue with Hegel, Climacus and Anti-Climacus, Kierkegaard's pseudonyms for expressing truth within the meaning-frame of what can be called both the immanent and transcendent action of God in Christianity, Kierkegaard never lost sight of the human person's ontological contingency upon God's immanent trinitarian action that creates and sustains

human beings. Synchronous with such expressions of Kierkegaard, Jürgen Moltmann suggests that an emphasis upon the Spirit of God as solely the agent of redemption fails to acknowledge the Spirit's activity as the 'divine energy of life, which according to the Old Testament ideas interpenetrates all the living' (Moltmann 1992: 8). The activity of the Spirit is actively 'connected... with the body and nature', as well as with 'God, faith, the Christian life, the church and prayer'. 'If we talk in Hebrew about Yahweh's *ruach*, we are saying; God is... a force in body and soul, humanity and nature, ... *ruach* was also the breath of life and the power to live enjoyed by human beings and animals (Ecc 12: 7)... The *ruach*... keeps all things in being and in life (40-42). Ps 104: 29f: 'When thou takest away their *ruach* they die. When thou sendest forth thy *ruach* they are created.' Not only did Kierkegaard affirm this contingency within all humanity upon the immanent action of the *Creator Spiritus* (Christ and the Spirit), he also posited the notion of spirit as inherently relational.

In this section, we will challenge the over-simplistic understanding of Kierkegaard's notion of the subjective as purely individualistic. At first sight, the conventional understanding of Kierkegaard would seem far from social constructionist theory, however, I believe Søren Kierkegaard as much as any before him attempted to express much of this same irreducible and complex relational dynamic. Like social constructionist, he believed in the uniqueness of each occurrence and the impossibility and nonsense of identical re-presentation. He did believe, however, that eternal truth comes into time, in fact, envelopes it. He does this by positing human being as an existential synthesis between time and eternity, the finite and the infinite, in a unique way.

By virtue of the *relationship subsisting between* the eternal truth and the existing individual... putting the eternal essential truth into juxtaposition with existence... [Therefore, though] the subject is prevented by sin from taking himself back into the eternal, now he need not trouble himself about this; for now the eternal essential truth is not behind him but in front of him, through its being in existence or having existed so that if the individual does not existentially and in existence lay hold of the truth, he will never lay hold of it (Kierkegaard *CUP*: 87, my emphasis).

Besides his affirmation that essential truth is in some way attainable in time, his emphasis upon the unique and paradoxical 'relationship subsisting *between*' is here paramount. For Kierkegaard, not only are socialities relationships, but the existing individual as well. I wish here to present an emerging understanding of Kierkegaard taking shape only in the last few decades. It acknowledges a more complex and deeper structure within his concept of spirit.

‘Man is spirit. But what is spirit? Spirit is the self. But what is the self? The self is a relation which relates itself to its own self’ (Kierkegaard *SUD*: 146-7). As merely a relation between the eternal and the temporal, the individual is not yet a self. ‘In the relation between two [e.g., the body and the soul], the relation is the third term as a negative unity, and the two relate themselves to the relation’ (146). In other words, the relation between the eternal and the temporal, the soul and the body, is not yet a self.

If on the contrary the relation relates itself to its own self, the relation is then the positive third term, and this is the self. Such a relation... must either have constituted itself or have been constituted by another... But this relation (the third term) is in turn *a relation relating itself to that which constituted the whole relation* (Kierkegaard *SUD*: 146, my emphasis).

The confluence of the eternal and temporal is not personhood. It remains a negative unity until it is both willing to be constituted in transparent relation to that ‘Power which constitute[s] it’ (147) and ‘relates itself to another’ (146). C. Stephen Evans argues that ‘another’ in this case means just that, others, either other individuals or the person of God. In addition to Evans, I would maintain that Anti-Climacus also considers *oneself as another* to the degree one is transparently related to that Power which posits the relation which is personhood. Either way personhood is constituted only in relation. ‘The self cannot of itself attain and remain in equilibrium and rest by itself, but only by relating itself to that Power which constituted the whole relation’ (147). ‘Whole relation’ takes into consideration the ‘internal social audience’, the sedimentation and history of relations, as well as the transforming potential of that Power which constitutes the relationship of self. From these opening pages in *SUD*, human beings must be considered inherently relational and constituted irrevocably social (Evans 1995: 82-3). The new relation becomes a *positive* third term only to the degree each constituent is fully ‘willing to be itself’ in relation to another. Here we begin to see the emergence of Kierkegaard’s tripartite structure of relationality. When any two or more come together a third term is immediately created between them. Two individuals, already relations unto themselves, are simultaneously constituted to some degree in perichoretic communication with each other. This dynamic transpires concurrently both outside themselves socially and within themselves as persons-in-relation.

In the Modern reading, Kierkegaard was often conventionalized into a rigid anthropology of the individual or suppressed into an over-simplified Christology (Barth); whereas his driving thesis was pneumatological (Berkhof 1989: 79). For him spirit was emphatically dialogical and relational. In *Kierkegaard in Post/Modernity*, Matušík and Westphal tell us Kierkegaard’s

individualism turns out to be the flip side of a thoroughly relational conception of the self and is beginning to be seen as having interesting ramifications for social theory and practice. *Almost all of the chapters in this volume can be read as contributions to the ongoing task of critical social theory...* Kierkegaard in dialogue turns out to be a social philosopher (1995: ix).

This social dynamic within Kierkegaard is directly associated with his concept of spirit, active in both social relations and within persons as a relationship to themselves.

Though Kierkegaard's understanding of relational dynamics is similar, social constructionists hesitate to present humans as a relationship unto themselves; and though they are compelled to theoretically consider a similar dynamic active within human sociology, they are reticent to consider this same dynamic as active in creating the self as a relation unto itself which is concurrently active in parallel with the contributing interpersonal social factors. Kierkegaard suggests that this internal/external dynamic dialogically and holistically relates itself not only infinitely and exocentrically (Pannenberg) out into the world, 'moving away from oneself infinitely by the process of infinitizing oneself', but also cyclically 'returning to oneself infinitely by the process of finitizing' (Kierkegaard *SUD*: 163). The person is neither either/or, but conditioned by *both* the person's sociology and openness to that constituting Power that creates and sustains the self. Such reticence by constructionists to consider this unique dynamic of the individual as a relationship unto itself are understandable due to the abuses of Modernity, as well as lacking the conceptual dynamics that emerge only within Christian trinitarian considerations.

If indeed a dynamic like *perichoresis* constitutes us, we will be both individuals, through our internal immanent relation to ourselves by being transparently and fully open to that 'Power that posits it' (147), *and* simultaneously constituted and conditioned by our social and cultural relations. This is evident in Paul's social conditioning within the process of sanctification.

For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. *If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good.* But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me... For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members (Romans 7: 15-17, 22, 23; my emphasis).

Kierkegaard tells us we are a relationship that becomes a positive third term, a self, by coming into relation with either that Power which constitutes us as a relation unto ourself, *or* another. If in reflection we wholly relate unto ourself in purity of heart, venturing all, we are constituted in perichoretic

relation with that Power which constitutes us; our 'inward man' as Paul says. Optimally, if we are wholly related, our 'internal social audience' effectively becomes 'Christ in us'. For Paul, this is the 'conscience' of every person (Romans 2: 15). On the other hand, when we are constituted in relation to others, out of the specific formative social matrix that emerges, we are constituted and conditioned to some degree by the socialized spirit of the community with all its undeveloped potentials, suppressive mechanisms and social contracts of distorted relations. These two intermingling socialities (the 'inner man' and outward sociality) create the struggle. Because perichoretic relations necessitate interpenetration and interanimation, as well as maintaining the integrity of the individual, we to some degree reflect the social dynamics of those with whom we related.

We cannot completely separate ourselves from the existing 'fallen' structures within our sociality, and according to Paul it's not completely necessary to do so. If we are genuinely aware and sincerely acknowledge these 'fleshly' patterns of social behavior *within our relations*, or our spirit is open to as much, then we have done what is needful for the process of sanctification to begin and continue, despite our immediate sinful behavior. If we are *willing* and truly *desire* greater fullness of life, transformation will eventually happen, degree by degree (2 Corinthians 3: 18). Our hope lies in the transforming light of Christ, not our immediate will or ability to change it. As these fallen and incomplete structures within our relationships are revealed and sincerely acknowledged, which is evident in our true sorrow and brokenness of spirit, they will evolve over time being transformed by His immanent and unrelenting call within and between us all. 'All things that are exposed, are made manifest by the light, and become light' (Ephesians 5: 13). Nevertheless, because all socialities interpenetrate and every distinction *respectfully* maintained within the interaction, we must be satisfied with being transformed from 'degree to degree'. In the interim, among the thorns, His grace is sufficient (2 Corinthians 12: 9). Nevertheless, this internal dynamic within the self to wholly relate (or not) allows the person to *perichoretically participate* (or not, or to some degree, or according to one's *own* conditions) in all external relational occurrences. Only through such a dynamic, wherein the Eternal comes in relation to the person, can the *person* become spirit, instantiated as a whole and distinct *person-in-relation*.

Both the knowledge that God is for us and has come to us within the immanent-transcendent call of Christ (God's personal advent) *creates the possibility of venturing all*, becoming spirit. Unlike all other knowledge, in which *we* are thought of as primary operator of theory formation, our knowledge of God must be graciously formed in *reflection* to God Himself as a gift, and happens only to the degree we unveil our face before Him, *willing* to venture all. 'The individual becomes infinite [spirit] only by virtue of making the absolute

venture' (Kierkegaard *CUP*: 379), by 'venturing everything' (382) into authentic relationship. To this degree we will 'perceive analogies in the realm of the spirit' (379)—*analogia spiritus*—in which our whole experience becomes constituted analogically in relation to the whole experience of God. For Kierkegaard to venture everything means to relate absolutely to that which is Absolute. Because the Eternal has come into *our midst*, genuine selfhood requires the always incomplete maturation process of becoming fully *conscious* of God, what is ultimate. Even though God constitutes us a relation, we are released in freedom (Kierkegaard *SUD*: 149), and therefore, as Evans suggests,

The problem comes into being when the adult lacks a God-relationship and thus gives to the relations with other human selves (and with what is less than human) a priority and ultimacy such relations do not deserve. I am not here talking merely about a case of 'arrested development', a case in which an individual does not discover God and fails to grow, but the case in which the individual chooses not to grow by suppressing the knowledge of God (1995: 84). [Cf. also, Bonhoeffer: 'For Christian philosophy the human person originates only in relation to the divine; the divine person transcends the human person, who both resists and is overwhelmed by the divine' (1998: 49).]

It is not the existing or potential conceptual level of our knowledge of God that is critical here, but the *willingness* of the individual toward possible growth in knowledge and experience of the Ultimate. Such a disposition characterizes Kierkegaard's notion of venturing all and infinite resignation.

His notion of complete personhood not only necessitates relatedness to God (ultimacy), but also a particular dialogical and relational dynamic within human sociology and selfhood.

The self is the conscious synthesis of infinitude and finitude, which relates itself to itself, whose task is to become itself, a task which can be performed only by means of a relationship to God... Accordingly, the development consists in moving away from oneself infinitely by the process of infinitizing oneself, and in returning to oneself infinitely by the process of finitizing. If on the contrary the self does not become itself, it is in despair, whether it knows it or not (Kierkegaard *SUD*: 162-3).

The prereflexive 'infinitizing' of oneself out of self into relations is one of two modal aspects identified by Kierkegaard within dialogical dynamics. The other is the returning action of being conceptually constituted reflexively and de-finitively a person-in-relation. Kierkegaard's notion of indirect knowledge can be associated with the former holistic dynamic of communication that takes place when the process of a person becoming spirit transpires in open relations to that same process in another, which results in their both being reflexively constituted in mutual meaningful event-unity. Such a dynamic is

the primordial condition and background of all relations, and any differentiated aspects of communication (e.g., words, sentences, gestures) meaningfully emerge from within this one basic-relation (Bonhoeffer). Before moving on to the dynamic of *perichoresis* and *analogia spiritus*, it might be helpful at this point to first consider the Christian social theory of Alistair McFadyen.

McFadyen's Christian Social Theory

God does not think, he creates; God does not exist, He is eternal. Man thinks and exists, and existence separates thought and being, holding them apart from one another in succession.

Søren Kierkegaard (*CUP*: 296)

I have argued from Kierkegaard that humanity exists between or within a pulsating cycle of infinitizing into a relationship away from oneself, and returning infinitely into the finitude of the self. McFadyen similarly presents us with a Christian dialogical social theory that is similar in ways to the earlier theorist, and moreover, one that includes a dialogical cycle that cannot be materially synthesized into the former dialectical understanding of reason within Modernity. From this brief study of McFadyen in discussion with aspects of Kierkegaard, I wish to suggest that the dialogical cycle of human existence involves a relational alternation of open awareness as an analogically infinite mode into relationship, and a reciprocating closure from out of this openness, finitizing or constituting the individual as individual within a finite cognitive social structure.

In *The Call to Personhood*, McFadyen presents personhood as socially constituted through dialogical communication, and considers all undistorted communication as ultimately mediated by Christ through the Trinitarian activity of Word and Spirit. He suggests, we begin to understand this dynamic by considering how Jesus called his disciples—the ‘immediate and uncompromising demand to ‘leave everything and follow [him]’ (McFadyen 1990: 48). The call was to stand out from their existing context and enter a new meaning-frame through which they would be completely recontextualized. McFadyen explains, however, that such a call to relation is not a denying of one’s existing relational contexts, rather a call to respond to a new, different, and more extended context. ‘It is not so much a decontextualising act of self-constitution as a recontextualisation in response to an external address’ (49).

In such recontextualization, former identities actively draw up into the creative force of the new and present call from Jesus, which has ‘no presupposition but itself’. In the example of Levi, he suggests, we are given no antecedent contextual elements suggesting presuppositions; rather, it suggests the call itself creates in the hearer the response it demands. The immediate relation itself *transforms* the old identity awakening the disciple to a new

future, present, and past upon response. In this respect, the call and response frees the individual from the enclosure of self and provides the space and decisive break from our world, creating the possibility of *ex-centric* freedom for authentic relations—the ability to be affected and potentially transformed in genuine relations. This effectively presents a

new form of communicative subjectivity, a new way of being in relations (56)... One's own space-time is de-absolutized in redemption by the co-intention of others with their own equally valid space-time. For ultimate meaning can no longer be found in one's own space-time, which has henceforth to be related to that of others and God; that is, recontextualised and hence relativised (McFadyen 1990: 57).

In this respect, the meaning, truth, and fidelity of relations emerge from *within* the relationship, the constituting dynamic of 'Christ between' (62). 'This presence of Christ is not an indication of an essence but a movement with others towards 'Christ between us'... Christ is therefore 'in' us as the ground of this self-transcendence, as a centre within us pushing us outwards, and as a centre beyond us pulling us towards God and others' (60,62). Unlike Levinas' manner of divine presence within the Face—to some degree a recapitulation to Greek/classical ontology—Kierkegaard and McFadyen point us to the ontological import and dynamic of the relationship itself, and the trinitarian and contingent dialogical structure of genuine relationship. This is evident in Christ's own call within Himself, who is the mediator and constitutor of all relationships (Mark 10: 29-30). It is difficult to understand such a call within the limited and contemporary Greek and Hebrew categories of relationality. Ultimately, we are not asked to indwell the other or even sacrifice ourselves to the other. By virtue of the coming Spirit, and the Spirit's reciprocity with Himself, we are asked to 'indwell' the relationship, to repetitively re-contextualize ourselves in the authenticity of open relationship.

Therefore, though all communicative contexts may be diversely conditioned and as such seemingly incommensurable, they are universally linked by an inherent dialogical and relational dynamic. 'Once the distortions and limitations of particularity are stripped away', all contexts are technically capable of unity, though not necessarily uniformity (McFadyen 1993: 439,441). Christian truth is 'not primarily propositional', but relational. 'It concerns the proper relationship between humanity, creation and God' (1993: 447). This has to do with the *genuineness* and wholeness of response to the call. 'When a person is, consciously or otherwise, adopting a hidden agenda (i.e. sin), and is therefore not genuinely present in communication, that person's address is distorted because it is not aimed at a true mutuality of understanding' (McFadyen 1990: 120). All undistorted personal response

requires an openness to others and to self-transformation, combined with the closure proper to an individually centred identity which is resistant to external overdetermination. This represents a structure of personhood in which both openness and closure are present, but never total (121).

In undistorted communication, the Spirit enables 'ordered openness in systems' and the Word 'is the form-giver to organised life' (1990: 63). Within dialogical communications one is 'alternatingly the object and subject of the process' (122), and therefore, both aspects of the perichoretic dynamic become evident in dialogical alternation. It is by faith in the all-consuming love of Christ that we can willingly venture all that we are into the transforming dynamic of the relationship. This is followed by (or not) the decisive act of being constituted *person-in-relation* by that Power constituting the relation. Sin is the precluding of this action, for McFadyen, the 'absence of genuine communication'.

The basic sin is to lay our search for meaning to rest prematurely; to refer the finite only to itself and idolise it as infinite. 'Nurtured in insecurity, sin's motivation is to secure, to anchor human being in a cosmos projected by itself, a creation of its own act of meaning or intentionality.'... Sin, for an individual, is a distorted way of intending oneself, others and the world in communication which imbues one's limited being, one's personal space and time, with universal meaning (236).

And therefore, 'in view of the eschatological and universal nature of the kingdom, openness must be unrestricted' (248).

Meaning *en totum* uniquely emerges from within each relationship. And even though all meaning must emerge from out of a prereflexive gaze of awareness, 'meaning is never purely subjective. The 'objectivity' (intersubjective validity) of meaning is present in individuals at a pre-conscious or pre-reflective level' (96). The transition from the infinitizing process of open awareness to the finitizing conceptual response is the paradoxical transition of Christ in and between us. This is the process of relativization from the finite call (existence) to the infinite (possibility) and back again to the finite. If undistorted, this results in the appropriate meaningful reconstitution of the relatants within the movement of the relationship and its own unique emergent properties. It is here within the prereflexive process of awareness, according to McFadyen, that the Holy Spirit (God as Person in the process of *becoming* holistically constituted within the Eternal) influences and analogically interacts with the dynamic of human spirit creating the ground for freedom and creativity.

Because this is a 'creative appeal', grace and faith are not subsumed under independent, rational human categories. God's communication creates the ontological possibility of freedom-in-response which includes the passive moment involved in

understanding. The power of the Holy Spirit through which the transformation of faith occurs is not coercive in an heteronomous sense, but imploring, beguiling and perhaps even compulsive—but it is so internally: i.e. it appeals to, transforms, but does not destroy the identity and rationality structure of the person. A sign of this is actually the inherent ambiguity (apparently non-compulsive rationality) of God's communication. It does not take the form of logical, rational propositions but, paradigmatically, the crucifixion of the incarnate which, in appealing to human understanding, actually transforms the understanding contained in human predicates. So God's rule is not despotic because it creatively appeals to human rationality in a way which allows people to participate through their own rational communication in that rule (McFadyen 1990: 299, n. 1).

This proximately describes *perichoresis* and specifically *analogia spiritus*: a 'passive', yet dynamic, prereflexive, holistic, process of God's Spirit in *mutual* analogical relation with that same process of human spirit within its cosmic relations. This is a co-conditioning process leading to creative gestalt and closure within the activity of being constituted *person-in-relation*. In this *moment* of transformational de-liberation a creative ground is provided in which the relative elements, contingencies, and persons *within* a relational occurrence are actually transformed and re-created in mutually meaningful relations respective to each one's intent and distinctiveness. This takes place in a *moment* of dynamic mutual co-conditioning that is constituted by the Eternal and creative action of the Trinity. To the degree each constituent within an occurrence is open to authentic relations, the relationship itself exhibits 'sublime' or 'passion' within the participants. This universal dynamic births and analogically sustains the reason and logic within each specific context and occurrence.

The dialogical closure of coming to personhood from out of the relationship is *optimally* a relativization of the finite contingencies of the specific situation in relation to this Eternal dynamic (*analogia spiritus*) and the immanent-transcendent call of Christ *within and through the world*. Each individual is meaningfully and respect-fully constituted within the immediate relationship, through subtly evolving meaning-frames in which relations never represent exact repetition. Sin is that degree of finite self-constituted meaning *forcefully* projected onto the relationship. All historical continuity must arise analogically *from within the immediate occurrence*, rather than comparing the 'then' and 'now' from some privileged perspective 'outside' or above the immediate occurrence. In this respect, truth or adequacy itself is always a product within the relational *moment* (and *how* one is constituted), but truth is never technically there to be uncovered from some universal purview. Truth can only be found in time, our time, or as Barth says, Christ's Time. Though analogically contiguous, truth is always recreated anew within each new occurrence, and signifies the quality of the relationship according to a universal *dynamic* active within it. *Ultimately*, however, it never conflicts with itself (truth

elsewhere). Therefore, as McFadyen points out, true continuity in dialogical relations is the personal spirit of being for and the quality of intending others throughout a variety of contexts and relations (1990: 152). Only the form and pattern of the individual's spirit in relation bears complete diachronic constancy.

So long as one's identity and communication here and now represent a continuity in the intending of oneself and others, then they are organised by and incarnate the same spirit which has structured personal centredness and external orientation in the past and elsewhere. It is constancy in one's spirit which determines personal constancy and integrity and which means that one's dependability for others may take a variety of forms (McFadyen 1990: 153-4).

Continuity of relations, promise, as well as truth and meaning, cannot be *exact* 'repetitions' or 're-presentations' of past conceptualizations, but obtain in the continuity of spirit that organizes, collates and allows transformation within felicitous relations. This can ultimately be related to Kierkegaard's insistence that the absolute relate to the absolute ('telos') and the relative to the relative (*Fear and Trembling, passim*; also Kierkegaard *CUP*: 347).

McFadyen emphasizes that relational interpenetration and resultant transformation takes place *between* the opening and closure of dialogical cycling. Others corroborate this. Social constructionist Tom Andersen compares dialogical communication to the act of breathing. Not only is inhaling likened to listening, and exhaling to response, but 'during the cycle of conversation one also [as in breathing] needs a small pause before talking (acting) and a small pause before listening (sensing)' (1996: 32). Loder calls the momentary 'arrest' during such transition our 'blind spot' (ultimately the 'void') we experience within dialogical cycling. If we fully venture everything into the 'void' we then experience the 'holy'. At this point, for Loder, *'transition itself becomes the very matrix of existence'* (1992: 304), simply because it is here our existing expectations, desires and dispositions are co-constituted *in* meaningful relations. This can happen 'only if the self-transcendent agency of the self finds its ground outside and beyond the pattern of self-relatedness' (291), and therefore, it becomes a 'blind spot'. Similarly for Bakhtin, 'pure givenness cannot be experienced', awareness begins with a prereflexive entrance into a relational occurrence and 'assumes the character of something-yet-to-be-achieved. Or, to be exact, it is given to me within a certain event-unity' (Bakhtin 1993: 32). Within this 'event-unity', a dynamic outside and yet within each of the constituent relatants perichoretically constitutes them in meaningful and emergent correlation.

Again, for both Loder and specifically Kierkegaard, what Volosinov refers to as the 'stabilized social audience', which comprises our 'inner world and thought', is made possible by the self generated as a 'relation which relates

itself to its own self', and therefore 'in turn a relation relating itself... [also] to that Power which constitute[s] the whole relationship' (Kierkegaard *SUD*: 146-7). For Loder,

it is evident that the self cannot be itself without its centered grounding beyond itself, but it must be a participant in that ground such that its life is preserved and its integrity as spirit is sustained by that ground. Thus, the ground also participates in the self in such a way that both ground and self are sustained as such from the standpoint of the self. In other words, there is a coinherence of the whole patterned activity of the self in and with its ground, and of the ground in and with the self. In essence, *the self is spirit when the pattern governing it is perichoretic* (1992: 292).

Simply put, the possibility of authentic relations can only take place within a tripartite *irreducible* dynamic like *perichoresis*, which assimilates, accommodates, and equitably transforms both self and social relations within one emergent *moment*. In such a moment *all* our history, understanding, and expectation must continually be ventured into the possibility of transformation. Johannes Climacus argues that even 'God communicates creatively in such a way that in creating he *gives* independence over against Himself' (Kierkegaard *CUP*: 232, my translation). To the degree we relate perichoretically we begin to relate as the Persons of the Trinity relate, that we might mutually in all relations relate with Them, so that eventually 'God may be all in all' (1 Corinthians 15: 28).

Perichoresis

John Shotter shares a story about Tom Andersen who

writes of a meeting with a family, in which the teenage daughter of the mother's first marriage often ran away, and also did some shoplifting. The mother had had two new babies, and the stepfather seemed more attentive to his own two children than to his stepdaughter. As Tom puts it, the nature of the crucial event is as follows: '*One of the team members, feeling that the teenager had been excluded from the new family, talked about how he thought the girl might feel. When he reached the words, 'Maybe she feels she is excluded', he had difficulty continuing. The feelings in the team member were so strong that he had to take several breaks to be able to finish. The family was stunned, and the runaway and shoplifting disappeared overnight.*' How should we understand the family's understanding of such an event? What is it to be momentarily 'stunned', to be 'struck', 'arrested', or 'moved', by another person's words? What is occurring in such a moment? How is it, that the crucial change seemed to emerge from out of the exchange without any problem-solving thought, argument, deliberation, reasoning, persuading, etc., having to take place? (Shotter 1999: 9).

There often come special moments of understanding, a mutual connection between us through which the understanding and experience of our

collective future, present, and history are literally recreated. We become part of something much larger than ourselves and emerge transformed in perichoretic relatedness from within the formative matrix of the relational unity itself. Accompanying such heightened experience of unity, we usually experience paradoxically an increased sense of personal identity and distinctiveness. Such moments transcend our cognitive reasoning, explanation, and even narrative, and though these aspects are integral within such encounters they are only known as such in immediate retrospection to the transforming moment. This is perichoretic relations—love.

It is not by accident that those theologians who have seriously studied human development (and postmodern science), Moltmann, Pannenberg, and theologian-psychologist James Loder, have resurrected the theological dynamic of perichoresis (and therefore the social distinctions of the Trinity). Neither is it odd that this understanding of social constructionists has emerged within the therapeutic concerns of human developmentalists. These reflect Kierkegaard's world, in which theory and the abstract are set in their proper relation to the asymmetrical ontological priority of the transforming *moment*. Though this perichoretic moment is indeed ours, it is mediated and therefore ultimately irreducible, simultaneously both '*from me and yet from beyond me and over me*'. How can we better understand this moment of immanence-transcendence, the moment of interpenetration, interanimation and co-conditioning within such dynamic intersubjective confluence?

For the Church Fathers the ancient theological concept of *perichoresis* expressed an emerging concept of 'mutual interpenetration or eternal circulation of divine life' amongst the persons of the Trinity (Badcock 1997: 240). John Damascene initiated the technical use of *perichoresis* in trinitarian theology, and furthermore, placed it 'on a level with the unity of the divine nature as the ground of divine unity (240-1)'. Etymologically the term contains, *peri*, meaning 'around' and 'at all points', and *choreo* meaning 'to proceed, or to make room'. Similarly, the Latin use, *circumincessio*, informs us 'that among the persons there is mutual interpenetration at all points *without loss of identity*. Individuality and mutuality are simultaneously affirmed, and the members of the Trinity can change places without changing their identity' (Loder 1992: 23). The conventional use of *perichoresis* emphasizes the spiritual activity of interpenetration and indwelling. In this essay, however, it represents an *irreducible* dynamic that includes the transforming relational interaction while simultaneously maintaining of the distinctiveness and identity of the constituent persons, *and* the hypostasis of the relationship itself as a third term out of which each individual is mutually co-conditioned. The phenomena of perichoretic relations in all cosmic relations are mediated. In this respect, the dynamic of *perichoresis* is not to be solely identified with the action of God's Spirit, but as an irreducible and dialogical Trinitarian dynamic that is a goal

or ‘task’ for human relations, a goal only because we live in a world of broken relations (sin). *Perichoresis* will never be fully understood, it will never be fully experienced in this age. Nevertheless, *perichoresis* bears a relational quality that Loder ultimately suggests, is to some degree inherent in all relationships and becomes an ontological dynamic creating and sustaining creation itself, *a fortiori*, human beings themselves. The implications of such an understanding, if compelling, enable us to address many of our persistent theological polemics with enhanced conceptual tools.

For example, Jürgen Moltmann, among others, attempts to reveal the temporal as well as spatial qualities of *perichoresis* within personal relations (1981, 1985). When we begin to consider the *perichoresis* of time and Eternity in the reciprocity of Christ and the Spirit, the divine-human relationship takes on an entirely new form of mutuality, a dialogical mutuality. If indeed God’s relations with the world entail a dialogical reciprocity through Christ and the Spirit, Time and Eternity, and, if an analogically similar dynamic can be shown as operative within human relations (encompassed by the Eternal), then we might be able to begin developing the appropriate conceptual ground for widening our understanding of Christian faith, and divine providence and human freedom. Prospectively, such an understanding of human existence will enable us to consider the feasibility and logic of a God who does not cognitively know the future before it happens, and yet paradoxically enables humans in time to contextually and analogically portend the future. This enables the possibility of faith—the proleptic experiencing of the *reality* of future events (the *hypostasis*, reality, of things hoped for (future), the demonstration of things unseen, Hebrews 11: 1). [In an attempt to define *hypostasis*, Helmut Köster (1972: 586-88) tells us: ‘Faith is now viewed as personal, subjective conviction. This interpretation has governed Protestant exposition of the passage almost completely... Yet there can be no question but that this classical Protestant understanding is untenable. The starting point of exposition must be that the ὑπόστασις in Hb 11: 1 has to have not only a meaning like that in Greek usage elsewhere but also a sense similar to that it bears in the other Hb references. It should also be noted that ὑπόστασις here is parallel to ἔλεγχος and that it occurs in a sentence full of central theological concepts. Now as regards ἔλεγχος it is evident that this does not mean subjective non-doubting nor does it have anything at all to do with conviction; it bears the objective sense of ‘demonstration’, ... proof of things one cannot see.’ ‘If one follows the meaning of ὑπόστασις in Hb 1: 3, then ὑπόστασις ἐπιζομένων bears a similar sense: it is the reality of the goods hoped for, which have by nature a transcendent quality... In a formulation of incomparable boldness Hb 11: 1 identifies πίστις with this transcendent reality: Faith is the reality of what is hoped for in exactly the sense in which Jesus is called the χαρακτήρ [exact image] of the reality of the transcendent God in 1: 3’

(586-7). 'It is plain, then, that in Hb. ὑπόστασις always denotes the 'reality' of God which stands contrasted with the corruptible, shadowy, and merely prototypical character of the world but which is paradoxically present in Jesus and is the possession of the community of faith' (587-8). Note that Köster, failing to sufficiently consider the Hebrews writer's insistence on the relational reciprocity of Christ and the Holy Spirit, and the possibilities this might provide for human faith to emerge in dialogical relation to various *trans-temporal notions of reality*, is left with more paradox than need be warranted. Much of this is probably do to Köster's undeveloped concept of the Trinity and his latent classical and dualistic philosophical presuppositions.] As is evident within most modern translations (those besides the pre-modern AV or the recent NKJ), the Modern mind attempts to circumvent what it sees as the paradoxical ontological interpretation ('reality' or 'essence') and opts for a subjective or psychological interpretation (e.g., 'assurance' and 'conviction'). This opens room for compromising the transcendent quality of Christian faith, or forces faith into an impositional gift that ultimately discounts the choice or disposition of the recipient. The Scriptures paradoxically tell us, in faith we *actually* 'see' or in some way experience 'from afar' that which is yet fulfilled (Hebrews 11: 13). We analogically experience something of the future now through perichoretic relation to God. This is not collateral held in guarantee of due payment, but a down payment—a partial receipt of the *actual* payment before full receipt. I will argue later that an ontology of *perichoresis* set within a corresponding dialogical form of relationality in both human and divine community facilitates both the preeminence of God who is able to then relate personally with us *in time* through Christ, and yet maintains our freedom in relation to His Eternal nature through the Spirit, more specifically through *analogia spiritus*. In this respect, faith can then become the product of both divine and human action concurrently—a mutual co-conditioning—*within* the asymmetrical priority and preeminence of God's Eternal action.

Leaving our brief mention of the *perichoresis* of time and Eternity, we return to the structure or logic of *perichoresis* itself. James Loder's use of Kierkegaard suggests that the tripartite nature of *perichoresis* presents *an irreducible relational dynamic which enables the polarities of a relationship to remain distinct entities while allowing them each to be constituted from within the formative matrix of the relational unity itself*. This obviates the classical ontology and language of subject-object, which has had to settle for centuries with the idea of 'indwelling the nature of the other', rather than indwelling a mediating and constituting relational dynamic as an emergent third term within the relationship, a dynamic that facilitates the mutual emergence of meaning while at the same time maintaining the unique distinctiveness of the individuals. For Kierkegaard, says Loder, 'mutuality becomes a positive third term, not obliterating but intensifying the polarities'. Furthermore, 'the reality of mutuality

becomes self-conscious, or aware of itself as such'. This is similarly alluded to by Bonhoeffer:

Two wills encountering one another form a structure. A third person joining them sees not just one person connected to the other; rather, the will of the structure, as a third factor, resists the newcomer with a resistance not identical with the wills of the two individuals. Sometimes this is even more powerful than that of either individual—or than the sum of all the individuals, if this is at all conceivable. Precisely this structure is objective spirit (1998: 98).

For Bonhoeffer, 'objective spirit' is the basic-relation and holistic social structure of the community, a shape of relationality. This idea leads to the insistence by Loder and Kierkegaard of human participation in the divine ground and mutual coinherence by which it is perichoretically constituted. In an ontology of *perichoresis*, however, Barth's initial concern about the *vestigia trinitatis* are assuaged through the dynamic and mediating middle or third term within all relations. This, as well, maintains the separation of the divine and human, Eternity and time, the finite and infinite insisted upon by Kierkegaard.

In *perichoresis*, the constituents are meaningfully co-related without having to 'indwell' the nature of the other. In this respect, persons are completely subsumed into the Creation of the event-unity, but never lose their distinctive identity, and yet can be principally changed, transformed, re-created by the relation to the other. This is an important concept we should not confuse with theories like Joseph Bracken's social elevation of the metaphysical reality of community (with its Process and Hegelian proclivities of Absolute Spirit). Rather, from within the dynamic of the relationship itself, by virtue of the trinitarian Power that dynamically constitutes it, more is able to emerge in each (*creatio ex nihilo*) than what is technically within the preexisting sum of the existing parts. Bonhoeffer tells us,

the person is willed by God, in concrete vitality, wholeness, and uniqueness as an ultimate unity. Social relations must be understood, then, as purely interpersonal and building on the uniqueness and separateness of persons. The person cannot be overcome by apersonal spirit; no 'unity'; can negate the plurality of persons. The social basic category is the I-You relation. The You of the other person is the divine You. Thus, the way to the other person's You is the same as the way to the divine You, either through acknowledgment or rejection. The individual becomes a person ever and again through the other, in the 'moment'. The other person presents us with the same challenge to our knowing as does God (1998: 55-6).

Though it is the source and fullness of the relationship, the dynamic of the relationship itself never obviates the spirit of the constituent persons. (We must remember, to become spirit entails our degree of *willingness* to venture

all of self into the constituting matrix of *authentic* relationship. To the degree we retract from such call to full personhood we indeed forfeit our freedom and creative potential, and necessarily release our destiny, or that portion of our destiny, into those fully ventured hands elsewhere that are active in relation to the Creative action of Christ and the Spirit.) *Perichoresis*, Gunton tells us, ‘particularizes the *hypostases*’ of the constituent parts of the relationship, sustaining ‘their own distinct and particular existence, *by virtue of and not in face of their relationality* to the other’ (1993: 190, 194). From within the dynamic of the created relationship itself, from each dialogical occurrence (cycle), comes freedom, possibility, Creation.

We can observe an example of the perichoretic dynamic in human dialogical communications by taking note of the hermeneutical delay. The meaning of sentences is not constructed in a linear fashion, each word’s meaning added to the growing meaning of the whole. Rather, words are held in hermeneutical delay and prereflexively build until meaning bursts forth in emergent whole forms of life. In this respect, the beginning words of a phrase have no meaning, they wait in growing gestation as mounting possibilities. Cause and effect dynamics here die with Dilthey and are better understood as the holistic co-conditioning suggested by Heidegger, in which prereflexive dynamics periodically explode forth in meaningful *gestalts*. Each moment of *gestalt*, on the other hand, remains open to further ongoing co-conditioning with other *gestalts* to produce even greater *gestalts*, and so on.

The meaning and contribution of the initial words of a sentence are as conditioned by those of the latter as much as the latter are by the earlier. Words maintain their distinctive presence and relation within the sentence but become part of a co-conditioning relation to and within the sentence, the complete meaning of which is greater than the sum of the constituent words (or *Gestalts*). The emergence of meaning, however, is never technically constructed in a deductive manner (deduction is only apparent retrospectively *after the moment* of *Gestalt*). Meaning is holistically created anew within each relational occurrence, and though contingent upon developed linguistic norms and tradition, meaning is ultimately created and mediated upon primordial holistic dynamics that are able to transcend, recreate, and transform those norms in bringing persons into unique event-unities.

In another allusion to perichoretic dynamics, developmentalist Robert Kegan similarly presents human development as a negotiating dialectical dynamic active within *each* stage of human development. This optimally brings the oscillating imbalance of development and construction of new matrices of meaning into an ‘interindividual’ balance, resulting in a ‘culture of intimacy’ containing ‘interdependent self-definition’ (Kegan 1982: 118). His dominant theme, which is perichoretic in nature, is *reciprocity*:

Reciprocity now becomes a matter of at once mutually preserving the other's distinctiveness while interdependently fashioning a bigger context in which these separate identities interpenetrate, by which the separate identities are co-regulated and to which persons invest in affection supervening their separate identities (253).

Kegan describes a dynamic that is evident in all forms of relational evolution, but also presents us with a transformational dynamic definitive of the highest stage of development. *This dynamic, which transcends any one stage, presents us with what it means to be human*, rather than an egalitarian alliance that engages the other within the other's current evolutionary position. The latter tends to rigidify the other's protective schemes and thus stultify relational growth. 'The *relationship* is wedded most of all to that life motion which the partners do not share so much as *it shares them*' (254). The 'life motion', which presents the 'bigger context', facilitates transformation in which both the relationship and the individual dialogically condition each other, continually creating a more integrated intimacy.

The popular psychological notions of greater differentiation and greater integration as goals are here given a substantive and justifiable meaning. Each new evolutionary truce further differentiates the self from its embeddedness in the world, guaranteeing, in a qualitatively new way, the world's distinct integrity, and thereby creating a more integrated relationship to the world. Each new truce accomplishes this by the evolution of a reduced subject and a greater object for the subject to take, an evolution of lesser subjectivity and greater objectivity, an evolution that is more 'truthful' (Kegan 1982: 294).

This is, for Kegan, a process fundamental in all persons (295). Borrowing from the language of Polanyi, we can see this dynamic more clearly through the differing aspects of focal and tacit awareness. Summarizing Polanyi, Maben Poirer tells us:

Polanyi claimed that the knowing process in man is necessarily constituted of two different and very distinct, yet interdependent and mutually supportive, types of awareness or knowledge, namely tacit awareness and focal awareness. Focal awareness... is that quality or type of awareness that all of us have when we focus our attention directly on some concept or thing, and this concept or thing is experientially present to us as... an otherness existing apart from us, and experienced by us as located in the forefront of our mind... By contrast, tacit awareness is that quality or type of awareness which constitutes our background knowledge, so to speak—that is, background to what we experience focally. While in no sense is it the focus of our attention, it sustains our ability to have a focal awareness... It is the product of all the explicit (focal) knowledge that we have accumulated throughout our life to date, and that we have managed to appropriate to ourself (that is, convert to tacit knowledge), and thus made part of what we call 'our

experience', as well as of all those other experiences and things that we have been aware of in a less than explicit way, but which nonetheless have contributed to our formation and judgment (Poirer 1988: 314-15).

Kegan is arguing that our relational dynamics inherently contain an ongoing desire for ever greater articulated differentiation of our world in which to reintegrate more intimately *as self* with the world and others around us. Every time we learn something new it to some degree conditions and deepens every other experience henceforth. In this way, the depth of our focal experience is always perichoretically conditioned by the storehouse of our developed tacit awareness and even that which has never become focal but has always been a part of our holistic experience (like water to a fish).

Polanyi understands awareness and personal knowledge as a bipolar-relational unity in which the focal aspect of consciousness exhibits 'marginal control' in its producing insight out of the tacit dimension. We can similarly equate this tacit awareness with the prereflexive activity of awareness, and it is here where Polanyi suggests, 'we know more than we can tell'. Tacit awareness with all of its existing structure and *openness* explicitly backgrounds and conditions our focal and conceptual experience. In the constitution of meaning, they are ultimately irreducibly inseparable. To further our inquiry into the *how* of perichoretic dynamics we need to now consider the notion of *analogia spiritus*.

Analogia Spiritus

The concept around which everything turns in Christianity, the concept which makes all things new, is the fullness of time, is the instant as eternity, and yet this eternity is at once the future and the past.

Søren Kierkegaard (1958: 80)

'God unceasingly desires the freedom of his creation, the inexhaustible freedom of those he has created' (Moltmann 1981: 218). 'By virtue of friendship with God in the Spirit, we have the chance to influence God and to participate in his rule' (221). When we as spirit come into appropriate relationship with the Spirit of God there is freedom. Furthermore, says Loder,

for human nature, to partake in this Spirit is to participate in the inner life of God. Thus, statements of dialectical unity (e.g. one person, two natures; three persons, one essence; *creatio ex nihilo* of the natural order as simultaneously contingent and independent; human nature as both dead yet alive; God fully present yet coming; human relationships as mutual creation of each other in mutual coinherence) only genuinely illuminate creation, human existence, and the Divine nature if they are understood from within the inner life of God; that is, by God's Spirit according to God's self-knowledge (1992: 21).

As mentioned, this does not necessitate the *vestigium trinitate* because of the unique nature of *perichoresis* itself. We as humans analogically partake of the divine nature (2 Peter 1: 4) without it principally becoming part of our own. Just as the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son becoming the space and dynamic of relationship *outside* the other two (Loder 1992: 21); in other words, it is through *analogia spiritus*, this dynamic then *reflecting* within us (κατοπτριζόμενοι, 2 Corinthians 3: 18), we can know and experience God, and in fact genuinely experience others.

In *analogia spiritus*, the process of the Divine Spirit transpires in correlative relation to the process of our prereflexive awareness as we ‘infinite’ into the relationship. Our personal concerns are instantly brought into the de-liberating singularity (transtemporal mutual co-conditioning) of this Eternal dynamic act of Creation. For Kierkegaard this dimension of the Eternal is no longer thought of as merely ‘out there’ in the domain of a wholly other God, but through God-Man, the paradox, the Eternal has come to humanity in time (or, in one sense, dialogically between time) (Kierkegaard *CUP*: 187). Furthermore, Moltmann suggests:

Because God’s creative activity has no analogy, it is also unimaginable. The divine act of creation is never described in differentiated terms. Nor is it dissected into a number of different processes. It is unified and unique. This means among other things that time is excluded from the act of creation, for time always requires duration, and creation takes place suddenly, as it were—in a moment (1985: 73).

This act of Creation, however, is not to be thought of as a singular act of God taking place before the block of history began to which humanity is simply given ‘cause and effect’ dominion. The Eternal dimension of God’s Creation breaks suddenly into the interstices (the ‘pause’ between) of the human dialogical cycle making all things new and drawing humanity itself into the act of co-creation with Himself.

In a conference on ‘Immanence and Transcendence’ at Boston University, Hans-Georg Gadamer described the Parmenidean notion of ‘*sudden blow*’ or *metabole* which embodies change in everyday life, and likened this *moment* to that dynamic, *exaiphanes* (‘suddenly’), which the New Testament associates with the annunciation, transfiguration, conversion of Paul, and Pentecost:

... this blow-like occurrence, opens a new dimension of time, which is called in the later terminology of the New Testament ‘eschatological’ time... Paul says, ‘you should not keep on waiting for the return of the Savior. He will come without your calculating expectations, like the thief in the night’ [cf. 1 Thess 5: 2]. Indeed, the same problem regarding the moment of the Second Coming of the Savior, the eschatological moment, is in the Gospel of John, where it is interpreted as the moment in which the believer *accepts* the message. It seems to me that we have a pre-shaping of all this in the dialectic of time and of movement in the Platonic

view. Strangely enough, I cannot find any trace of this whole theory of the sudden, of the *exaiphanes*, through the whole history of ideas until Kierkegaard. [Cited in Lawrence F, ed (1984) *The Beginning and the Beyond*. Chico, CA: Scholars, pp.7f. This reference of Gadamer is drawn from Loder 1992: 185.]

This understanding of Eternity, which potentially inhabits the awareness of every dialogical cycle within human relations (when *fully* open), is not static but can be thought of as dynamically bringing all things into cross-temporal and mutually co-conditioning relations through the Spirit and Christ. This moment of dynamic holistic relations is *analogia spiritus*. Let us briefly consider the human condition for *analogia spiritus* and attempt to highlight aspects of experience in which this activity might be noticeable.

Kierkegaard's use of spirit, divine or human, refers to that supervening whole or consciousness that *opens* and *organizes* the constituting process of the whole of psychic and bodily life. The Spirit of God, for example, can be understood as a dynamic *process* of awareness and holistic presence through which God is *wholly* constituted within His Trinitarian relations. It is through this process that God likewise personally and dialogically relates with Creation.

If spirit is a holistic dynamic of the divine or human person in its process of being constituted self-in-relation, and if within *perichoresis* the historical and personal identity (continuity) of the person is indeed maintained, then, suggests Kierkegaard, an 'infinite' or 'eternal' dialogical modality must be active within each person, and these must be related accordingly through that 'Power' that is constituting the relationship in order to be whole. This is the essential aspect within *perichoresis*—*analogia spiritus*, relating absolutely to the Absolute. For Kierkegaard,

aesthetic pathos expresses itself in words and may in its truth indicate that the individual leaves his real self in order to lose himself in the Idea; while existential pathos is present whenever the Idea is brought into relation with the existence of the individual so as to transform it. If in relating itself to the individual's existence the absolute *telos* fails to transform it absolutely, the relationship is not one of existential pathos, but of aesthetic pathos (*CUP*: 347)... The pathos which adequately corresponds to an eternal happiness consists in the transformation by which everything in the existence of the individual is altered, in and through his mode of existence, so as to bring it into conformity with this highest good (348).

When *all* is ventured, the individual becomes spirit and then comes into holistic relation with that corresponding aspect and dynamic of God—God's Spirit. In this modality of dialogical relations, the entirety of the individual is transformed within the relationship. Nothing is left the same. Though all former aspects of the individual (or tradition for that matter) are analogically contiguous with the former respective aspects, they have become part of a

transformed whole. The continuity of identity, however, is ultimately dependent upon the dynamic of spirit (as we have seen in both Kierkegaard and McFadyen).

Analogia spiritus presents the possibility that the *whole* person and the pre-reflexive *processes* of being constituted *whole-person-in-relationship* are capable of being *analogically constituted while in holistic correlation with this same process happening in the other*. As discussed earlier, like breathing, this culminates during the point of unified dialogical transition when one pauses a *moment* between listening before speaking (gestalt) at the same time the other reciprocally shifts from speaking to listening (openness). It is a process and state of becoming which cannot be reduced to or materially associated with the reflexive or cognitive. *It is transformative and takes place immediately antecedent to and during the activity of Creation itself, from which living relations emerge*. This happens in a mutually reciprocal *process* as both God and the respective individual pass from the dialogical *process* of awareness (openness) into a constituted response (closure) and transformed personhood. This is clearly seen in the earlier vignette about the person who broke down in loving empathy for the little girl. In a *moment* of genuine connection *all* was transformed in an instant, without deductive deliberation. The significant distinction between human and divine spirit is that the human process of becoming spirit, while analogically related to the Eternal, is constituted 'intermittently' within spacetime, whereas God as Spirit is constituted Eternally, without intermittence, in the perfect dialogical relations of the Trinity (the Son being the 'intermittent' Incarnation of God in Time).

Again, this mutual co-conditioning process happens to the degree we are wholly ventured and *willing* to be transformed *within authentic relations*, in other words, *how* we relate. Here at the primordial genesis of all human response hundreds of influences are at work. Optimally, all these influences, natural, personal and divine, play a part and inhabit the final meaning and gestalt of our human conceptual response. Moltmann tells us:

Every kind of thinking and speaking, feeling and acting, suffering and hoping which is directed to the unfathomable, eternal God is doxological in character. For all these things are ways of expressing before God overpowering experiences and profound expectations. These are the threads in life which lead to the living reality of God himself. Trinitarian ways of speaking, singing and thinking grew up in this doxological context, and if they are not to lose sight of their divine Opposite, that context must be kept in mind. 'Concepts create idols. Only wonder understands', said Gregory of Nyssa... Theological talk about God stems from doxological talk to God, and remains talk before God. This unique character is best preserved when theology expresses the experience of God apophatically. This does not mean any restriction of knowledge, or any impoverishment of thinking. On the contrary, it means that knowing is set free in 'the broad place' of God's Spirit 'who searches

out even the depths of the Godhead'; and it means that thinking is immeasurably enriched (1992: 73).

Though such dynamics within relationship are indeed mediated, they are intrinsically conditioned by our personal development and immediate concerns and desires. Therefore, though the creating action is not principally our own, our existential concerns, desires, knowledge and forms of life are able to be prereflexively de-liberated within the Eternal act of Creation, and through this *moment* drawn into a mutual conditioning process transforming and constituting us in appropriate relational fit-ness and response within His creative action—a gift, albeit effectively co-conditioned by ourselves.

It is here at the level of *analogia spiritus* that Paul overturns Isaiah's notion of the incomprehensibility of God. In what formerly 'eye had not seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived (1 Corinthians 2: 9—Isaiah 64: 4)', Paul claims 'these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit' (1 Corinthians 2: 10). To Isaiah's challenge: 'for who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?' (1 Corinthians 2: 16—Isaiah 40: 13), Paul mysteriously ripostes, 'But we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2: 16)'. When we become fully ventured before God and the world, we become spirit in relation to God's Spirit, and we will be constituted in direct perichoretic relation with the mind of Christ, which are the Incarnational thoughts of God *within that moment* relative to our relational capacity and meaning-frame. To the degree our undeveloped forms of life, broken relations, suppressed activities, and shortened knowledge are themselves redeemed through our *willingness* to absolutely relate to the Absolute, we are perichoretically (mysteriously) drawn into the freedom of God's Creating activity *within the moment*.

Present in the symbolism of the annunciation narrative, we find the logic of *analogia spiritus* within the inseparable association of the Creating action of God and the hermeneutical event. The symbolism used to narrate the process of identifying Christ's divinity is of paramount hermeneutical significance. It begins with a word (stimulus) crying out in the natural wilderness disruptively arresting our constituent 'natural' order and meaning-frame, opening our awareness fully to Him. Here, human spirit is thrust open in anticipation, as our eyes affix upon this man Jesus. At such point, however, he is still prereflexively unrecognizable to us, *until* first the Spirit alights upon Him. Then, by virtue of no flesh, no presuppositions, He becomes known for who He is, in all His Eternal significance.

We must first transpire the hermeneutical delay and prereflexive play of the arresting word, the opening of our spirit, and the analogy of our spirit with the divine Spirit before we can reflexively recognize the Word and its divine and Eternal meaning. We often fail to recognize this antecedent prereflexive process before gestalt simply because it all turns on a *moment*, an Eternal prereflexive *moment* in dialogical alternation to reflexive time.

The radical nature of this perichoretic logic in hermeneutics is likewise reflected in the full capacity of redeemed communications. This is miraculously revealed and portended, in the mediational dynamic of the Pentecost phenomenon of communication. As the Spirit fell indiscriminately upon the people (all people), words were spoken and understood within a greater medium and dynamic of holistic analogical communication among those who were truly open. This happened despite their cultural diversity, yet indivisibly within social acts of unified meaning. As each spoke in their own language, all others heard and understood in their own respective languages. They did not all understand within one universal language, but according to each specific relationship and individual respectively.

Likewise, did the Spirit of God merely *implant* the closest approximate meaning possible into each listener respectively? Absolutely not. As recent social constructionism and various theories in Trinitarian thought might suggest, all compliant individuals themselves were drawn into full perichoretic relations with each other similar to that we imagine experienced within the Trinity. Within such a dynamic John Milbank tells us the ‘existing harmonies, existing ‘extensions’ of time and space, constantly give rise to new ‘intentions’, to movements of the Spirit to further creative expression, new temporal unraveling of creation *ex nihilo*, in which human beings most consciously participate’ (1991: 236). Technically, each person’s *own* prereflexive process of becoming spirit was drawn into the Creative *moment* of event-unity through which the meaning was openly and prereflexively created within each one’s respective linguistic capacities and transformational possibilities (or conditionally suppressed—sin). Information was not simply passed by the Spirit from one person to another, rather Christ and the Spirit created and facilitated the possibility and dynamic relational ground through which the persons *themselves* participated in perichoretic communication, as well as in this case, heard from God. They were literally drawn into and participated in the very act of Creation itself (communication).

Within this phenomenon we might suspect that someone from a more primitive culture would only partially understand something expressed by a person from a more developed culture because of the primitive culture’s limited forms of life and linguistic development. Within the Pentecost narrative, however, we sense that the *extra* or remainder of meaning, would nevertheless have been meaningfully *intuited* within the practical structures of the unique occurrence to the degree it could be understood without expanding beyond the existing creative capacity or destroying the integrity and identity of the respondent. Remember, Pentecost, among other things, is more than likely reflecting the *fully redeemed* communicational abilities available to human relations. Therefore, we would expect less developed relational configurations and linguistic schemes would not experience the meaning mutually with the

same ‘fullness of life’ as the other, nevertheless it is all there in the relationship to be experienced either in a manner of praxis or analogically to one’s specific communicational development.

On the other hand, when an individual with less relational articulation and categories attempts to express something meaningful to another who has greater facility, the advanced person would be able to intuit the individual’s meaning and ‘articulate’ it within a more advanced (or simply different) relational development, thus giving the meaning of the expression greater fullness of meaning and definition than what the person expressing it was able to explicitly articulate within their own linguistic development. And, this is exactly what happens in successful teaching or psychotherapy. Within the dynamic world of the relationship, the therapist indwells the client’s world, intuitively the client’s undeveloped or faulty structures, then attempts to draw the client into expanding their own horizons and forms of life (understanding) effecting adaptive equilibrium. This dynamic, to some degree an everyday event, is only possible through a holistic mediated analogy of meaning and a dynamic similar to *perichoresis*.

This is the logic of spirit (analogical holism) in which nothing is ever communicated without symbol, word or story of some kind; and yet all these are impotent without a paralleling prereflexive dynamic that creates and communicates whole ideas analogically between persons. Some level of mutual meaning is created respectively *without obliterating the existing capacities and personal distinctiveness of each*. The person, symbol or speech undergoes appropriate transformation (recreation), but this transformation does not destroy but enriches and deepens the former self and language use. *Analogia spiritus* immediately and existentially establishes all semiotic integrity and efficacy upon this Eucharistic site *within* each relational occurrence.

Optimally, the relational logic and irreducible dynamic of human becoming spirit *willingly* processes itself in analogical correlation with those same dynamics active in both the other and the constituting Power of the relationship (that in whom we all ‘move and have our being’). In the act of revelation, for example, Marion tells us,

Incarnate in our words, the Word acquires in them a new unspeakableness, since he can be spoken in them only by the movement of incarnation that is, so to speak, anterior to the words, which he speaks and which he lets speak him. Any speech that speaks only from this side of language hence cannot reach the referent (1991: 141).

Words (entities) themselves become constellations of former diachronic and synchronic meanings (relations) each momentarily and meaning-fully ‘delayed’ within our speaking (or reading) until this in-tension(al) process of spirit breaks forth as a new creation and event-unity; and all this happens in

the twinkling of an eye. How many times have we passionately intended to speak something to others and immediately upon completing the statement or idea, and then during the *moment* of transition, the same *moment* the listener is filled with new meaning, the meaning instantly enlarges and deepens within us as well? The presence of the listener further transforms our understanding of the event.

It is here that reason finds its well suited but dynamic and dialogical home. Reason, however, is never situated upon a universal metaphysical or eternal frame of reference outside of time, outside of the immediate relationship. We must simply be satisfied to live in our immediate time and context. Kierkegaard taught well that there is indeed objective and universal truth, but we are constituted contextually in time. We must therefore allow for continuity and reason to emerge *in the midst of* each new relational occurrence while in analogical relation to the tacit dynamic of the Eternal, *analogia spiritus* (Mark 10: 29-30; Matthew 10: 34-39).

Though our existing concern and self are ventured into the stirring waters of prereflexive awareness, and our thoughts emerge through self-reflection (in relation to our internal social audience), when spoken anew, these ideas enter a new world, a world unknown and uncreated before the speaking. With sublimity they fall into a world with a new unspeakableness as *we our self*, the speaker, often learn from the speaking itself. As Marion, again, so vividly recounts within the act of revelation:

Thus, speaking our words, the Word re-doubles his incarnation, or rather accomplishes it absolutely, since language constitutes us more carnally than our flesh. Such an incarnation in our words can be undertaken only by the Word, who comes to us before our words (1991: 141).

I suspect we have all clearly experienced at one time or another this relational moment when our words once spoken instantly refill with fuller, unexpected meaning. This is simply because they immediately take part in, embody, 'house' (Heidegger), a new creation, a new relationship which is different from the sum of what previously existed. Ideas that were formerly constituted in relation to our internal social audience, are recreated and transformed within a living relationship. One's identity, as well as the veracity of the text are certain and timeless as informed 'energies' and sedimented histories, which nonetheless never cease to become what they are in active and appropriately transformed meaning relevant to each specific relational occurrence. In this respect, the solitary text, outside of living relationship remains meaningless, dust upon the shelf.

In *analogia spiritus* 'words' only prereflexively register upon us. Reflexively, we experience only emergent gestalts of holistic meaning and complex forms of life within relationships, which supervene over the lower structured

logic of the symbols employed. Thus, the primordial ground of dialogical relationships is fundamentally pneumatological, traces within our breath, even though word and spirit remain in constant and inseparable reciprocity. For Moltmann,

all things are called into being out of God's living breath, and that breath 'holds them together' [Wis. 1: 7; Isa. 34: 16] in a community of creation which furthers life. If they cut themselves off from that community, they lose the living Spirit. If they destroy the community, they destroy themselves. The Spirit of life means especially the connections and cohesions of everything created (1997: 24).

We *must* begin to recognize the inherent association of spirit and relationship.

Trinity in Perichoresis

We have seen how social constructionism is beginning to expand the former conventionally understood autonomy of the subject by revealing the interdependence of subjectivity upon various social contingencies, most notably an irreducible relational dynamic active both within and between the subject and the other. Such radical considerations in relational dynamics, as we have seen, are nothing new. Since the 4th century this has been evident in Christian theology's attempt to better understand the relational dynamic within the ancient doctrine of the Trinity culminating in the dynamic of *perichoresis*.

For the most part Moltmann's understanding of *perichoresis* within the Trinity, as well as basic personal relations, emphasizes only the dynamic of mutual 'interpenetration' while maintaining personal distinctiveness. The reluctance in his earlier career to identify the Spirit *as* the relationship between the Father and the Son and a tripartite shape to dialogical reality, I believe, forces him to inconsistently maintain the Hegelian and even classical language of 'entities indwelling other entities', and opens his work to association with more extreme versions of panentheism and Process theology. In the end, however, Moltmann portrays the Spirit as issuing *from out of the relationship* between the Father and the Son, emphasizing the Spirit's role in *making space for the relationship*. As for all life, 'life is experienced and lived *in* the Spirit, ... it is the medium and space for experience' (Moltmann 1992: 157). This is a function of the Spirit for the Father and the Son.

The Holy Spirit allows the Son to shine in the Father and transfigures the Father in the Son. He is the eternal light in which the Father knows the Son and the Son the Father. In the Holy Spirit the eternal divine life arrives at consciousness of itself, therein reflecting its perfect form... Finally, the mutual transfiguration and illumination of the Trinity into the eternal glory of the divine life is bound up with this. This uniting mutuality and community proceeds from *the Holy Spirit* (Moltmann 1981: 176-8).

It is only *through* the Spirit that Father and Son relate. Effectively, the Spirit becomes the ground and dynamic of the relationship between the two, which enables the social unity of the Godhead.

The nature of the Holy Spirit is perceived only in his relationships to the other persons of the Trinity, who are 'of like nature'. His trinitarian inter-subjectivity illuminates his subjectivity, because his subjectivity is constituted by his inter-subjectivity. In his trinitarian inter-personhood he is person, in that as person he stands over against the other persons, and as person acts on them (Moltmann 1992: 289-9).

Within a relational unity that is itself theorized as the ontological dynamic upon which all else exists, it makes some degree of sense that the two cannot be maintained in their distinct and yet interrelating personalities by that which is greater, lesser or other than what they are by nature—divine *persons-in-relation*. For Moltmann, therefore, it is necessary that the Spirit itself be constituted as a Person in relation to the other two.

Expanding on this, Dumitru Staniloae suggests another reason for there being three Persons:

No one can exist except in relation with two other persons, and not only in a perpetually closed relationship with one other person... I cannot live in the fullness of the life of another—and therefore also in my own—except by also living my relation with his other other, thus making it my own relation... I can say that I know my other in the light of his other other, with whom he is linked. As for me, I must see them both differently, not just one of them... The third person opens the horizon which can embrace all and frees the relationship between the two from narrowness and from a certain monotony (1981: 185).

If, when we relate directly with another person, we are instantly conditioned to some degree by the other within the specific perichoretic basic-relation (i.e. our thinking becomes to some degree what it is by the other's presence), it is not difficult to understand the importance, even necessity, that we experience the other relating to another in order to know them and ourself in differentiation.

Though Moltmann argues that the manifest character of personhood is different for each Person of the Trinity, he insists on the distinctive personhood of the Holy Spirit. For each, their 'particular individual nature is determined in their relationship to one another' (1981: 172).

The 'three Persons' are different, not merely in their relations to one another, but also in respect of their character as Persons, even if the person is to be understood in his relations, and not apart from them. If we wanted to remain specific, we

should have to use a different concept in each case when applying the word ‘person’ to the Father, the Son and the Spirit (1981: 189).

Moltmann, more informed by developmental thought and the inherent socialization of personhood, is not completely dismissing Barth’s modified modalism (a correction to 19th century liberalism) but expanding it into a dynamic social Trinity through a more developed understanding of *perichoresis* and personhood. My contention is that he fails to maintain the full logic of *perichoresis* consistently throughout his theology. In other words, how well does he maintain the Spirit within the Trinity as a third term *hypostasis*, and the necessity of human relations consisting of a mediating *hypostasis*, ‘Christ in and between us’, which itself stands in perichoretic relation to and against the participants?

James Loder, on the other hand, takes into consideration Kierkegaard’s understanding of person as a relation unto itself that only becomes a positive relation in relation to the Other. This parallels his insistence that the Spirit is the perichoretic ‘relationship between’ the Father and the Son (Loder 1992: 21). It also enables him to further Moltmann’s understanding of *perichoresis* by insisting that within the Trinity, as well as all relational dynamics of personhood, the relationship itself becomes a third term *hypostasis* providing the transcendent ground and action through which the constituents of the relationship might mutually relate while maintaining their distinct personhood. For Loder, the dynamical structure of *perichoresis* is tripartite in nature, and this structuring begins to corroborate the inherent relational structure of personhood enigmatically announced by Kierkegaard, and currently emerging within the secular and Christian discourse of social theory. In such an understanding, ‘spirit refers to a *quality of relationality*’ (Loder 1992: 10).

These theological considerations in both Trinitarian and anthropological studies reflect the emergentist language and dynamics currently issuing from social constructionist theory, and there is much they can co-condition and corroborate respectively within each other. Social constructionism, with its Hegelian proclivities, however, continues to relax much of the distinctiveness of personhood into the absolute domain of the relationship (echoing some of the difficulties within Moltmann’s language). Again, this is because of its failure to consider the relationship itself as a perichoretic third term within a more complex relational dynamic, through which, as far as I can see it, has only been explicitly considered in the centuries old struggle to grasp the ‘revealed’ Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Nevertheless, if the Church fails to present this dynamic to the world, a dynamic that has been crying out for development throughout the centuries, the rocks of secular thinking will begin to declare it. And so it is, against all the conceptual intransigence of both Greek dualistic structures and Far Eastern expressions of a monistic reality, a tripartite structure of reality within a dialogical dynamic of

relationality is beginning to emerge despite the complacency of the Church. I have endeavored to present recent literature in social constructionism as a case in point.

I have specifically highlighted within recent developments by social constructionists their growing acknowledgement of a relationality of differentiated unity mediated by a formative matrix within the relational unity itself. I would suggest, that until developmentalists begin to understand the importance and fuller dynamic of the 'third term', and the unique quality and necessity of its *hypostases*, it will continue to fall back into a Wittgensteinian failure to fully understand all of what is suggested in Kierkegaard's *moment* and his insistence that human beings and human relations consist of the temporal *and* the eternal in alternation, neither materially synthesizable into the other. Such a call to personhood acknowledges the necessity of theory *and explanation* within the immediate occurrence. In deference to social constructionism, I too, as well as Kierkegaard, stand against the imposition of all 'established' theory not willingly ventured for transformation within *authentic* relations. I agree that the pejorative use of 'explanation' often comprises an individual's or institution's defiant resistance to genuine difference, presence and intentions in others. Will to power, however, is overcome by the *willingness* to fully venture one's entire self (and theories) into the ever-transforming vortex of the next relational *moment*, not through a prohibition against theory or explanation itself, which are inherent in all human existence and interactions whether one admits it or not. Such venturing—picking up our cross—is made possible by the cross, and its unlimited grace.

Conclusion

In this essay I have only begun to outline how an emergentist ontology might be understood as analogically contingent upon the perichoretic relations within the Trinity itself. I have further suggested we consider that all personal and social interactions emerge from a tripartite perichoretic dynamic both within and between participants. This is because such a mediating dynamic must itself stand out from the participants and yet be personally active in each in order that mutuality and distinctiveness be realized. Likewise, if mutuality and distinctiveness are to be maintained without one being sacrificed to the other, reality must in time (with the Eternal) abide within the interstices of the dialogical event.

Nevertheless, of inestimable import for Trinitarian theology and the dynamic of *perichoresis*, that the theoretical emergence of certain dynamics within social reality in secular social constructionism has begun to corroborate and bring into focus substantial aspects of a 'revealed' ancient doctrine of Christianity. It is my suspicion, that extrapolating the work of Kierkegaard has much more to teach us in this area. The break from Modernity that social

constructionism represents tracks back through Wittgenstein and ultimately to Kierkegaard. The lenses through which we understand Kierkegaard's enigmatic and adventurous writings become clearer each day with each advancement in social theory, developmental theory, as well as the natural sciences (physics, biology and thermodynamics).

He spoke of Eternity coming into time through God-Man and as such sustaining all human relations. The result is a human temporal and mutual relatedness to an Eternal God, which, Philip Hefner suggests, places us in the world as 'God's created co-creators whose purpose is to be the agency, acting in freedom, to birth the future that is most wholesome for the nature that has birthed us' (Hefner 1993: 27). Similarly, says Moltmann, 'through faith, the hitherto unexplored creative powers of God are thrown open in men and women. So faith means becoming creative with God, and in his Spirit' (Moltmann 1992: 115). Human activity, therefore, is thrust into relation with the Eternal action of God by faith through *analogia spiritus*; and any doctrine of predestination without such consideration, for Kierkegaard, is 'a thoroughgoing abortion' that explains nothing (*JP*: 56). [According to Timothy Jackson, 'a number of themes characterize Arminianism, ... three related ones are central to Kierkegaard's corpus: (1) a commitment to *universal access* to the highest things, over against belief in double predestination of Christ's limited atonement for the elect, (2) a commitment to *equal responsibility* before the highest things, over against strong versions of sacerdotalism or spiritual collaboration; and (3) a commitment to *human freedom*, against fatalistic doctrines of irresistible grace or an overly rationalized account of moral and religious commitment' (Jackson 1998: 238).] Our understanding of God's preeminence must indeed be maintained, but now expanded within a more complete understanding of relationality.

We no longer have to consider Eternity as a singularity or essential ontological event 'before' or 'outside' history. Because of advancing developments in dialogical theory within both secular and Christian social theory, dynamics have begun to emerge in our understanding through which to consider *how* humanity, and thus Creation, might be dialogically drawn into the Eternal dynamic singularity of God's Creation act, through *analogia spiritus*. Truly all the Eternal relations of the Trinity are before all things, and in them all things hold together. God's preeminence takes place in every *moment* of relational transition that transpires *within the midst* of history. Within the awareness before the *pause* of every dialogical breath—the prereflexive processes of our coming to spirit, coming to whole and personal response-in-relation—we and all that we are are analogically drawn into the same Eternal dynamic of God's action, which in singular gestation, in a *moment*, breaks forth in meaningful cosmic relations. Within the interstices of our dialogical transitions lie human freedom, that de-liberation of Grace in which we are all co-ordinated with

full dominion in mutual co-conditioning and simply asked to co-exist with others of like endowment. To the extent we are *willing* to do so, even as little as a mustard seed, we enter unfathomable dominion. We need not insist that the phrase ‘before all things’ refers to the moment before the entire block of all history in order to protect divine preeminence. He must only be preeminent and active as the Holy Spirit (God’s openness to humanity) in relation to every process of open awareness in humans antecedent to the gracious co-ordination of Christ (God’s first and last Word, or will, in the *midst* of our relations) in constituting each specific relation in His Time.

If indeed we claim that the creative action and reciprocity of Christ and the Spirit are what constitute and sustain all of Creation, and in fact, that Christ prayed that those in the Church might all be one; even as He is in the Father, and the Father in Him, that they also might be in Them, then this ultimately suggests a common ground between the Church and culture—the desire to relate *perichoretically*—love.

Unscientific Scriptural Postscript

For McFadyen, it is Christ’s living relationship to us that frees us for re-contextualization and transformation within all genuine relationships. Kierkegaard further insists that the *how* of all such relations is foundational to the *what*. And it is Loder and Moltmann, from two directions, who suggest this perichoretic dynamic (part of the *how*) take shape during the fundamental activity of becoming spirit, in what Loder refers to as *analogia spiritus*. It is difficult to refute the asymmetrical priority of the Spirit’s dynamical action within the hermeneutical and soteriological event of knowing Christ when Christ Himself designated the foundational human condition for such knowledge and relationship as contingent upon our relationship to God’s Spirit. ‘*Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come*’ (Matthew 12: 32).

When genuinely considered, the radical narrative and claims of Jesus immediately throw us into a state of paradox, even dread. We are forced into the dilemma of having to consider a scandalous concept in relation to our existing meaning-frame. This is a dilemma that will always be scandalous, in fact, always non-rational, no matter how hard we try to rationalize and understand it. Our reaction at this point is everything. The condition. Do we in epistemic humility *willingly* open our spirit to the possibility of His apophatic conditioning of our existing metaphors? Or, do we blaspheme, speak against, or resist (Hebrews 6: 4-6) the Spirit of God, which alone bears witness to the Eternal meaning of Christ?

Through the *irreducibility* of perichoretic and dialogical relationality we can begin to understand this seemingly incoherent contention of Christ. [It

is significant that D. Hagner suggests this is a difficult passage that does not exactly encourage optimism in the exegete (1993: 347). W. Davies and D. Allison say, ‘Matt 12: 32 has no obvious meaning... We remained stumped’ (1988 v2: 348); and U. Luz (1989) finds no explanation satisfactory.] As considered, Spirit and Word are in active inseparable and irreducible reciprocity. Dialogically, however, our spirit, our holistic opening to God is necessary for recognition of the Word. The call of Christ as *scandalum* necessitates our *willingness* to be wholly constituted in relation to the possibility of God’s self-revelation, which transcends, but does not obviate, the legitimate relativities of our faith. This is *analogia spiritus*. *How* he is known is fundamental. Without the proper *how*, the *what* of faith is redundant (Matthew 16: 13-20). Christ placed this primary condition for salvation, *how* He was ‘believed’, as foundational to His actually being believed. In other words, the *what* is ultimately inseparable from the antecedent *how*, and, to the degree the *how* is genuine, Christ will be known and affirmed accordingly. Words and propositions, actions and relations—all these are nothing to the extent we are *unwilling* to be wholly transformed in relation to His call. Can an immanent dynamic and understanding of what it means to resist the Spirit’s influence in this way be suggested? Possibly. In this respect, *salvific openness is ultimately revealed in whether or not we prioritize our own theories and demands for understanding the possibility of the ‘offense’ over and against our willingness and desire to consider the possibility of the ‘offense’ despite our current inability to understand*. In other words, have we *decided* that the ‘offense’ is *not* possible simply because it does not make sense within our current meaning-frame and understanding? Are we *willing* to venture and risk all our knowledge to be reconstituted in relation to the possibility of God, or do we hold some knowledge sacrosanct, demanding that God line up accordingly? The knowledge of God is not a call to irrationality, merely non-‘rationality’ from our existing meaning-frame. To believe in and know an Eternal and infinite God must be a gift from God, however, our condition must be a *willingness* to epistemically venture all in response to such a call.

If indeed *analogia spiritus* is this preliminary site upon which all our conceptualizations take shape and meaning, then it would only be logical that any resistance to this holistic aspect of God’s Personal dialogical interaction with us would be foundational to all other subsequent and relative aspects of knowing Him. ‘Be holy, for I am holy’ (Leviticus 11: 44; 1 Peter 1: 16). If one is not *willing* to know Christ as such, he is *not* in truth known. In contrast, one does better ‘who lives in an idolatrous community prays with the entire passion of the infinite, although his eyes rest upon the image of an idol... [This] one prays in truth to God though he worships an idol’ (Kierkegaard *CUP*: 180).

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