

A GRAPHIC MODEL OF THE ASPECTS OF CULTURE
FOR APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION

THE REVOLUTIONARY TIMES

We find ourselves in the midst of a time of profound transformation of culture in every part of the world. The pain of confronting youth culture, women's liberation, and modern art in Western civilization is familiar to the Third World as it encounters Western rationality, compound interest, and transistors. This phenomenon extends even to those cultures which we might like to have remain in idyllic innocence as "primitive." This shift is basically a paradigm shift, brought about over the last fifty years as changes in technology, settlement, communications, and transportation have transformed the universe which we experience. The accomplishment of a man walking on the moon is, quantitatively speaking, simply another technological advance. For people across the world to see their environment from afar as a small, cloudy planet suspended in nothingness, however, is a qualitative shift in consciousness. The moon walk is simply a rather dramatic example of the new sense of ourselves as human beings which pervades the latter part of the twentieth century.

In The Meaning of the Twentieth Century--The Great Transition, Kenneth Boulding (1964:28-9) describes the selfconsciousness of the creation of social structures in our time as that of "post-civilization." Others, such as the archaeologist Teilhard de Chardin (1962), have called it a "post-human" era, and the time in which man has "come of age" (Bonhoeffer 1949). I would describe this situation as a paradigm shift of radically extreme dimensions. Every aspect of our lives is so discontinuous from that of even two generations before us that change is almost imperceptible, because it is so complete. In this context, all of the sciences, but particularly the social sciences, are also in transition.

THE SOCIAL TASK

It is anthropology, I would suggest, that is best equipped to deal in a well-informed way with the base for the massive cultural re-creation task which faces our day. As Malinowski points out in The Dynamics of Culture Change, "The field of culture change is one in which it is impossible to keep apart the theoretical and practical issues involved" (1945:6). There needs to be a way in which to pull together the diversity and richness of our understanding of cultural dynamics in such a way that that wisdom can be brought to bear upon local problems. Malinowski notes that

...in colonial policies we have perhaps the nearest approach to an experiment, at times almost a controlled experiment, to be found in social science... (1945:7).

The same could well be said of urban ghetto policy, restructuring in the schools, Peace Corps and other foreign aid projects, even of community renewal in the American suburbs. In all of these instances, it is clear that the ever-increasing rapidity of culture change demands the creation of unprecedented theoretical, strategic, and tactical models. A simple way of systematizing anthropological models of culture is needed to allow those grass-roots people now creating the direction of culture change to do so in an informed way. Of course, colonial and domestic policy will proceed without such a model, but the cost in human life and particularly in cultural gifts to civilization becomes increasingly prohibitive.

An anthropological model for practical usage by laymen as well as by intellectuals must hold every bit of the rigor demanded by any anthropological model. It must be thoroughly elegant, rational, and internally consistent. For the layman, who may have but passing acquaintance with anthropological method, or with reading for that matter, rationality is the key. His comprehension of a model is not on the basis of his acquaintance with past theory, but on the way the model itself organizes reality. Again, in practical operations, the model must be readily internalized. As Boulding

points out in The Image (1965), visual rationality is crucial to comprehending and internalizing complexity.

THE STUDY DESIGN

In the following study I shall present a model of the cultural processes which offers a way of holding together anthropological cultural theory into a single graphic abstract. The cultural process model is designed as an analytical filter which illuminates the dynamics of culture at any level of complexity. Although this is a working model at present, it has undergone extensive grounding and revision over the past two years by the staff of the Ecumenical Institute, which is a research and training body, affiliated with the Chicago Church Federation. In addition to work by the 1200 staff members of the Ecumenical Institute, the model was used as a basis for a four-week intensive work session in July, 1971, involving approximately 1,000 people from across the world. I have participated in planning and carrying out the workshops from which this model was created in my role as a staff member of the Ecumenical Institute. The study has two parts: first, I shall lay out the context of the cultural process model, and then I will present the model itself.

CONTEXT OF THE MODEL

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

In Man and His Works, Melville Herskovits notes,

"One of the earliest postulates of anthropological science was that the ends achieved by all human cultures are basically the same..." (1952:233). This assumption supported the theory of the "psychic unity of mankind" which held that the resemblances between the institutions of different cultures are to be accounted for by the different capacities of human beings. No attempt at drawing cultural comparisons could have proceeded without this assumption of cultural equivalence. Herskovits (1952) points out that this theory was directly behind the work of Spencer, Tylor, and Morgan.

Out of this stance, social theorists of the nineteenth century put heavy emphasis upon the need for a nomothetic model of cultural equivalences or universals. As Auguste Comte put it in his massive System of Positive Polity, "To form...a satisfactory synthesis of all human conceptions is the most urgent of our social wants..." (1875:2). On a basis of sketchy ethnographic evidence and total ignorance of the mechanism of inheritance, the evolutionists of this period advocated the creation of universal cultural laws. The trend toward faith in inevitable progress of mankind was rather marked. As Tylor observed in The Origins of Culture:

On the one hand, the uniformity which so largely pervades civilization may be ascribed, in great measure, to the uniform action of uniform causes: while on the other hand its various grades may be regarded as stages of the development of evolution,

each the outcome of previous history and about to do its proper part in shaping the history of the future...(1871:xi).

It was through this work that was begun the task of delineating the universal aspects of culture. Tylor, for instance, in his Anthropology, foreshadowed later systems when he delineated culture as consisting of the following aspects:

...language; the "arts of life"--the food quest, implements, dwellings, clothing, fire-making, cooking, and what would today be called economics (barter, money, commerce); the "arts of pleasure"--poetry, drama, dance, the graphic and plastic arts; "science"--counting, weighing, and other methods of reasoning about the physical world, and magic; the spirit-world or religion in its various forms; history and mythology; and "society" or social institutions...(1881:73).

Clark Wissler's system, while more usefully arranged, was similar in content (1923:74). Murdock's catalogue approach, in "The Common Denominator of Cultures" in The Science of Man in the World Crisis, (Linton, ed. 1945:123-42) is vastly more inclusive than other schemes. He includes a total of forty-six categories, but offers little rational relationship among them.

The key distinction between the work of nineteenth-century anthropologists and those of the twentieth century is in the elaboration of the role that the aspects of culture play in relationship to each other. The primary figure in the shift from nineteenth to twentieth century thinking is Franz Boas. Whatever else may be said of Boas, it is clear that he trained an entire

generation of American anthropologists in the understanding that the "solid work" had not been done in anthropology, and that theory and method should be held off until serious empirical data-gathering was done (Harris 1967:259). It was through this push toward a more "scientific approach" that the description of cultural aspects began to take reliable form as a useful tool in talking about culture.

I would point to Emile Durkheim's work, The Rules of Sociological Method, as the clearest articulation of the application of scientific reasoning to cultural variables in such a way as to give functional strength to the delineation of cultural universals. Durkheim points out that a social fact is a thing altogether distinct from its individual manifestations; it is an abstraction of behavior (1938:7-8). His definition of a social fact is as follows:

A social fact is every way of acting, fixed or not, capable of exercising on the individual an external constraint; or again, every way of acting which is general throughout a given society, while at the same time existing in its own right independent of its individual manifestations...(1938:13).

A model of culture, then, is not concerned with the particular practices of a particular group of people except insofar as they operate as the common consciousness of what it means to participate in the given culture. It is this commonness or statedness or self-consciousness which distinguishes a social fact from any routine activity of

a culture, rather than the mere repetition of an activity throughout a culture.

Bronislaw Malinowski pulled together the insights of the functionalists and structuralists as to the dynamic interactions of social facts into a design of the imperatives and responses out of which any culture operates. This model assumes that social imperatives call into being social responses, or aspects of culture. The responses take institutional form, but are never altogether synonymous with any given institution. His model in tabular form, is as follows:

<u>Imperatives</u>	<u>Responses</u>
1. The cultural apparatus of implements and consumer's goods must be produced, used, maintained, and replaced by new production.	1. Economics
2. Human behavior, as regards its technical, customary, legal or moral prescription must be codified, regulated in action and sanction.	2. Social Control
3. The human material by which every institution is maintained must be renewed, formed, drilled, and provided with full knowledge of tribal tradition.	3. Education
4. Authority within each institution must be defined, equipped with powers, and endowed with means of forceful expression of its orders.	4. Political Organization

In another section of the same book, Malinowski

describes the imperatives and responses of the religious

and aesthetic elements of culture (1944:92-119). The cultural process model is based on these presuppositions as the most viable way to hold together the demand for rational models of the aspects of culture and the dynamic framework of culture as an integrated system which is assumed in our time.

THE CULTURAL PROCESS MODEL

THE PRACTICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS

The cultural process model here being introduced is a series of interlocking triangles which deal abstractly with the process of creating commonness of social facts which goes on in any culture at any time. Figure 1 is the basic cultural process model, representing level 0, the cultural process as a whole, and level 1, the processes of economic commonality, political commonality, and social commonality. This basic model can be expressed thusly; the cultural process of humanness is a dynamic, which is made up of economic commonality, political commonality, and social commonality. The model is thus out to hold inclusiveness, in that each level down further delineates the contents of the level above it.

The model describes social processes. By this is meant the arenas of activity in which a culture is always about the task of creating commonality. This is the same thing as a social fact. Processes are not reducible to their institutional manifestations. For instance, the

Figure 1

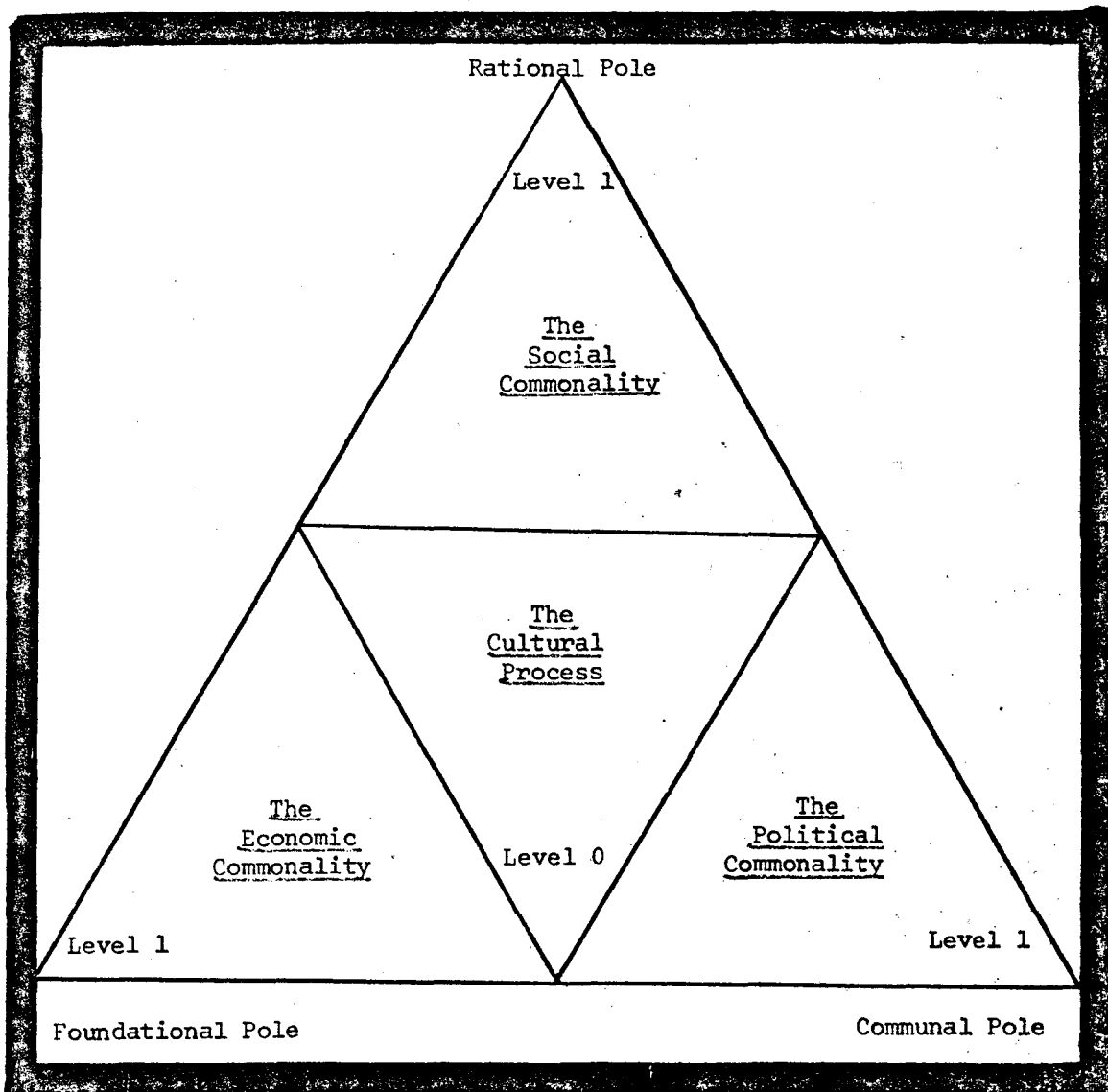
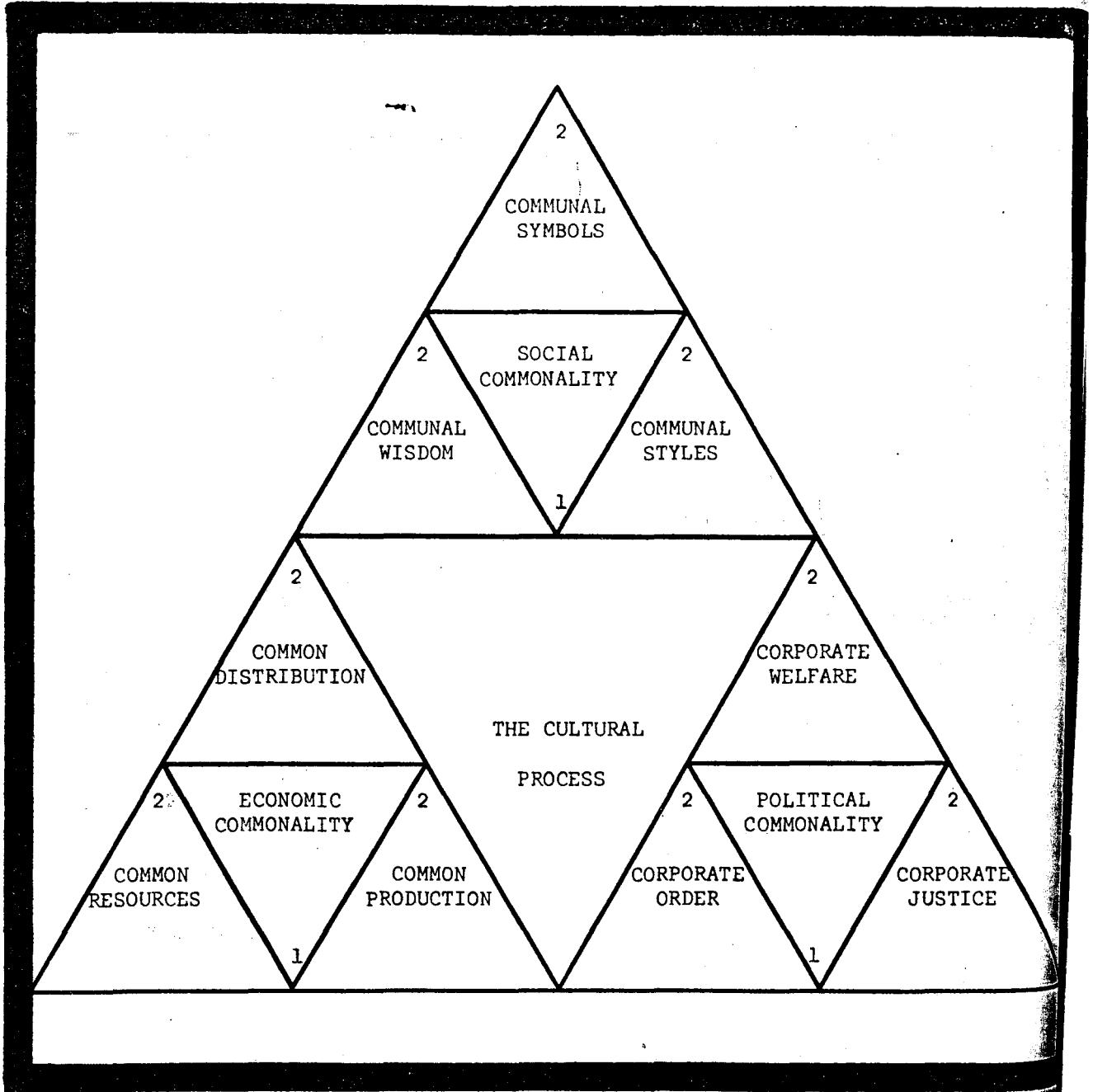


Figure 2



process of education will go on whether there is an educational structure or not. And yet, to deal with the process of education, one must include educational structures.

In addition to the processes, the model is also understood in terms of the dynamic relationships among the processes. No process takes place in a vacuum; rather, it takes place in interaction with all of the other processes. The process of economic commonality, for instance, operates in continual interaction with political and social commonality, and they with it. At every moment each process is creating, judging, and sustaining all of the others, and being created, judged, and sustained by the others.

THE MODEL RATIONALE

The cultural process triangles operate out of a single abstract rationale. The foundational, or lower left, pole of any triangle pertains to the drive for self-preservation. In the context of the whole cultural process, this is the process of economic commonality. Within the economic process, this is common resources; within the political process it is order, and so on. (See figure 2) The foundational pole of any triangle is that without which the other two processes do not go on. Without life sustenance through the economic, for instance, one's polity and sociality has no relevance.

Within economic commonality, there is no possibility of production or distribution but that there are resources with which to begin.

On the lower right-hand pole of any triangle is the communal pole, which pertains to the relationships of power and decision-making in the midst of any social group. Eighteenth century political theorists stressed the need for any social group to counteract people's fundamental tendency to destroy each other by creating some sort of a social contract. The maintaining of this common social contract in any dimension of culture is the communal aspect.

The final dynamic of the cultural process in any triangle is the top pole, the rational dynamic. This is the dynamic which dramatizes the uniquely human in the triangle; it is the spirit which makes participation in the social process of one's culture understood to be worthwhile. Without this process there would be no commonness, because there would be no mechanism for maintaining human consciousness in being.

It is in the dynamics of the foundational, communal, and rational aspects of any triangle that the cultural process model deals with culture as a series of human relationships, rather than a static holding of mere cultural data.

THE ECONOMIC COMMONALITY

The cultural dynamic of humanness is a process, one

Figure 3

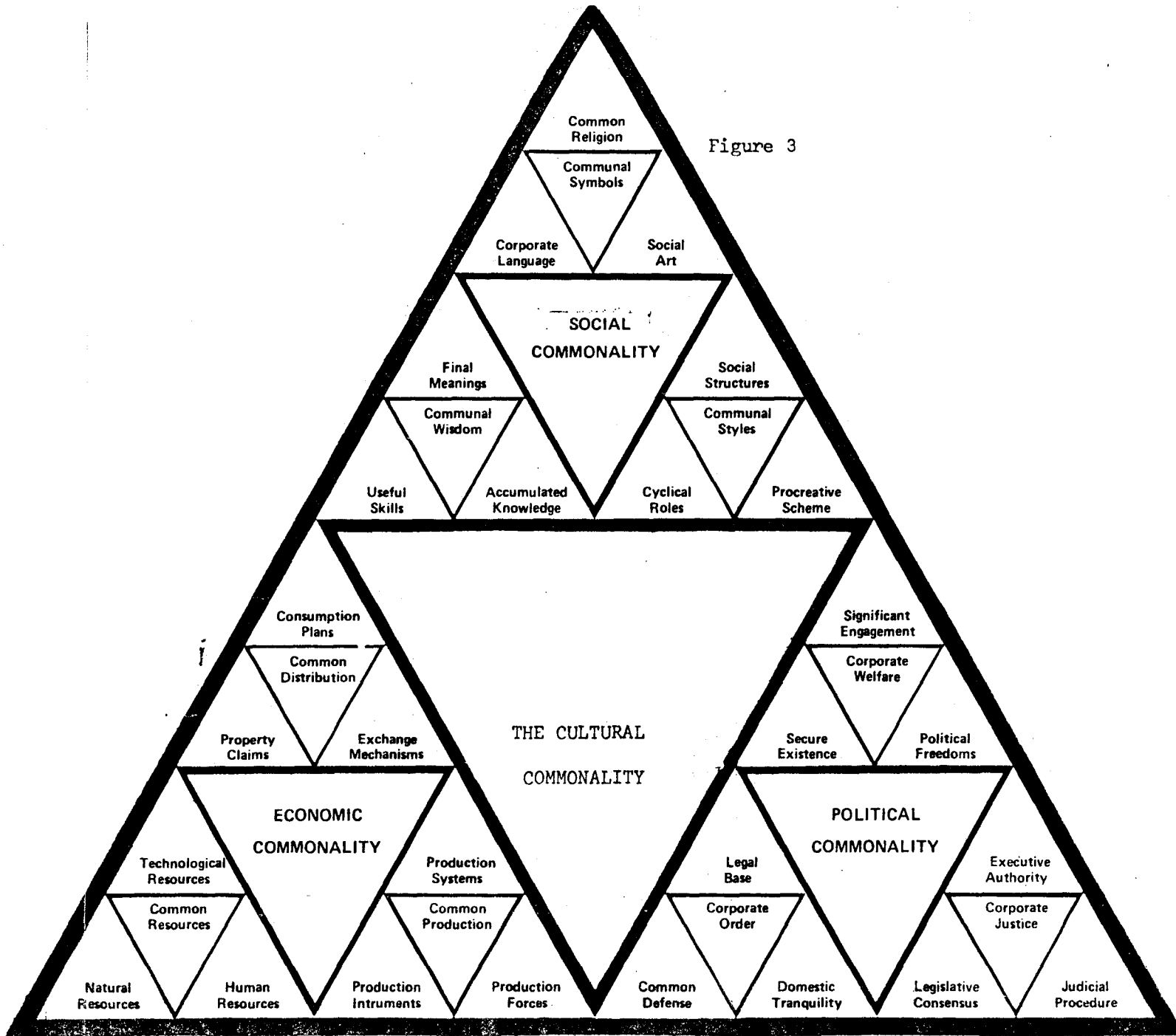
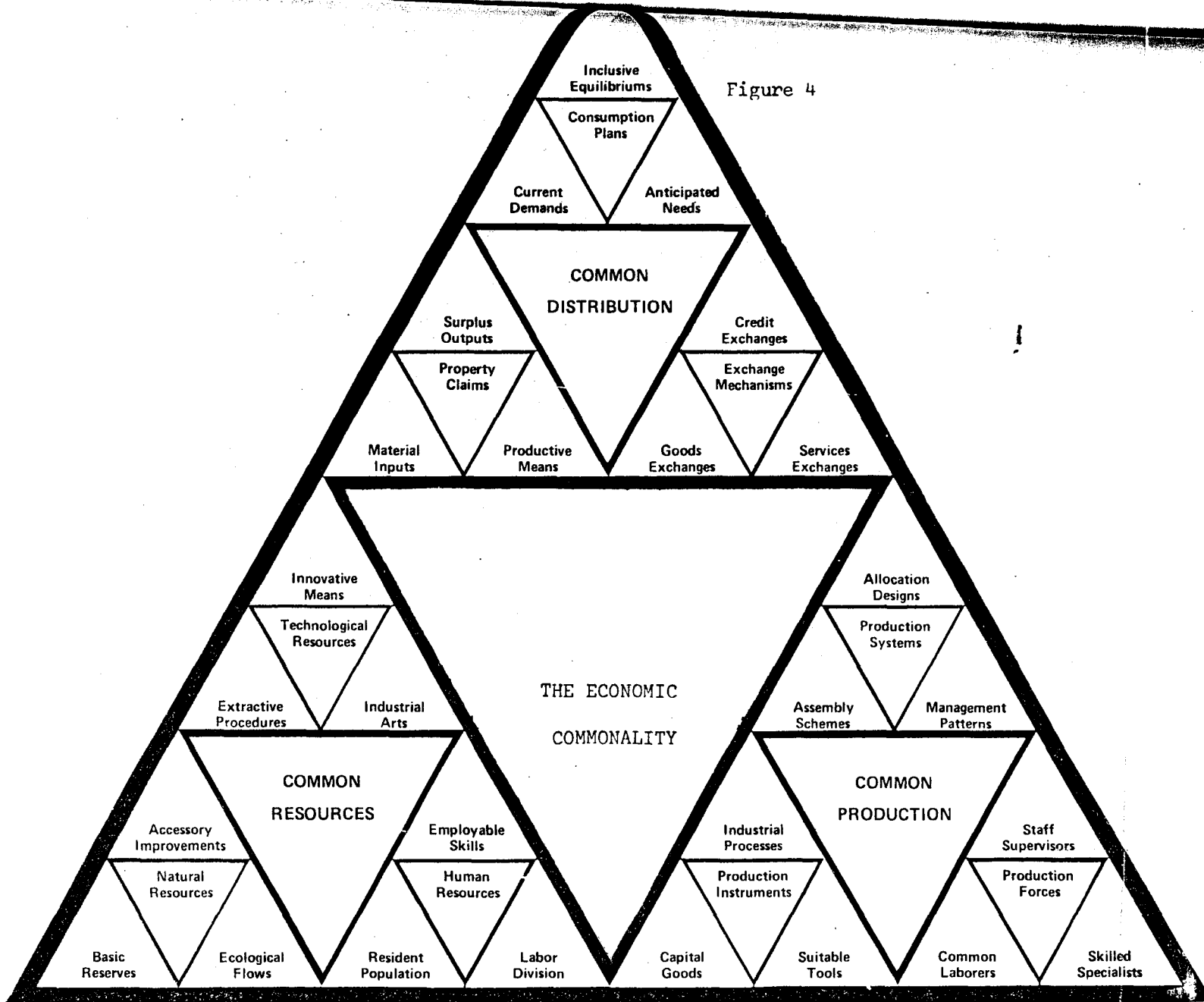


Figure 4



aspect of which is creating economic commonality. This foundational pole was chiefly the articulation of the nineteenth century, although the activity itself has always been present. Adam Smith, Karl Marx, and Thomas R. Malthus are key articulators of the modern theoretics in this arena. Durkheim, in The Division of Labor in Society (1947:203), points to the foundational nature of the economic process when he notes that even if political activity were absent, economic life would continue:

Social solidarity would then be nothing else than the spontaneous accord of individual interests ...The typical social relation would be economic ...resulting from the entirely free initiative of the parties...

Marx stated clearly that the fundamental human relationship was an economic one. In the rise to power of the bourgeoisie, he saw that an economic system which separated the laborer from his labor by making it a commodity, completely altered the social dynamics of the entire culture (1888:15).

Economic commonality is organizing material means in order to sustain human life. Through such a means a culture taps resources of wealth, systematizes creation of goods and services, and regulates mechanisms for dispensing these usable commodities. These three dynamics are named common resources, common production, and common distribution. Without this process of

creating economic commonality, a culture can neither support itself nor guarantee its future existence.

THE POLITICAL COMMONALITY

The cultural dynamic of humanness is a process, one aspect of which is creating political commonality. Despite his clumsy style, Auguste Comte was a signal articulator in this area. As he rather painfully put it in his

Positive Philosophy:

...the relation between the political and the the social condition is simply this:--that there must always be a spontaneous harmony between the whole and the parts of the social system...(1896:II,218).

This communal pole of the cultural processes is the point at which any social group structures its internal and external relationships. It has to do with social ordering, or the process of corporate order; with decision-making and arbitration, or the process of corporate justice; and with guaranteeing the minimal rights or expectations of people within and without the group, held here in the process of corporate welfare. This process was broken open in its modern statement in the eighteenth century in the work of such writers as Hobbes, Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Thomas Jefferson. The agonizing struggle of the French and American revolutions shows through in the clarity and vociferousness of their work. Perhaps the most helpful images these writers produced were in the area of the social contract--the sort of consensus which a social group creates to preserve itself

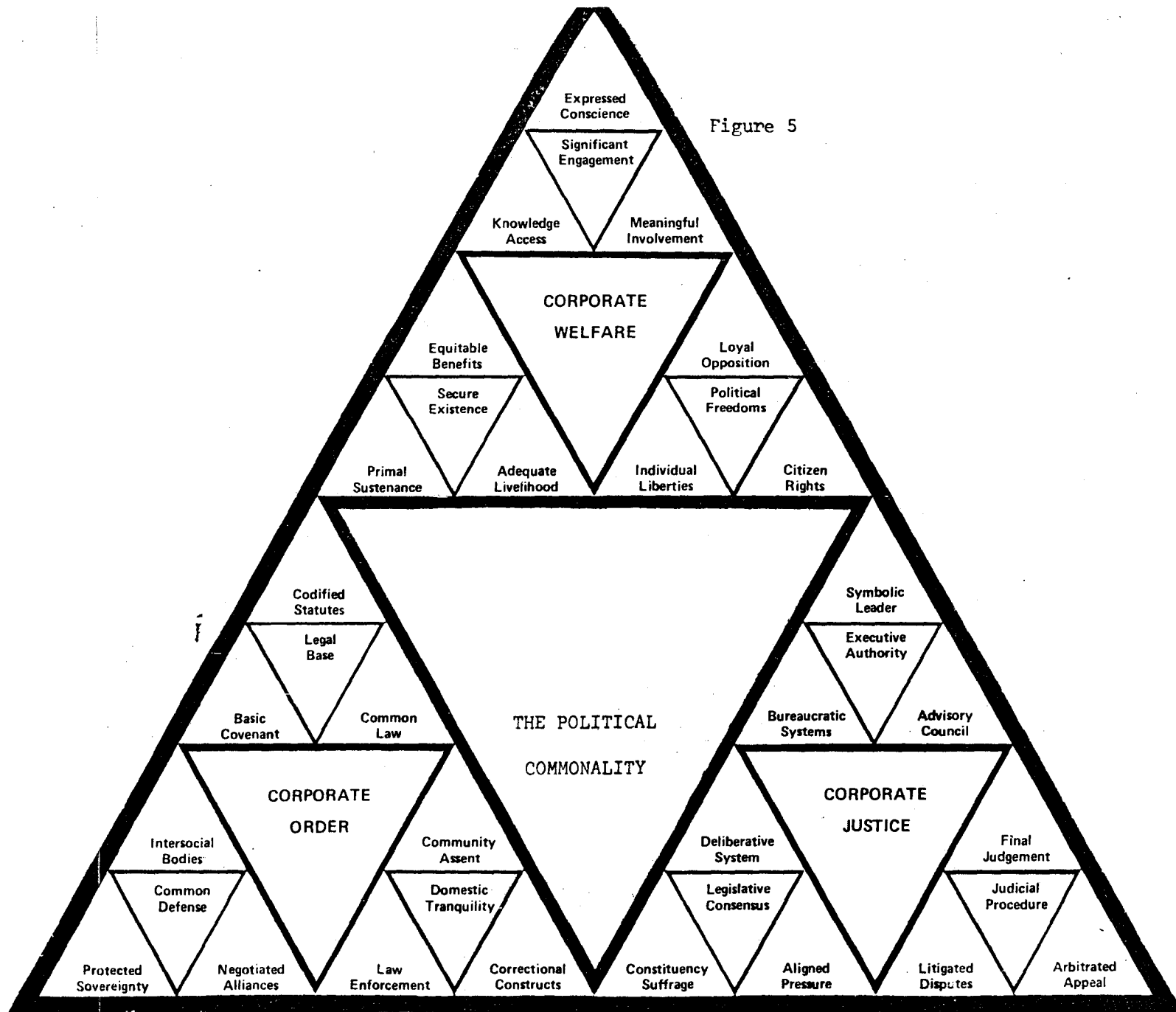
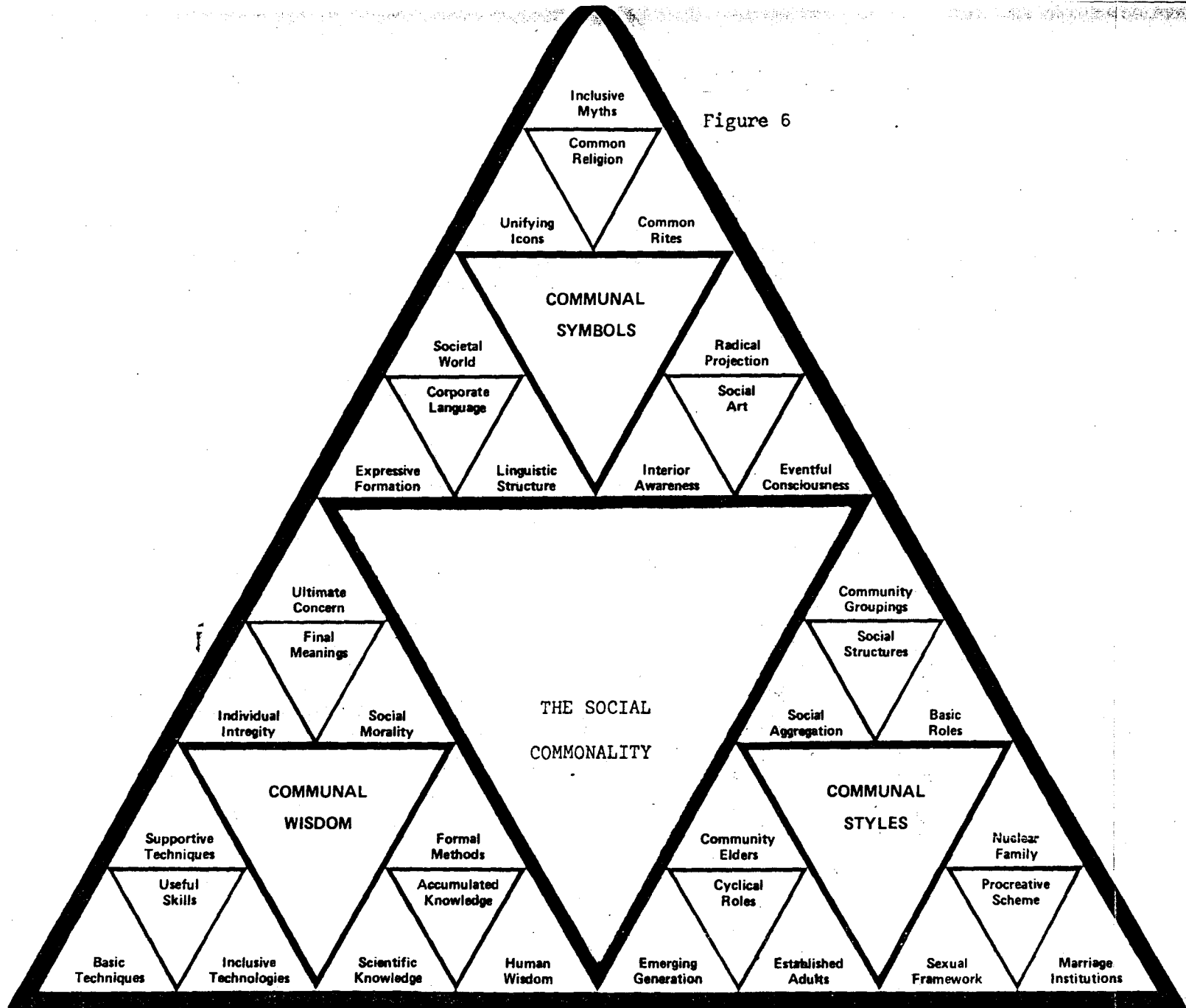


Figure 5

Figure 6



as individuals and the whole, and to wield greater power corporately than they could as the same-sized collection of individuals. Rousseau puts the image very clearly in his A Treatise on the Social Contract:

Now as men cannot create new powers, but only compound and direct those which really exist, they have no other means of preservation, than that of forming, by their union, an accumulation of forces, sufficient to oppose the obstacles to their security, and of putting these in action by a first mover, capable of making them act in concert with each other...(1776:17).

Political commonality is the process of individual and corporate human relationships within the community that enables it to function as a social unit. This requires that the process of political commonality structures the cultural forms, implements the will of the people, and serves the community's well-being. Without the function of political commonality, the culture's bonds, which relate person to person and group to group, in all dimensions of life, would collapse, allowing cultural chaos.

THE SOCIAL COMMONALITY

The cultural dynamic of humanness is a process, one aspect of which is creating social commonality. The social commonality is the rational, or organizing pole of the cultural process. Durkheim's category, the "conscience collective," seems to hold the significance of this pole. Paul Bohannon, in an article entitled "Conscience Collective and Culture," (Wolff 1960:78-9),

points out that the French term conscience translates into English as both "conscience" and "consciousness." For Durkheim, then, internalized sanctions of the culture are amalgamated with awareness of the social milieu. Bohannan goes further to note that Durkheim uses conscience also to point to the shared awareness or consciousness of life of a culture--not only what a culture holds as its images of humanness, but also how it rehearses, quickens, and transmits those images. The social process is this activity of commonly signifying what humanness is through internalized sanctions, the common sense of the social milieu, the images of humanness itself, and the acting out of those images. It is clear in any discussion of this dimension of life today that we find ourselves in the midst of a void in language to describe empirically the activities in culture to which we are pointing. It seems that this is the area in which it is most difficult to distinguish social science from psychology, theology, or just plain hogwash. It is clearer than ever before, however, that the social processes of culture are peculiarly powerful. Hitler, modern advertising, and social movements of all sorts over the past ten years point to the incredible power and objective weight as cultural fact which these activities have. It is perhaps most crucial of all that anthropology organize its profound wisdom in objective description of the universality of the social processes.

Social commonality is the means of giving an external rationale to internal consciousness. Each culture continually interprets the collective knowledge, organizes the collective mores, and symbolizes the common life struggle of its members. These processes, of communal wisdom, communal styles, and communal symbols, shape social commonality. Without social commonality, human society acquires no significance in sustaining and ordering itself, and the entire cultural process is denied the vision necessary for its continued creative response.

CONCLUSION

Even the most naive human being today is aware that there is something unprecedented about our times, even if it comes to him only as color television and a phenomenal degree of defiance on the part of his children and wife. This uniqueness of our time seems to be focussed in the total transformation of our basic paradigms of living, and this is as true in Samoa as it is in Chicago. The foregoing model, while it is yet highly abstract and unfinished, seems to point in the needed direction in that it provides a simple and rational way for common man to objectify the terrifyingly rapid change he finds himself in the midst of, and it holds any particular human activity in relationship to all of the culture's activity. Unless such tools are made available

to the common man across the globe, accompanied by training in mass problem-solving methods for cultural problems, there is serious question whether local man will have the fortitude to continue to struggle with the social and individual crises which our age has brought about, let alone use that new situation as an opportunity to forge out new paradigms of what it is to be post-modern man.

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