## WHERE PERSON MEETS WORD
## PART 1: PERSONALISM IN THE LANGUAGE THEORY
## OF KENNETH L. PIKE

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## I. *Introduction*

Reformed theology has always championed the Trinity as the beating heart of the Christian faith. This is true not just of the mainstay historical Reformers, Luther and Calvin, but also of Dutch Calvinism, Old Princeton, and the Westminster heritage.[1] Certainly, Calvin and Melanchthon were not alone in claiming that "God's triunity was that which distinguished the true and living God from idols."[2] The true God *is* the Trinity.

Out of this tradition emerged Cornelius Van Til and his insistence that the self-contained ontological Trinity be the basis of all human experience and knowledge.[3] He claimed that "if we are to have *coherence* in our experience,

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[1] On Luther, see David Lumpp, "Returning to Wittenberg: What Martin Luther Teaches Today's Theologians on the Holy Trinity," *CTQ* 67 (2003): 232, 233–34; and Mickey Mattox, "From Faith to the Text and Back Again: Martin Luther on the Trinity in the Old Testament," *ProEccl* 15 (2006): 292. On Calvin, see T. F. Torrance, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Trinity," *CTJ* 25 (1990): 166. For an example of the Dutch Calvinist view, see Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003–2008), 2:279, 329. For Old Princeton, see Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2013), 1:442; and B. B. Warfield, *Biblical and Theological Studies*, ed. Samuel G. Craig (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1968), 22. For a more contemporary discussion, see Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 85.

[2] Scott R. Swain, "The Trinity in the Reformers," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, ed. Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering (New York: Oxford, 2011), 228.

[3] "The Trinity … gives the most basic description possible of God as the *principium essendi* of knowledge for man" (Cornelius Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology: Prolegomena and the Doctrines of Revelation, Scripture, and God*, ed. William Edgar [Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2007], 30). "Our knowledge rests upon the ontological Trinity as its presupposition" (p. 59). With regards to the final reference point of all interpretation, all predication of meaning, Van Til wrote, "The Protestant principle finds this in the self-contained ontological Trinity." It is this God, we must maintain, that "is always the most basic and therefore the ultimate or final reference point in human interpretation" (Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*, ed. K. Scott Oliphint [Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2008], 100. On this doctrine taken explicitly from Scripture, see pp. 227–28, 236, and 241).

there must be a correspondence of our experience to the eternally coherent experience of God. Human knowledge ultimately rests upon the internal coherence within the Godhead; our knowledge rests upon the ontological Trinity as its presupposition."[4] In other words, our experience and knowledge are grounded in the equal ultimacy of the one and many, and the perichoretic relationship of the persons in the Godhead.[5] What might this mean for our understanding of people and our use of language? Many things, certainly, but one of them must be that God's Trinitarian nature is imprinted on the structure of our communicative behavior. Not only does this have critical implications for our understanding and use of language, but it also encourages us to reassess the place of the Trinity in general revelation.

Building on the foundation laid by Van Til, we can explore the Trinitarian implications for language and general revelation indirectly by examining the work of Kenneth L. Pike (1912–2000), who developed a distinctly Trinitarian approach to all of human behavior, especially language. What's more, Pike's thought foregrounds the inherently personal nature of God and its ramifications for our understanding of people as creatures made in his image. Given that the *imago Dei* and the internal witness of God to all people is part and parcel of a Reformed view of general revelation, what we learn from Pike has repercussions for our understanding of the traditional doctrine of general revelation as it relates to the Trinity.

In order to develop these ideas adequately, this article is broken into two parts. The overarching thesis of both parts is that the Trinitarian structure of Pike's theory is not only prescriptive for our thinking about language (and all purposive behavior), it was a destination he was bound to arrive at because personalism (general revelation) and Scripture (special revelation) converge in the Trinity.

In Part 1, we will see that the Trinitarian structure of Pike's language theory was in part propelled by the personalism underlying his thought. We will begin by reminding ourselves of the mystery rooted in people and the origin of their communicative behavior (the triune God), and then move on to consider Pike's tristructural view of language. Once it has been established that his approach is truly Trinitarian, we will move on to examine personalism and its manifestations in his work.

In Part 2, I show how his personalism merged with his understanding of Scripture and the *imago Dei*. This tandem, alongside personalism, is the concomitant catalyst for the Trinitarian shape of his theory. Finally, we will end by noting that Pike's work opens the discussion for the nuanced treatment of the Trinity in general revelation.

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[4]  Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 59.
[5]  See ibid., 58–59; Van Til, *Defense of the Faith*, 47–50.

## II. *People, Mystery, and the Trinity*

We begin with a simple point: people are not so easily pigeonholed. As much as our labels and judgments categorize and compartmentalize, they fall short of exhaustive description. We do not know others as deeply as we wish. This is part of the reason why we weep at funerals: we have not grasped the whole of someone, and the residual mystery exits the known world without being fully accounted for. Sitting before the funeral casket, we are painfully reminded of the inanity of thinking we can exhaustively know another human being, or anything else for that matter. Mystery is an irrevocable part of existence.

The trouble is that throughout human history we have either ignored the implications of this mystery or assumed that we can step outside its shadow when we are *not* dealing with a person. People may retain an element of mystery, but a pinecone does not—neither does an ecosystem or the structure of a particular language. These things, we assume, can be boiled down to their most basic elements; we can know them more or less comprehensively, as boasted by the rich history of theoretical formulation and empirical analysis.

Contrast this sentiment with that of Cornelius Van Til when he uttered the following words to his students several decades ago: "We certainly cannot penetrate intellectually the mystery of the Trinity, but neither can we penetrate anything else intellectually because all other things depend on the mystery of the Trinity, and therefore all other things have exactly as much mystery in them as does the Trinity."[6] This remark is quite striking, when you consider the implications for academic inquiry.

Van Til was pointing to the nature of reality. The world in which we live is inherently personal because it was created, is governed, and will be consummated by the *personal* God of Scripture. God is himself a person, a triune person, and every human being contains an element of mystery because he or she is made in his image.[7] This much we might accept, but the same principle applies to the

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[6] Cornelius Van Til, "Christ and Human Thought: Modern Theology, Part 1" (lecture, Westminster Theological Seminary, Glenside, PA, n.d.).

[7] "Christian theism holds that every finite person is surrounded by a completely personalistic atmosphere because, even if the world immediately around him is impersonal, this impersonal world derives its meaning from its Creator" (Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 230). "God is personal. His purposes are personal, not merely mechanical. No impersonal, mechanistic laws exist that would constrain him or stand between him and his people" (Vern S. Poythress, *Inerrancy and Worldview: Answering Modern Challenges to the Bible* [Wheaton: Crossway, 2012], 246). "In Scripture, the personal is greater than the impersonal. The impersonal things and forces in this world are created and directed by a personal God.… All the wonderful things that we find in personality— intelligence, compassion, creativity, love, justice—are not ephemeral data, doomed to be snuffed out in calamity; rather, they are aspects of what is most permanent, most ultimate. They are what the universe is really all about" (John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God* [Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2002], 26). "The biblical view of the natural world is intensely personalistic. Natural events come from God, the personal Lord.… In the view of the biblical writers any impersonal objects or forces are only secondary causes of the course of nature. Behind them,… behind even

rest of creation—and that is difficult for academics to swallow. Even a pinecone is grounded in the Trinity, and so we cannot know everything about it; we cannot know it exhaustively. A claim to know *anything* exhaustively—be it a person, a pinecone, or the particular syntax of a language—is a claim of divinity.[8]

This presents a dilemma: our default response to mystery and limitation is impersonal reductionism—accompanied by fear, discomfort, or hubris.[9] Impersonal reductionism allows us to continue in the dream of control and mastery, despite its intellectual pomposity, and because we falsely frame reality so that it appears more manageable, we wander into intellectual countries we have no metaphysical, epistemological, or linguistic business traversing. Our reductionism, coupled with a vapid curiosity, brings us, paradoxically, into more mystery. And from there, pure curiosity—fascination detached from personal application—takes the reins of our inquiry. As Pascal wrote, "The chief malady of man is restless curiosity about things which he cannot understand; and it is not so bad for him to be in error as to be curious to no purpose."[10] Our precarious history with mystery and limitation, as I see it, leaves us with two responses to this dilemma: (1) We can ignore the personal and mysterious nature of life and treat any subject within it as if it were exhaustibly knowable. This would be impersonal and unitarian at best, and certainly no place for personal, Trinitarian Christian thought. (2) We can account for the personal and mysterious

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the apparent randomness of events, stands the personal God, who controls all things by his powerful word" (pp. 52–53). See also John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2013), 488; and Douglas F. Kelly, *Systematic Theology* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Mentor, 2008), 1:175–76.

With regard to man being made in the image of a personal God, Kallistos Ware notes that "the human being is made in God's image and likeness; since God is beyond understanding, his icon within humanity is also incomprehensible" (foreword to *Deification in Christ: Orthodox Perspectives on the Nature of the Human Person,* by Panayiotis Nellas, trans. Norman Russell [Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987], 9, quoted in Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* [Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2004], 460). For a helpful background on personalism in the French tradition, see Letham, ibid., 459.

[8]  We can, however, know truth in a way analogous to the way in which God knows it. See Van Til, *Defense of the Faith,* 62, 67, 70–71, 183, 376; Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Apologetics,* ed. William Edgar (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2003), 77; Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology,* 31, 33, 42, 177–78, 185, 292, 363; Cornelius Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1969), 16, 17, 38, 47, 172, 278; Vern S. Poythress, "Reforming Ontology and Logic in the Light of the Trinity: An Application of Van Til's Idea of Analogy," *WTJ* 57 (1995): 187–219; and Vern S. Poythress, *In the Beginning Was the Word: Language—A God-Centered Approach* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2009), 268.

[9]  Consider, e.g., Plato's reduction of the universe to ideas: "The Platonic tradition … desires to purify concepts by separating the idea (the meaning, the content) from its embodiment in language. Plato counseled aspiring philosophers to seek to know the idea of the good, the beautiful, and the just. The idea was thought to be in its essence a transcendent idea, independent of any particular language—also independent of God. It was an impersonal idea. And so Plato's vision tacitly assumed an impersonalist universe" (Vern S. Poythress, *Logic: A God-Centered Approach to the Foundation of Western Thought* [Wheaton: Crossway, 2013], 161).

[10]  Blaise Pascal, *Pensées,* trans. William F. Trotter (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2003), 6 (fragment 18).

nature of existence, looking to the tripersonal God of Scripture to direct and shape our perspective of the world and our methodology for inquiry. The latter option does not mean we cannot rigorously investigate and study aspects of the world with precision and draw true and lasting conclusions; it simply means that we cannot eclipse the personal nature of existence in the process or ignore that it is the Trinitarian God who created it and is reflected within it.

The second response, however, is not so popular in academia, particularly in the field of linguistics. Sacrificing the possibility of exhaustive or comprehensive knowledge seems needless at the least, fatuous and barbaric at the worst. Thus, structural linguistics and transformative-generative grammar have been taken far more seriously in the last few decades than the tagmemic theory of Kenneth L. Pike, whose integrative philosophy for all of human behavior allowed for the personal nature of reality while not excluding the rigor and precision desired in understanding a meaningful event of that reality—whether linguistic or non-linguistic. It is to Pike's theory that we now turn, before coming back to the personalism that played a role in shaping it.

## III. *A Tristructural View of Language and Human Behavior*

Before navigating the tributaries leading to the Trinitarian structure of Pike's thought, we should provide some evidence up front concerning what exactly makes his approach to language (and to all of human behavior) Trinitarian.

To start, *is* it Trinitarian? Pike would probably prefer the term *tristructural*; at least, that is the term he used in an article published by *Bibliotheca Sacra* in 1958. By tristructural, he meant that "every significant unit of speech … is comprised simultaneously of three structures, in such a way that each of the structures includes all the substance of the unit, but each structure is formally distinct from the other two."[11] However, after even a cursory examination of his main works, it is clear that we have warrant to call it Trinitarian.

Certainly, the most obvious feature of his thought is his triads: the particle, wave, and field observer perspectives;[12] the grammatical, phonological, and

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[11] Kenneth L. Pike, "Language and Life 4: Tristructural Units of Human Behavior," *BSac* 115 (1958): 36.

[12] The particle view considers "language as made up of PARTICLES—'things,' pieces, or parts, with sharp borders." The wave view considers "language as made up, not of parts which are separated from one another and added like bricks on a row, but rather as being made up of WAVES following one another." The field view considers "language as FUNCTIONAL, as a system with parts and classes of parts so interrelated that no parts occur apart from their function in the total whole, which in turn occurs only as the product of these parts in functional relation to a meaningful social environment" (Kenneth L. Pike, "Language as Particle, Wave, and Field," in *Kenneth L. Pike: Selected Writings to Commemorate the 60th Birthday of Kenneth Lee Pike*, ed. Ruth Brend [The Hague: Mouton, 1972], 129). In reference to the particle and wave perspectives, Pike writes, "A theory must on the one hand take account of the apparent irreconcilability between the fact that a behavior event is often a physical continuum with no gaps in which the movement is stopped, but on the other hand must take account of the fact that human beings react to their own behavior and to that of other

referential hierarchies;[13] linguistic units with contrastive-identificational features, variation, and distribution;[14] events simultaneously structured in the manifestation, feature, and distribution mode.[15] Yet, these triads themselves

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individuals as if it were segmented into discrete chunks" ("Towards a Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior [1956]," in *Selected Writings*, 106).

[13] "In language we find three kinds of hierarchy which are partly independent but which at the same time interlock with each other. In the *grammatical* hierarchy, meaningful lexical chunks make up parts of words entering into larger chunks of structure, which in turn enter into still larger chunks. At the bottom of this hierarchy are *affixes*—that is, prefixes like *re-* of *return*, or suffixes like *-s* of *returns*, or roots like the *turn* of *returns*. These make up words … as a whole; or *phrases* … or *clauses* … or *sentences* … or *paragraphs*.…"

"On the other hand, the way which a man pronounces may also be arranged in the form of wheels within wheels—smaller items within larger and larger ones. *Cat* is a syllable in which three sounds … occur. In the long word *prestidigitator*, however, there may be several syllables, with just one *accented* syllable—which we may call *stressed*—so that the whole word forms a single larger pronunciation unit, that is, one *stress group*. Stress groups become important in the meter of many poems; the *line* sometimes forms a still larger pronunciation unit; and the entire poem, when read aloud, may be pronounced in such a way that a person can tell that the reader is going to stop—evidence that it too is a pronunciation unit of some kind, in the total *phonological hierarchy*."

"In addition to the grammatical and phonological hierarchies, we assume … that there is a *referential hierarchy*. The referential hierarchy includes the *talk-concepts* which people have about *things* and about *events* or about *features* or *situations* relating such things and events, which they *observe*—or *imagine*—and *talk about* (or think about). It is, then, the observed (or imagined) and talked-about reality which is concerning us here. We are simply silent about the 'thing-in-itself,' which may exist apart from any human observer; things and situations or events enter into our analysis only when *some* perspective is involved" (Kenneth L. Pike, *Linguistic Concepts: An Introduction to Tagmemics* [Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982], 13–15).

[14] We arrive at a contrastive-identificational awareness of a particular unit of language or human behavior, when we can tell what it is *not* like in addition to what it *is* like. "The same components which help us to see that one unit differs from another also help us to *recognize* the unit when it is no longer close to the one which we separated it from.… Features which are contrastive in relation to some contexts are *identificational* in others" (ibid., 42). Variation deals with "those features of a unit which may change *without causing the loss of recognizability* of the unit. The appropriate observer readily recognizes that certain changes do not affect deeper identities" (p. 52). Distribution provides the broader functional system within which a unit finds its meaning. "Some place must be the point of origin for the coordinates which allow one to identify oneself in a place in the larger world. Something must tell us where we are, beyond reference to our immediate environment. Reference to successively larger patterns of occurrence, to a larger *universe of discourse*, is necessary if one is to know the significance of a person, a thing, or a word. Knowing that I'm behind my nose does not tell me how to find the way to town. I need to be oriented in reference to a larger context, to a universe—or to a discourse. The *I* of a discourse (in relation to *you*) suggests that the speaker knows something about his social relations. But unless one goes beyond oneself and his neighbor to a hierarchically ordered outside world, he is in some sense lost within himself" (p. 60).

[15] The manifestation mode is "the hierarchical structuring of the physical material which is present in every human behavioral event. In language, this implies structure in terms of phonemes, which in turn enter a hierarchy with syllables, stress groups, and still higher units." The feature mode is "the simultaneous identification-contrastive components of that unit, with its internal segmentation analyzed with special reference to purpose or lexical meaning wherever these are detectable. It is in reference to this mode … that any over-all meaning of a sentence is treated." Lastly, the distribution mode is "the breaking up of the sentence into its pertinent major and minor spot classes. Specifically, the distribution mode is … the correlation of spots plus the classes filling

are not sufficient to merit the label "Trinitarian." Countless philosophers and theologians utilize triads in their theory. What makes Pike's approach unique is not simply the *matter* of his thought (the triads themselves), but the *manner* of his thought, that is, the way in which he sees them functioning. The hierarchies of grammar, phonology, and reference are overlapping and interlocking.[16] The particle, wave, and field perspectives are different structural views of the same data.[17] A single unit has contrast, variation, *and* distribution.[18] One can see right away that Pike's triads reflect the God who is three-in-one, as well as what

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those spots" (Pike, "Towards a Theory," 114–15). A *spot* is "the place at which substitution can occur.… All behavior is considered to contain significant spots at which behavior occurrences can be found." A *class* is the "particular list of items which are appropriate to that spot" (pp. 110–11). Pike would later change his terminology to *slot* and *class*. Each *slot* would then have an appropriate collection of *fillers* that could fill that behavioral slot.

[16] "We would insist upon the interlocking of the hierarchies, with 'certain points or regions at which some of the units of the hierarchy *are* coterminous, or co-nuclear, in order for the units of the various hierarchies to be relevant to one another,' and that we therefore deny any totally-separate view of three hierarchies. We leave them only sufficiently independent to have identities of their own within the interlocking total fusing system" (Kenneth L. Pike, *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior*, 2nd ed. [The Hague: Mouton, 1967], 475). "Language constitutes a system but no language system can occur unless some kind of interlocking also occurs. Lower-layered units within one modal hierarchy must somehow be fused into or integrated with larger units of activity on a higher level of that hierarchy, or else there is no structure joining these units."

"Structure, in this sense, is in part a function of the interlocking and interpenetration of levels or layers of a hierarchy. The various hierarchies of such a system, furthermore, must also be relevant to and interlocking with one another or else no structural organization of them occurs. On the one hand there must be certain points or regions at which some of the units of the hierarchy *are* co-terminous or co-nuclear, in order for the units of the various hierarchies to be relevant to one another. On the other hand there must be certain points in the system at which some of the units on various levels of the hierarchies of the modes are *not* co-terminous or co-nuclear. If all units of all hierarchies were always co-terminous and co-nuclear then there would be no trimodal structuring at all, but merely a single structure which could be looked at from three different points of view."

"The linking of one unit type or another leads not only to co-terminous and co-nuclear relations, but also to fusion, to double function, and to indeterminacies of various kinds. These fusions and indeterminacies are not to be considered as disastrous to the present system—nor to be considered as undesirable or as the result of an incomplete analysis. On the contrary, at times they are seen to be essential features of the system itself. It is these which allow for that type of integration which itself is essential to a system" (p. 566). For examples of the interlocking grammatical, lexical, and phonological hierarchies, see pp. 567–80. For an example of overlapping hierarchies, see p. 101.

[17] "There are three views of linguistics which cover approximately the same material and which in some respects are similar, but which are different enough to allow a far richer experience if the linguist uses all three than if he uses only one" (Pike, *Linguistic Concepts*, 12).

[18] Note that Pike's focus on units having contrastive-identificational features and yet having variation ultimately goes back to the perfect harmony of unity and diversity in the Godhead. A linguistic unit can have variation and yet still maintain its identity. This is the case ultimately because "each of the persons of the Trinity is exhaustive of divinity itself, while yet there is a genuine distinction between persons. Unity and plurality are equally ultimate in the Godhead" (Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 348). "The unit of class and the diversity of particularity both rest on the ontologically ultimate unity and diversity of God" (Poythress, "Reforming Ontology and Logic," 197). On the relation of the one and the many, see Van Til, *Defense of the Faith*, 48–49.

theologians refer to as the coinherence or perichoresis of the Trinity.[19] Just as the persons of the Godhead interpenetrate one another, so the various aspects of Pike's triads overlap and interlock—units of the grammatical hierarchy simultaneously substantive in levels of the phonological hierarchy, and units of the phonological hierarchy simultaneously substantive in the referential hierarchy, and so on. Critical to a well-developed understanding of a linguistic unit is its identity, variation, and distribution—focusing on only one of these features leaves us with a partial view of the data.

Mystery, too, enters into the relationship of these interlocking triads, which is also a key tenet of incomprehensibility of the Godhead.[20] This mystery presents itself in the fuzzy boundaries of hierarchies and their component units. For example, in discussing the "thresholds," that is, the upper and lower boundaries of a behavioreme (an identifiable unit of human behavior, such as having breakfast or driving to work), Pike suggests that the relative indeterminacy of these thresholds "is reflecting some of the ambiguity which exists, in fact, in the activity of the community itself, and that a concealing of this ambiguity in order to get 'clear cut' theory at this point would not contribute to the fidelity of description but to concealment of the facts of behavioral structure."[21] His avoidance of reductionism and discrete categories, while earning him criticism from modernist-minded scholars, is, in fact, what makes his theory more markedly Trinitarian.[22] While it certainly reveals patterns, human behavior is not an empirically exhaustible plexus of relations, nor is language an antidote injected into the bloodstream of mystery; it merely channels mystery from place to place in recognizable ways for finite creatures, allowing us to communicate

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[19] See Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1960), 1:461–62; Frame, *Systematic Theology,* 479–81; Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology,* 357; Letham, *Holy Trinity,* 178, 208; Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2012), 90–91.

[20] The incomprehensibility of God can be seen in the "mysterious interpenetration of the persons of the Godhead," stressed particularly in the work of Charles Hodge and rearticulated by Van Til, who sought to guard this ancient doctrine from the threat of univocal reasoning in the form of rationalism. See Lane G. Tipton, "The Function of Perichoresis and the Divine Incomprehensibility," *WTJ* 64 (2002): 289–306. Van Til's understanding of perichoresis bears an uncanny resemblance to Pike's metaphorical use of the concept in his linguistic theory (interpenetrating hierarchies). This may be because both Van Til and Pike were familiar with the work of Charles Hodge, particularly the first volume of his *Systematic Theology.*

[21] Pike, *Language,* 129. Note also that the ambiguity of these borders may reflect the fact that human community in some way resembles or at least retains the mark of the Trinity. Mystery also exists in the replaceable components of an intonation system. In an interview in the early 1990s, Pike commented that "there's something very mysterious about the way the paradigmatic handling of intonation shows replaceable components at a particular point in a system and is important in that way" (see Alan S. Kaye, "An Interview with Kenneth Pike," *Current Anthropology* 35 [1994]: 296).

[22] Again, see Tipton, "Function of Perichoresis," for Van Til's defense of but supplement to traditional orthodox Trinitarianism. Van Til's defense of the incomprehensibility of the Godhead as it relates to perichoresis pairs nicely with Pike's rejection of the comprehensibility of the structure of human behavior.

coherently and yet keeping us from understanding the world and ourselves exhaustively.[23] Digging deeply enough into any linguistic structure or meaningful human behavior, one will inevitably run into mystery, for, as Van Til says, all that God has made reflects the mystery that is part of his tripersonal nature.[24]

Therefore, it is Pike's *manner* of thinking that sets him apart from other linguists of his day. Interlocking hierarchies and perspectives are conducive to producing larger amounts of data and a depth of understanding, but not an exhaustive mastery of syntax, morphology, or phonology. Pike knew that limitation, and he was content with it because mystery, for him, had a place in all of human behavior. Rather than spend time trying to understand an element of human behavior exhaustively in the abstract, he focused on concrete situations in which the observer needed to extract a particular understanding from a behavioral unit—no matter how small or large that unit was.

In sum, if the *manner* of our thinking should reflect our being made in the image of the triune God who has created and upholds all things by his Word, if our approach to language and thought needs "radical recasting in the light of Trinitarian ontology and logic,"[25] then Pike certainly seems to be headed in the right direction.

## IV. *Personalism Defined*

The above summary should help us to appreciate that Pike's theory *is* truly Trinitarian. The question we have before us now is, how did it come about? To begin answering that question, we need to understand Pike's personalism.

Personalism as an official movement is difficult to define, not only because there are many schools and applications of it (depending on the setting, historical and geographical), but also because it carries core values common to other philosophical movements.[26] We can try to limit ourselves to what Simon

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[23] Note, e.g., how the *Word* of God—God's own speech to us—in the flesh helps us to understand and relate to God more concretely (just as language helps us relate to the world), and yet Christ is still shrouded in mystery by the paradox of his divine-human nature, just as the inner workings of language are, I argue, as mysterious as the perichoresis of God.

[24] This can be traced back to the analogical nature of human reality. In our being, thought, and language, we are analogous to the Trinitarian God. In terms of our being, there is classification (i.e., stability or *who we are*), instantiation (i.e., variation and uniqueness), and association (our relationships). Each of these features presupposes the other two; each is a perspective on our being. In terms of our thought, we develop categories for interpreting the world that are also classificational, instantiational, and associational, since "our conception of language … influences our conception of logic." In terms of our language, "Trinitarian speech is necessarily Trinitarian, trimodal, and coinherent. Human speech is dependent. Since it provides access to real knowledge of God, it is necessarily trimodal and coinherent by analogy" (see Poythress, "Reforming Ontology and Logic," 195).

[25] Ibid., 217.

[26] Personalism, according to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* has roots recognizable in Europe, America, and Asia; its proponents range from F. D. E. Schleiermacher to Walt Whitman; its forebears are as diverse as Boethius, Thomas Aquinas, Immanuel Kant, Jean Lacroix, and Emmanuel Mounier. With so many figures attached to a single movement, whether to its historical

Blackburn calls the "older usage" of the term: "Personalism is the theistic stress on the existence of divine personality or any philosophy according to which the individual person is the starting point of theory."[27] Better yet for our context is the definition provided by Alistair Hannay, "The finite individual is somehow grounded in and seeks its fulfillment in an infinite spirit, or God, understood as personal."[28] This, in part, is in accord with the American strand of personalism brought out in the work of Borden Parker Bowne (1847–1910) and Edgar Sheffield Brightman (1871–1960), which was "both idealistic and theistic … and had as its foundational insight the view that all reality is ultimately personal. God is the transcendent person and the ground or creator of all other persons; nature is a system of objects either for or in the minds of persons."[29] Speaking more particularly of Bowne's personalism, we can say that it "maintains that reality is a society of selves and persons with a Supreme Person (God) at its center. Person was, for Bowne, the fundamental principle of explanation, capable of explaining all other principles but itself."[30]

However, we can and must improve and clarify these definitions within the Reformed tradition.[31] In distinction from the so-called Boston personalism, we affirm that all of reality is grounded in the triune, personal God who reveals himself objectively and yet personally in revelation to man as his image-bearer. In this sense, we can say that reality is ultimately personal, and that if nature is a system of objects in the minds of persons, then the ultimate mind is the mind of God.[32] Personalism in this sense is not relativism or subjectivism. When

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foundation or contemporary expression, we must be careful in committing to a definition without qualification. See "Personalism," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/personalism/.

[27] Simon Blackburn, *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 284.

[28] Alistair Hannay, "Personalism," *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, ed. Ted Honderich, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 692.

[29] C. F. Delaney, "Personalism," in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. Robert Audi, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 661.

[30] Rufus Burrow Jr., *Personalism: A Critical Introduction* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 1999), 11.

[31] Van Til was clear in articulating the theological chasm between "Boston personalism" and what he called "orthodox personalism." Proponents of the former, namely Bowne and Brightman, ran into serious trouble because they sought to make finite personality the "fulcrum for the operations of the laws of thought. But finite personality can be thought of intelligently only on the presupposition of the idea of the self-intelligent God. And on the basis of the idea of this God alone is it possible to avoid both rationalism and irrationalism, both determinism and pure contingency, or a combination of them" (Cornelius Van Til, "Boston Personalism" [lecture delivered at Boston University School of Theology, March 6, 1956], 55–56).

[32] "Man's surroundings are shot through with personality because all things are related to the infinitely personal God" (Van Til, *Christian Theory of Knowledge*, 208). Van Til is quick to point out that though there is continuity between man's mind and God's mind, there is not identity of content (*Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 270–71). God's mind is ultimate in the sense that there can only be analogical knowledge for man, but the fact that this is the case means there is continuity between God's mind and man's mind, since "God is the original knower, and man is the derivative re-knower" (p. 274). For man to be a "re-knower," he must have a mind in analogical correspondence to that of his Creator.

couched in the appropriate language, it is nothing more than a representation of scriptural truth. Reality is not an impersonal conglomeration of material, facts, and data; there is nothing that exists apart from God's creating and sustaining Word, and because God is personal, all of reality is as well.

Theologically, personalism falls into the field of general revelation. God "reveals himself in the history of nations and persons (Deut 32:8; Ps 33:10; 67:4; 115:16; Prov 8:15, 16; Acts 17:26; Rom 13:1). He also discloses himself in the heart and conscience of every individual (Job 32:8; 33:4; Prov 20:27; John 1:3–5, 9, 10; Rom 2:14, 15; 8:16)."[33] Or, as Calvin put it, "there is a sense of divinity engraved in the hearts of all *people*.… It cannot be erased from the human spirit."[34] God reveals himself not only in the world around us, but also in each person's conscience,[35] and by nature of the fact that all people are made in God's image.[36] People are walking testaments to the nature of reality as created and sustained by a triune, personal God.

The above definitions of personalism and its place in general revelation will help us to understand how Pike arrived at a Trinitarian theory of language and human behavior. However, rather than move on just yet, we need to understand that Pike's personalism was not an explicit acceptance of an official movement but a manifestation of his theological convictions within the field of linguistics. Pike has, in this sense, his own strand of personalism, which at first glance is nothing novel. Like many figures in the Reformed tradition, he is wary of treating reality as an impersonal, mechanistic system rooted in pure physicality. Yet, the uniqueness of Pike's strand of personalism comes to the fore in his embrace of observer perspectives (particle, wave, and field) and the rejection of abstract categories or concepts that are either divorced from concrete manifestation or skew the data of language by being reductionistic.[37] In light

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[33] Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:310.

[34] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion: 1541 French Edition*, trans. Elsie Anne McKee (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 26, emphasis added.

[35] Kelly, *Systematic Theology*, 1:144. See also Rom 2.

[36] The *imago Dei* is far too rich a subject to treat here. Suffice it to say that the *imago Dei* is reflected in everything we do as human beings. In Oliphint's words, "all that we are, think, do, and become is derivative, coming from or out of something else; we depend on, as well as mirror, the real, the Original, the *Eimi*. In classical terminology, we are 'ectypal.' The *kind* or *type* of people we are, knowledge we have, thoughts we think, things we do, is always and everywhere a copy, pattern, impression, image, taking its metaphysical and epistemological cue from the only One who truly *is*, that is, from God himself" (K. Scott Oliphint, *Reasons for Faith: Philosophy in the Service of Theology* [Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2006], 178–79). Berkhof suggests that we are always "God-related," that we do not simply *bear* the image of God occasionally; we *are* the image of God. He adds to this general truth the traditional features of the *imago Dei*: knowledge, righteousness, holiness, spirituality, immortality of the soul, and dominion over "lower creation" (Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 203–5). These aspects echo Turretin's (among others') earlier conclusions; see Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1992), 1:466–70.

[37] Rémy de Gourmont stated that "the only excuse a man has for writing is to write himself—to reveal to others the kind of world reflected in his individual mirror." Commenting on this, Pike

of these concepts, his critiques of other linguists were spent on those who either (1) bifurcated aspects of language that he felt must be tied together (such as form and meaning); or (2) reduced linguistics to a particular hierarchy (e.g., grammar or reference) rather than focusing on its interlocking hierarchies as perceived by observers. Both critiques are tied to his personalism—the notion that *people are central to inquiry and investigation.* This is back of Pike's critiques of the *structuralist* movement within American descriptive linguistics (a movement of which he was a part), as it was based on the foundations laid by Ferdinand de Saussure, Leonard Bloomfield, and Noam Chomsky.[38]

In terms of Pike's own teaching, both theological and linguistic, we find that even from its genesis in the mid-1930s, people remained his central focus. This might be attributed to his initial experience with the Summer Institute of

writes, "The world mirrored in each man's mind is unique. Constantly changing, bafflingly complex, the external world is not a neat, well-ordered place replete with meaning, but an enigma requiring interpretation. This interpretation is the result of a transaction between events in the external world and the mind of the individual—between the world 'out there' and the individual's previous experience, knowledge, values, attitudes, and desire. Thus the mirrored world is not just the sum total of eardrum rattles, retinal excitations, and so on; it is a creation that reflects the peculiarities of the perceiver as well as the peculiarities of what is perceived. In a very real sense there are as many interpretations of the world as there are people in it" (Richard E. Young, Alton L. Becker, and Kenneth L. Pike, *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change* [New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970], 25). In Pike's later work, *Linguistic Concepts*, he begins the preface by saying, "In this volume *person* (and relation between persons) is given theoretical priority above formalism, above pure mathematics, above idealized abstractions." He goes on, "The hopeless attempt to eliminate the observer in favor of scientific detachment or of objectivity is dismal. Units must be experienced or observed or deduced or imagined.… When man studies 'things,' he injects part of himself into their definition. What is a chair, if there is no man to sit on it? A flute, with no player? A concert, with no listeners? A saw, with no carpenter? The relevance of intended use of a thing is part of its nature as experienced by an observer" (pp. xi, xii, 3).

[38] Take, e.g., the following critiques: (1) "we reject the theory of signs of de Saussure (1931) and of Hjelmslev—who says that 'A "sign" functions, designates, denotes; a "sign," in contradistinction to a nonsign, is the bearer of a meaning' (1953:27); our present theory would not allow us to say … that a linguistic item 'is the bearer of a meaning,' since there would be no available linguistic units to 'bear' meanings, in view of the fact that there are only form-meaning composites"; (2) "As more and more materials in speech begin to appear structured, the view that 'language' as a structure differs from 'speech' as an activity is threatened. In behavioremics, furthermore, the structural units always retain substance as relevant to their manifestation mode. Under the impact of these two factors, we abandon the distinction between *la langue* and *la parole* proposed by de Saussure"; (3) "Note Bloomfield, who feels that such things as phonetics 'do not form part of linguistic theory'"; (4) "Chomsky attempts to present a grammar theory which is 'completely formal and non-semantic' (1957a:93; cf. also 94, 97, 99–104"; (5) "A tagmemic view would feel that a rigid transformationalist approach does not give adequate theoretical attention to the nature of units in general (contrast, variation, distribution); to emic levels such as clause; to patterning by way of field theory (experience of pattern is not *merely* perception of a rule); the necessity for more persistent attention to the correlation of form with meaning in a unit of grammar (a tagmeme); to etic versus emic elements of units or levels; to the structure of units beyond the sentence; to partially-independent but partially-overlapping hierarchies of lexicon, of phonology, and of grammar, in reference to particle, wave, and field; to the relation of verbal to nonverbal structure" (see Pike, *Language*, 63, 536, 355, 97, 149, 496).

Linguistics (SIL), when he worked on his own among the Mixtecs, an isolated and agrarian people of Mesoamerica, translating the NT into a tongue to which he had had no prior exposure.[39] In such a setting, relationships are the bedrock of survival, both physically and socially. When you are several days' journey by donkey to the closest train station, linguistic ideals and abstractions do little to fill your stomach or break the language barrier isolating you from substantive human contact. Pike cut his teeth on practical linguistics, choosing to live among a foreign people, to think in their language, and to study both its structure and pronunciation. The experience showed him early on that compartmental-izing aspects of language such as grammar and phonemics was an exercise in abstraction and did not adequately represent the linguistic community under consideration. Thus he writes, "If a language structure is to be described re-alistically, the interweaving of grammatical and phonemic facts must not be ignored. A language system represents a structural whole which one cannot compartmentalize mechanically without doing violence to the facts."[40]

It is also important to know that Pike's personalism is related to his focus on the physical manifestation of meaning. By this we mean that "every struc-tural unit postulated for language … has a physical component as its base; no exceptions are knowingly tolerated."[41] In other words, units of language (morphemes, words, phrases, clauses, etc.) are *always* bound up with a par-ticular physical manifestation; their meaning is inseparable from their form within a participant sequence of activity (e.g., a conversation, a paragraph).[42]

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[39]   Pike's boss at the time, W. Cameron Townsend, even had him avoid learning Spanish before living among the Mixtecs, so as to help his immersion and subsequent functionality in the language. See Eunice V. Pike, *Ken Pike: Scholar and Christian* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1981), 18–48.

[40]   Kenneth L. Pike, "Grammatical Prerequisites to Phonemic Analysis (1947)," in *Selected Writings*, 48.

[41]   Kenneth L. Pike, "Meaning and Hypostasis (1955)," in *Selected Writings*, 102.

[42]   "This approach seems to be useful for ordinary speech, but now a special problem arises: what are the emic units of activity of the native speaker by which he does discuss meanings as if they were isolatable, as if he thought they had no physical component? The first part of our solution in such an instance is to assume that a physical component DOES appear in these instances, as well as in those of ordinary speech with their manifesting contexts, but that here the physical component of the 'meaning' which the native speaker proposes is the combination of his neurological activity as he thinks about or utters the words labeling these meanings, plus the physical activity of uttering the words aloud. The verbal activity constitutes the physical manifestation of these activity units just as verbalization constitutes the physical component of ordinary speech in context, so that no non-embodied emes of meaning need here to be postulated."

"The second part of our solution is to point out the further generalized dichotomy in kinds of human activity. One kind of activity is the normal occurrence of an event as part of a sequence of events which it helps comprise; ordinary activity occurs in an appropriate context, as the verbal activity comprised of pronouncing the word *Bill* occurs in the context as the subject of the sentence activity *Bill ran home*. A quite different kind of activity is the excising of a part of a sequence of activity from its regular context, and viewing it as an isolated unit; a 'viewing context' or 'viewing frame' may be set up as a special 'holder' of the 'specimen' to be examined; note, for example, that in the preceding sentence the phrase *the word (Bill)* served as such a viewing context for the word *Bill*,

But because we often discuss meaning and form as if they were capable of being isolated, a question arises: How can we study, analyze, categorize, or discuss a unit of language without "doing violence to the facts"? Pike's answer is, in a word, *hypostasis.*

> Any abstraction of an activity from a normal participant sequence for purposes of viewing it, studying it, mentioning it, analyzing it, listing it, cataloging it, or discussing it as such, we shall call HYPOSTASIS of that activity. The mention of a word is an activity of hypostasis. The formation of a dictionary listing is accomplished by the hypostasis of these forms. The practicing of the passing of a football is the hypostasis, and repetition of hypostasis, of the football-passing activity of a normal game, etc.
>
>     The native speaker, in quoting a word out of normal context, is performing an act of hypostasis. If he means the MEANING of that word, however, he is doing something further: he is making an abstraction from various contexts of some common phase of the elicitation-response characteristics of those contexts, and is giving to his abstraction a name, or "label." The physical manifestation of the label is a component of the abstracting activity, and, for that activity, fulfills the kind of function which for the non-abstracting activity of normal speech is played by the physical component of that normal speech. Activity units in which a substitute verbalization for hypostasis defining purposes replaces the verbal activity utilized in normal non-abstracting sequences, we may call 'conceptualized hypostasis' to differentiate it from hypostasis which merely repeats, out of context, an item to study it apart from that context.[43]

In more simple language, what Pike is saying is that (1) sometimes we remove a unit of language from its genuine participant context in order to study it, an act of hypostasis; (2) sometimes we talk about the *meaning* of that hypostasized unit, and in such a case we are gathering meanings from various participant contexts and creating an abstraction, a conceptualized hypostasis. For example, if we discuss the intonation and stress of the word *love* in the clause "God is love" (1 John 4:8) in hopes of showing how the intonation and stress in that clause relate to John's meaning in the larger context of the paragraph, then we are performing an act of hypostasis—temporarily treating the word in isolation from its context. If, however, we claim that *love* is "wanting what is best for another without regard for oneself," then we have taken multiple participant contexts in which that word occurs (or contexts we associate with our perceived meaning, e.g., Jesus' death on the cross) and made an abstraction—a label that encompasses the mass of specific physical manifestations we have in mind.

Both hypostasis and conceptualized hypostasis are analytical tools, but in our use of them we must be conscious of what we are doing. We are temporarily *pretending* that a specific form can be isolated from a specific meaning in a specific physical context; we sacrifice (or at least temporarily ignore) the acute

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since in that sentence we specifically wished to accomplish the kind of activity which we were at that moment describing" (ibid., 102–3).

    [43] Ibid., 103.

meaning in a defined participant situation in order to focus on meaning in a broader context of analysis. Yet even here we do not bifurcate form and meaning because in the process we have created a new form: either the hypostasized form and meaning in a new context or the conceptually hypostasized form and its contextually compounded meaning.

Now, why mention this in relation to personalism? Just as language units cannot be abstracted from sequences of participant activity without in some sense distorting or skewing our perception of the original data, so language cannot be separated from those who speak it without distorting or skewing our perception of its structure, function, and purpose. A linguistic unit—even a hypostasized one—is a form-meaning composite. Analogously, a speaking person is a form-meaning composite. The meaningful language a person uses cannot be separated from that person (the "form") without skewing our perception of the data. To deal with language is to deal with people.

The above discussion has, I hope, brought us to a place where we can more precisely define Pike's particular strand of personalism. For the remainder of this article, we will assume the following definition: people and their meaningful behavior in specific contexts are vital to our understanding of the structure of language and of the rest of reality. This definition will serve us well in the following section, in which we highlight manifestations of personalism in Pike's work.

## V. *Manifestations of Personalism in Pike's Work*

We have already discussed certain aspects of Pike's personalism in brief, but having more evidence of personalism in its varying forms throughout his writing establishes the point and deepens our understanding of his approach to linguistics. Each of the following manifestations of personalism confirms just how pervasive the concept is in his thought.

We must first begin by establishing that, for Pike, language is a phase of human behavior that cannot be structurally divorced from other kinds of human behavior.[44] This is primarily because (1) "language behavior and non-language behavior are fused in single events" and (2) "verbal and nonverbal elements may at times substitute structurally for one another in function."[45]

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[44] Viola G. Waterhouse, *The History and Development of Tagmemics* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), 15. In his magnum opus, Pike claims, "Language is behavior, i.e., a phase of human activity which must not be treated in essence as structurally divorced from the structure of nonverbal human activity. The activity of man constitutes a structural whole, in such a way that it cannot be subdivided into neat 'parts' or 'levels' or 'compartments' with language in a behavioral compartment insulated in character, content, and organization from other behavior. Verbal and nonverbal activity is a unified whole, and theory and methodology should be organized or created to treat it as such" (*Language*, 26). See also Pike, "Towards a Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior (1956)," in *Selected Writings*, 106.

[45] Pike, *Language*, 26.

Pike confirmed through examples that "language behavior and nonlanguage behavior are structurally so analogous that on some occasions certain of their parts are interchangeable."[46] In sum, "the complexity of human beings reflects itself in human action,"[47] and language is one of those actions. This baseline assumption consorts well with his personalism: he is studying human behavior holistically, rather than atomistically.

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[46] Ibid., 30. Pike is quick to acknowledge his teacher, Edward Sapir, for his direction in this idea. According to Sapir, "a further psychological characteristic of language is the fact that while it may be looked upon as a symbolic system which reports or refers to or otherwise substitutes for direct experience, it does not as a matter of actual behavior stand apart from or run parallel to direct experience but completely interpenetrates with it.… For the normal person every experience, real or potential, is saturated with verbalism. This explains why so many lovers of nature, for instance, do not feel that they are truly in touch with it until they have mastered the names of a great many flowers and trees, as though the primary world of reality were a verbal one and as though one could not get close to nature unless one first mastered the terminology which somehow magically expresses it. It is this constant interplay between language and experience which removes language from the cold status of such purely and simply symbolic systems as mathematical symbolism or flag signaling. This interpenetration is not only an intimate associative fact; it is also a contextual one. It is important to realize that language may not only refer to experience or even mold, interpret, and discover experience, but that it also substitutes for it in the sense that in those sequences of interpersonal behavior which form the greater part of our daily lives speech and action supplement each other and do each other's work in a web of unbroken pattern. If one says to me, 'Lend me a dollar,' I may hand over the money without a word or I may give it with an accompanying 'Here it is' or I may say 'I haven't got it' or 'I'll give it to you tomorrow.' Each of these responses is structurally equivalent, if one thinks of the larger behavior pattern. It is clear that if language is in its analyzed form a symbolic system of reference, it is far from being merely that if we consider the psychological part that it plays in continuous behavior" (Edward Sapir, *Selected Writings in Language, Culture, and Personality* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963; repr., London: Forgotten Books, 2012], 11–12).

In addition, Sapir suggested that linguistics could be understood as a window into the rest of human behavior, which seems to have prompted Pike to do the same, since he cites a portion of the following quotation at the end of his first chapter in *Language*: "Better than any other social science, linguistics shows by its data and methods, necessarily more easily defined than the data and methods of any other type of discipline dealing with socialized behavior, the possibility of a truly scientific study of society which does not ape the methods nor attempt to adopt unrevised the concepts of the natural sciences. It is peculiarly important that linguists, who are often accused, and accused justly, of failure to look beyond the pretty patterns of their subject matter, should become aware of what their science may mean for the interpretation of human conduct in general. Whether they like it or not, they must become increasingly concerned with the many anthropological, sociological, and psychological problems which invade the field of language" (Sapir, *Selected Writings*, 166, cited in part by Pike, *Language*, 32). It seems Pike followed Sapir's recommendation and, using linguistics, generated a unified approach to the structure of human behavior—a fitting albeit less than elegant title for his magnum opus.

[47] Vern S. Poythress, *Redeeming Sociology: A God-Centered Approach* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 243. He continues, "One of these complexities reveals itself especially in language. Language shows multiple subsystems that we use in communication. Specifically, a language has a referential subsystem, enabling us to refer to things and to communicate content; it has a grammatical subsystem, maintaining internal structure; and it has a phonological subsystem, enabling transmission by sound." Spoken like a true student of Pike!

## 1. *The Emic and the Etic*

Pike's personalism was also evident in the founding and use of the concepts *emic* and *etic*, ending morphemes of the words *phonemic* and *phonetic*. These are essentially two different ways of viewing the same data or experience.[48] We might begin by substituting the word *insider* for *emic* and *outsider* for *etic*.[49] A simple example will serve to illustrate: consider an extraterrestrial who is watching people drive in and out of a gas station. Some people, he notices, get out of their metal boxes, remove a square piece of plastic from their pockets, and insert it into a machine next to them before quickly pulling it back out. Then they push lightly on the machine, remove a hose from it, attach the hose to their metal box, and wait a few minutes. Finally, they put the hose back in its place and push lightly on the machine once more. But at this point, the alien is puzzled: after lightly pushing on the machine, some people take a small piece of paper from it, but others do not. All the alien can confirm is that this phenomenon happens; he cannot attach meaning to it from the perspective of these people. Why do they not all take a slip of paper from the machine? Is the machine withholding? Is it judging them based on their parking skill? Is the color of their metal box the deciding factor?

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[48] Here, again, Pike incorporates the teaching of Edward Sapir, with whom he worked closely in the late 1930s, conversing with him about linguistics into the late hours of the night. Sapir wrote, "It is impossible to say what an individual is doing unless we have tacitly accepted the essentially arbitrary modes of interpretation that social tradition is constantly suggesting to us from the very moment of our birth. Let anyone who doubts this try the experiment of making a painstaking report of the actions of a group of natives engaged in some form of activity, say religious, to which he has not the cultural key. If he is a skillful writer, he may succeed in giving a picturesque account of what he sees and hears, or thinks he sees and hears, but the chances of his being able to give a relation of what happens in terms that would be intelligible and acceptable to the natives themselves are practically nil. He will be guilty of all manner of distortion. His emphasis will be constantly askew. He will find interesting what the natives take for granted as a casual kind of behavior worthy of no particular comment, and he will utterly fail to observe the crucial turning points in the course of action that give formal significance to the whole in the minds of those who do possess the key to its understanding. This patterning or formal analysis of behavior is to a surprising degree dependent on the mode of apprehension which has been established by the tradition of the group. Forms and significances which seem obvious to an outsider will be denied outright by those who carry out the patterns; outlines and implications that are perfectly clear to these may be absent to the eye of the onlooker. It is the failure to understand the necessity of grasping the native patterning which is responsible for so much unimaginative and misconceiving description of procedures that we have not been brought up with. It becomes actually possible to interpret as base what is inspired by the noblest and even holiest of motives, and to see altruism or beauty where nothing of the kind is either felt or intended" (Sapir, *Selected Writings*, 546–47).

[49] Pike, *Language*, 37. Waterhouse defines the contrast between emic and etic as follows: "The etic view has to do with universals, with typology, with observation from outside a system, as well as with the nature of initial field data, and with variant forms of an emic unit. The emic view is concerned with the contrastive, patterned system of a specific language or culture or universe of discourse, with the way a participant in a system sees that system, as well as with distinctions between contrastive units" (*History and Development of Tagmemics*, 6).

Imagine the same scenario from the perspective of a person filling his car up with gas. When he sees the man next to him push a button after fueling and not receive a slip of paper, the action is instantly meaningful. He knows that the man simply does not want a receipt for the transaction. He can draw a number of conclusions about this action that the alien cannot: perhaps the man hates clutter; perhaps he wishes to help the environment by saving paper; perhaps he is in a rush and would rather not wait for a receipt to print out. And, what's more, while the person has an instant understanding of the potential meaningfulness of the action, he may be unaware of all the things that the alien observed because his rote execution blinds him to certain details. The alien considers how strange it is for a piece of plastic to go in and out of a machine and cause that machine to respond. He wants to know how this works. The person, on the other hand, probably could not care less. He has inserted and removed his card at the gas pump countless times without hesitation and without much thought. He does not think about how the magnetic strip in his card is read by the machine, or how his pin number is related to the magnetic strip, and so forth. So, both the alien and the person at the gas pump notice certain things about the same event; each perspective yields unique but useful results; each has its advantages and limitations. The alien would not survive socially in the man's culture. The man would not survive in his own culture if he thought of every single activity he performed with meticulous scrutiny. The alien's view and the man's view are complementary.

The emic and etic perspectives have varying uses for the linguist, for each offers different opportunities and advantages of analysis. The etic view structures behavioral units from an outsider's perspective, while the emic view "is domestic, leading to units which correspond to those of an insider familiar with and participating in the system."[50] The etic view can be used cross culturally, while the emic view is "monocultural" because it only perceives internal relations of a person or culture.[51] The etic view classifies types of behavior, while the emic view structures them in relation to the native system.[52] Because of their potential for broader application, etic views are more absolute, while emic views are more relative.[53] Perhaps most important,

> etic units and classifications, based on prior broad sampling or surveys (and studied in training courses) may be available before one begins the analysis of a further particular language or culture. Regardless of how much training one has, however, emic units of a language must be determined during the analysis of that language; they must be discovered, not predicted.[54]

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[50] Kenneth L. Pike, "A Stereoscopic Window on the World," *BSac* 114 (1957): 145.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Pike, *Language*, 37. One can discover the emic categories and units of a language by observing the responses to verbal and nonverbal behavior as they are distributed in various contexts. "Every

Our understanding of a particular unit of behavior—that is, an element of experience—largely depends on who is observing that unit—either an outsider or a participant of the community in question. This is a key point at which we encounter Pike's focus on observer perspectives.[55]

Each person is part of an emic system(s), and, as such, has a perceptual grid through which he views the world—a pattern of actions and behaviors commonly understood by him. In other words, "Our own emic pattern of behavior heavily influences or controls our perceptions."[56] While we can always learn to make etic observations (such as the alien viewing people at the gas station), we carry our emic system around with us.

We can easily see how this relates to personalism. We might be tempted to simplify reality by saying that every person interprets and responds to the same events in the same way. For example, when a volcano erupts, there are not some who stand and ponder the nature of fire, and others who begin climbing the mountain to gather evidence as to what led to the eruption, and still others who sprint to safety. *Everyone* flees. Such instances encourage us to unify human responses to events. But at the same time, there are innumerable events that are etically the same but elicit a variety of emic responses based on an individual's emic system. A burning house has the same physical characteristics (etic) to both the pedestrian and the fire fighter, but while the pedestrian's emic system tells him to run *from* the house, the fire fighter's emic system tells him to run *towards* it (provided he has arrived on the scene with his crew and equipment—though heroism may surface if one ignores the suggestions of one's emic system). People are unique, not just in their God-given interests and passions, but also in their experiences and perspective of the world. Pike eschewed reductionism in perception because he saw that it distorted or misperceived reality as it is experienced by *people.*

Interestingly, this emic-etic concept related not just to his understanding of people, but also to his understanding of God's revelation as a *personal* revelation:

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emic unit of language behavior must be studied in reference to its distribution—distribution in reference to verbal behavior, and distribution in reference to nonverbal cultural behavior. Within the study of the distribution of language units in nonverbal contexts is included the consideration of the nonverbal responses of individuals to speech addressed to them. Just as the verbal replies of a speaker help one determine meanings of elements of communication, so the nonverbal ones do likewise. To attempt to analyze or describe language without reference to its function in eliciting responses—verbal and nonverbal—is to ignore one of the crucial kinds of evidence which is essential if the emic structure of language is to be determined, whether one is dealing with the larger units of that structure, such as the sentence, or smaller ones, such as some of the emic units of the sound system" (pp. 39–40). In addition to our identification of units of human behavior and their distribution among other verbal and nonverbal units of behavior, emic units must be considered in terms of their variation. See Sapir, *Selected Writings*, 34.

[55] Of course, observer perspectives come to the fore in Pike's use of particle, wave, and field.

[56] Pike, "Stereoscopic Window," 148. "Each observer will also have some bias in terms of the behavior events most familiar to him—those which are emic in his own activity. These he tends to take as his point of departure, as his norms, so that cultural background may affect an etic report" (Pike, *Language*, 46).

God has chosen to respect and work through cultural structures.… God chose to reveal Himself within a particular culture, through a particular culture, by means of events occurring in that particular culture. He made His message concrete by incarnating it in an emic structure, rather than by a series of lectures delivered by messengers aloof from and not a part of the revealing cultural medium.

The "target" language in this communication leading to the written tradition in the Bible was a pair of languages of specific men—Hebrew followed later by Greek. The problems of imparting a message across an emic barrier lying between heaven's communication system—whatever that may be—and man's verbal system involved the restructuring of the initial message into the target emic system. The message restructured into human speech had to be cast into the molding limits of noun, verb, lexicon, and sentence structures—in short, into a Hebrew-Greek structural grid—while retaining its conceptual integrity and the faithfulness of its intended impact. …

The choice of a particular language, culture, and finally the incarnation as a particular physical event cuts sharply across any attempt to treat the Christian essence as a mere abstract concept, as primarily an ethical code, or even as a system of theology abstracted from everyday living. Christianity stands or falls as a living program, a way of life, concreted in the life of man by the life of God through the life of the concretely living Christ.[57]

God—the perfect translator between emic systems (indeed, the Creator of emic systems!)—revealed himself to culturally entrenched *persons*, in the *person* of Christ.

Altogether, we find personalism in the emic and etic concept on a number of levels. Firstly, it accounts for individually meaningful (and communally meaningful) behavior within a shared system of patterns and experiences. Secondly, it understands that each person (and each smaller community) is biased in some way when approaching and interpreting experience, and so we must account for that bias in our understanding of any event. If no one is a participant in *all* emic systems, then we should be wary of assigning unchecked and exhaustive objectivity to their actions, thoughts, and words. Thirdly, just as the emic and etic concept allows us to account for and strive to bridge the gaps between individual persons and people groups (geographic, cultural, social, and historical), opening the door for the requisite percipience lying at the base of communication, so also God's personal communication to us in history grounds revelation as an emically translatable message from heaven to earth by the person of Jesus Christ.[58]

## 2. *Form-Meaning Composites*

We have already mentioned Pike's focus on form-meaning composites in relation to personalism, so only a few remarks are necessary here. The

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[57] Pike, "Stereoscopic Window," 152–53, 154.

[58] For a discussion of the term "born again" from an emic-etic perspective, see Kenneth L. Pike, "Prescription for Intellectuals," *Eternity* 8 (1957): 11, 44–45.

relationship between form and meaning stretches all the way back to Plato, who posited ideal forms in abstraction from contextually meaningful particulars with variation.[59] The danger of this practice within linguistics is that it creates an imaginary dualism. Form and meaning are never separated. There are no pure forms—such things would be meaningless.[60] Certainly, for the sake of analysis we can temporarily talk about form and meaning *as if* they were separate. And Pike would not disagree here.[61] He would, however, protest that emic units of language can never really be treated this way in the world.

> We try very hard to avoid studying form by itself or meaning by itself. We deal with them both together. We can never discuss either of them unless, lurking somewhere in the background, is the other. Even when a person tries to talk about the isolated forms of words, he knows that they are meaningful—or he knows that somebody

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[59] For a discussion of Platonic reductionism and its relation to a Trinitarian view of language modeled on Pike's thought, see Poythress, *In the Beginning Was the Word*, 326–31. The relationship between form and meaning is also embedded in the relationship between the one and the many, between universals and particulars. The debate on the nature of these relationships has powerful theological implications and is at the foundation of one's view of reality. For Christians (and for linguists following Pike's thought), just as form cannot be separated from meaning, and just as the one cannot be separated from the many, so the persons of the Godhead cannot be separated from one another. God is both one and three—neither feature takes precedence over the other. There is in God perfect harmony between unity and diversity. See Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 122.

In explaining the delay in the study of discourse by American linguists, Pike shows that he was aware of the trail of debris left by Plato's thought. It was Plato, after all, "who predicated philosophy on a 'reality' composed of thought-features abstracted from source-particulars, from things-as-directly-known. Above all, the problem [of a delayed study of discourse] may have arisen from separating the things-in-themselves (or abstract features of things, situations, or events) from the reality of *person*—person as observer, person as reality, person as investing every 'thing-in-itself' with an *observer relation* as its discoverer, its watcher, or its deducer" (Kenneth L. Pike, *Tagmemics, Discourse, and Verbal Art*, Michigan Studies in the Humanities 3 [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981], 3).

[60] Bloomfield notes that "the study of language can be conducted without special assumptions only so long as we pay no attention to the meaning of what is spoken. This phase of language study is known as *phonetics*." Shortly thereafter he asserts, "Since we can recognize the distinctive features of an utterance only when we know the meaning, we cannot identify them on the plane of pure phonetics" (Leonard Bloomfield, *Language* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984], 75, 77). He also adds that we all operate on the fundamental assumption "that each linguistic form has a constant and specific meaning" (p. 145). In practical terms, we never isolate a form from its meaning; nor do we receive a meaning without a form. "The child, for the sake of learning, must learn both meaning and sound. He must learn both the meaning of the word 'dog' and how the word sounds. How will he learn the meaning of a particular word or sentence unless he can identify its distinct sounds that distinguish that word from all the other words and sentences with quite different meanings? The sound has to be there all the time to access meaning. And conversely, the meaning has to be there for the sound to make any difference.… Language … is never pure meaning or pure sound. The sound (or a writing system or a sign language) must identify the meanings. And the meanings make the sounds significant" (Poythress, *In the Beginning Was the Word*, 263–64).

[61] "For convenience, one may on occasion discuss the form and meaning aspects *as if* they were separate, while taking pains to indicate that such an expedient is a distortion which must be corrected at proper intervals and in the relevant places in the discussion" (Pike, *Language*, 63).

knows that they are meaningful—or he is not handling language. Similarly, if a person tries to make a classification of isolated possible meanings, he is likely to end up without helpful results unless somehow these meanings arise from words which are tied into some language system or systems of cultural behavior.[62]

Theoretical dichotomies that dissolve in the context of real human behavior are useless, but the problem runs deeper than practicality.

When we maintain a gap between form and meaning, not only do we distort the nature of language and fail to perceive reality as it is, but we also reduce it or oversimplify it so as to make it essentially *im*personal, for what person could ever value or even acknowledge a meaningless linguistic form? And who could arrive at an understanding of formless meaning? Perhaps this is why Pike was so vigilant in guarding against it. It can be easy to see the world as a kaleidoscope of vapid forms, with nothing more than functional significance in relation to a physical environment. Or, to narrow the plane, it can be easy to treat aspects of language impersonally and reductionistically, such as how Chomsky spoke of grammar theory as "completely formal and non-semantic."[63] The trouble is that reductions of this nature exclude *people* from the process of inquiry, and this inevitably leads to deception.[64] A theorist who denies his own personal involvement in theorizing is a wizard behind the curtain. Reality cannot be adequately analyzed or interpreted using a methodology that ignores the truth that at all times and places it is *people* who are doing the analyzing and interpreting; and because people are limited in their perception, data uncovered by such methodologies are skewed and other important disciplines are left unconsidered. So, Pike is perfectly justified in claiming that our major problem throughout history is "separating the things-in-themselves (or abstract features of things, situations, or events) from the reality of *person*—person as observer, person as reality, person as investing every 'thing-in-itself' with an *observer relation* as its discoverer, its watcher, or its deducer."[65]

A form-meaning composite, then, is more than a linguist's analytical tool; it reflects a commitment to the personal nature of reality as having always and

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[62] Pike, *Linguistic Concepts*, 16–17.

[63] Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (The Hague: Mouton, 1957), 93. According to Pike, Chomsky "insists that grammatical structure be identified 'independently of any semantic consideration,' since he affirms that 'those who regard semantics as providing the basis, in some sense, for grammar' have implicit to this view the claim that 'there are semantic absolutes, identifiable in noises independently of the grammatical structure assigned to them.' … I affirm the necessity of dealing with form and meaning at the same time, to some degree, and deny the necessity of treating semantic elements as absolutes independent of all lexical and grammatical data" (Pike, *Language*, 149).

[64] Notice that even the serpent in the Garden of Eden avoided this conundrum. He knew that language is tied to people—indeed, that all of reality is tied to people. Rather than taking an impersonal approach and questioning Eve on the semantics of God's expression, rather than introduce the possibility of lexical ambiguity, he put forward the lie that God had performed an act of personal deception ("For God knows that when you eat of it …").

[65] Pike, *Tagmemics, Discourse, and Verbal Art*, 3.

at every point forms bound up with meaning, both of which are necessary for personal use and interpretation, that is, human behavior.

## VI. *Summary*

Acknowledging the personalism in the above aspects of Pike's thought helps us to understand his assumptions in the study of language and the rest of human behavior. To conclude Part 1 of this article, we can say that each of the manifestations of personalism we discussed—language as a phase of human behavior, the emic and etic perspectives, and form-meaning composites—leaves room for the personal nature of reality as ultimately mysterious, since it is grounded in the triune person of God. Tying language to all of human behavior only underscores the ridiculousness of noetic exhaustion; recognizing that we cannot be emic participants in every context reflects the bounds of our experiential limitations, and thus of our etic perception of mystery for the vast number of contexts *outside* of our own emic system; and form-meaning composites point to the assumption that "both physical form and mental, meaningful, interactional thought are needed for living as persons."[66]

That Pike's thought is riddled with personalism, then, is clear enough. Yet, this alone does not account for the structure of his thought as triadic.[67] We cannot say that a focus on persons leads to a Trinitarian methodology, for that would run into the problems of natural theology. Bavinck proclaims, "Over against all those who want to base the doctrine of the Trinity on rational grounds, we must undoubtedly maintain that we owe our knowledge of this doctrine solely to God's special revelation. Scripture alone is the final ground for the doctrine of the Trinity."[68] Warfield confirms,

> The doctrine of the Trinity is purely a revealed doctrine. That is to say, it embodies a truth which has never been discovered, and is indiscoverable, by natural reason. With all his searching, man has not been able to find out for himself the deepest things of God. Accordingly, ethnic thought has never attained a Trinitarian conception of God, nor does any ethnic religion present in its representations of the Divine Being any analogy to the doctrine of the Trinity.[69]

So, if Pike's personalism did not lead directly to his Trinitarian approach, then what did? That is the question we will answer in Part 2.

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[66] Kenneth L. Pike, "Person Beyond Logic in Language, Life, and Philosophy," in *The Eighteenth LACUS Forum 1991*, ed. Ruth Brend (Lake Bluff, IL: Linguistic Association of Canada and the United States, 1992), 25.

[67] Here we are thinking particularly of his use of triads, as well as his focus on interlocking hierarchies and observer perspectives, each of which has ties to the perichoresis of the Godhead.

[68] Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics,* 2:329.

[69] B. B. Warfield, *Biblical and Theological Studies*, ed. Samuel G. Craig (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1968), 22.