

The three-legged stool of experience and theoretical thought

**The transcendent (religious) basis and
transcendental (universal) framework for any field
of study -- with special reference to the social
sciences**

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The Transcendent Basis

- **The Father:** Origin of all things
- **The Son:** the One in whom all things hold together
- **The Holy Spirit:** makes all things possible

Perichoretic Trinitarian View

The three Persons

- acting jointly
- in mutual dependence
- at every juncture

in the great narrative of the

- ❖ creation,
- ❖ redemption and
- ❖ final transformation

of the world.

The Transcendental Framework

Basic conditions:

a. That there are **persons/things/social entities** (individuals or individualities).

b. That these are related according to certain **universal ways of relating**.

c. That both a. and b. are subject to a series of **changes and development**.

a. Individuality – illuminated by the totality-Idea of Origin

The intuitive grasp of individual wholes as they are seen as directly dependent upon the Origin

**b. Relationality – illuminated
by the totality-Idea of
Coherence**

The grasp of the irreducible
but harmonious diversity of
the different kinds of relation
holding together

c. Time – illuminated by the totality-Idea of Providence

The grasp of events as wholes in the light of an overarching unfolding of events, which cannot itself be reduced to any succession of events or process.

d. The perichoresis of the transcendentals and Ideas

- The transcendentals need to be looked at in combination rather than separately.
- Each transcendental can be seen as the Archimedean point for the other two transcendentals.
- The transcendentals come into being as a result of the engagement with the world by God as Trinity.

4. The modalities and theoretical reflection

By a process of 'transcendental-empirical' sketching, each of these transcendentals can be portrayed as refracted according to the fifteen modalities, i.e. the irreducible ways of knowing and being (identified by Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd):

pistical (faith)
ethical
juridical/legal
economic
social
symbolic/lingual
aesthetic (NB, I position this here
rather than between the economic
and juridical)
historical/cultural-formative
logical/analytical
psychic/sensory
biotic
physical
kinetic
spatial
numerical/quantitative

a. Individuals and individuality- functions

Theoretical ideas draw together the conceptual diversity of the many functions of an individual or individuality.

There are different ways for individuals to function ('subject' refers to the active pole of specific relation; 'object' refers to the passive pole of a specific relation):

Individuality Functions (listed below from ‘higher’ to ‘lower’ as ‘súbject/object’)

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| pistical (faith): | believer/belief |
| ethical: | ethical agent/good deed |
| juridical/legal: | legal subject/legal object |
| economic: | trader/commodity |
| social: | social actor/custom |
| symbolic/lingual: | communicator/symbol, language |
| aesthetic: | admirer/aesthetic object |
| cultural-formative: | shaper/utensil, know-how |
| logical/analytical: | analyser/proposition |
| psychic/sensory: | sensor/sensation |
| biotic: | organism/cell |
| physical: | particle/energy-packet |
| kinetic: | body in motion/trajectory |
| spatial: | extended figure/point |
| numerical/quantitative: | cardinal numeral |

b. Relations and relation-frames

Relations are universal realities connecting individuals.

The theoretical attitude means relations involve identifying the different sorts of relations that there are by identifying which are incommensurable with one another and by that token irreducible in kind to one another. The many different kinds of relation can be seen as follows:

Relation Frames (from 'higher 'to 'lower')

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| pistical (faith): | trust |
| ethical: | benevolence, troth |
| juridical/legal: | fairness, retribution |
| economic: | optimal exchange, stewardship, thrift |
| social: | courtesy, social intercourse |
| symbolic/lingual: | meaning, significance |
| aesthetic: | harmony |
| cultural-formative: | formative control |
| logical /analytical: | identity, non-contradiction |
| psychic/sensory: | feeling, sensitivity |
| biotic: | cellular composition |
| physical: | dynamic system |
| kinetic: | approaching or receding, speed |
| spatial: | contiguity, comparisons of size or shape |
| numerical/quantitative: | more or less than, equal to etc. |

c. Events and time aspects

In a modally differentiated way, events are examined in terms of the differenced time-aspects.

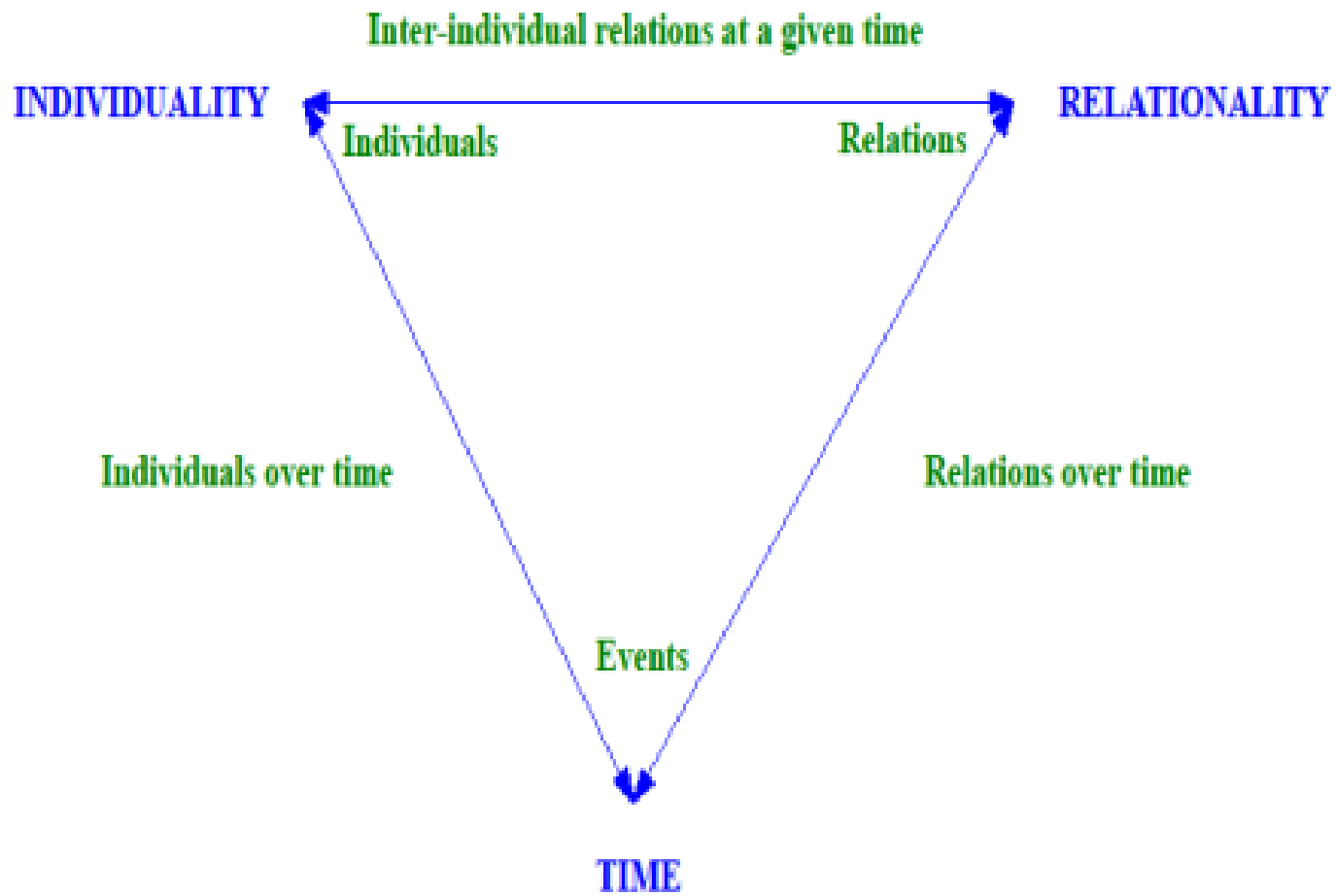
These time-aspects are ordered by a network of analogies (antecipations and retrocipations) in terms of the modal scale, as follows:

Time Aspects (from 'higher' to 'lower')

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| faith (pistical ethical): | liturgical time, 'time of belief', revelation 'right' time, priority of moral obligation |
| juridical/legal: | length of validity, retribution |
| economic: | interest, rent, profit, wage, economic cycle |
| social: | conventional time, social priority |
| symbolic/lingual: | word order, tense, symbolic moment |
| aesthetic: | aesthetic moment, dramatic order, rhythm |
| cultural-formative: | cultural development, periodicity |
| logical/analytical: | <i>prius et posterius</i> |
| psychic/sensory: | tension, durée |
| biotic: | growth time, organic development, |
| physical: | causal irreversibility, physical time |
| kinetic: | constancy, duration |
| spatial: | simultaneity |
| numerical/quantitative: | succession, ordinality |

The three descriptive views

- Individuals over time
- Relations over time
- Individuals in relation



Individuals-in-relation over time.

Together these descriptive views provide a rounded approach to any given state of affairs.

Looking at human beings in terms of

- the story of their individuality over time,
- the diversification of those relations, and through taking
- snapshots of the combined question of these at a given time,

360 degree view of the human being as one created to be in relationship – ‘It is not good that human beings live alone’ (Gen 2.18).

Implications for social theory

We need to see human society

- **not** as a conglomerate of atomistic individuals,
- **nor** as a collectivistic whole,
- **nor** mere flux.

Rather, we need to see clearly differentiated social structures, arising from the order of creation but unfolded in history, each with its own appropriate sphere of responsibility and competence.