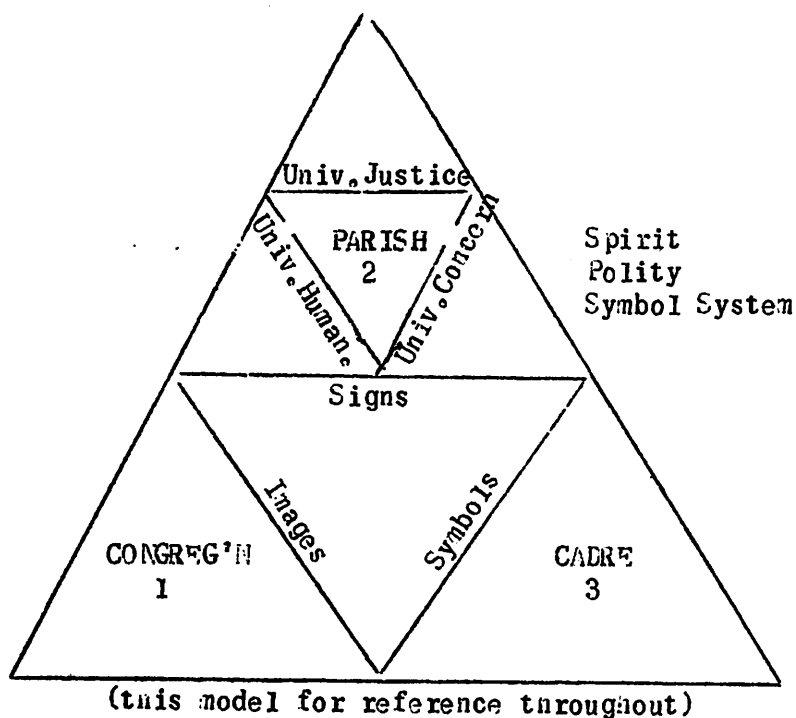


ISSUES OF POLITY

For me, the question of polity is raised with passion on four levels. The most passionate I've tried to conceal because I've been trying to keep people from getting too impatient. That is about the triangle in the local church model, where I've felt, fundamentally, it was polity that was most uncertain. It has given me agony every time I see that center empty. It's as if I don't have a head, or something. Then, in the order of passion, the Order; then, within the spirit movement across the world. In his nice way, our colleague from Japan was pressing us in this area. He raised his questions as if we were a monolithic "something-or-other" which had work to do in Japan. I tell you, I just died at that. NO! The Ecumenical Institute is not like the Evangelical Academies in Germany that have a work going on in Japan or in Hong Kong. There isn't such a thing as the Ecumenical Institute. We are catalyzers that try to

bring into being the spirit movement that already was before we get there. How do you build a polity which itself denies, no matter what the form of it is, what you're out to do? It's extremely painful. You almost don't want to go out of your house any more for fear somebody will ask you this question, for which you have no insight--only passion. The last one is the abstract concept relative to the New Social Vehicle. I put it in the abstract, although it's related to all of these. And I have passion here, though less intense.

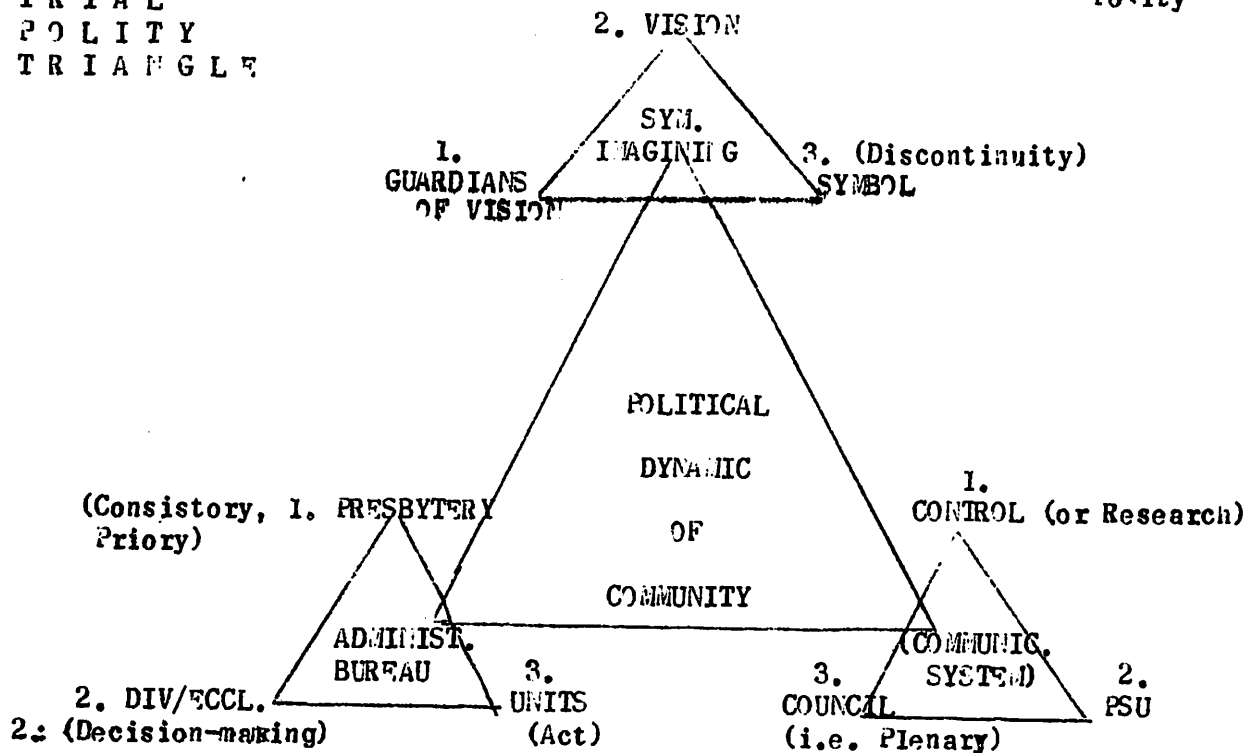
Let me begin with the local church. What goes in the center of the triangle is in a form duplicated here at the corners also. We've often said that one of these days we're going to have to do an entirely different kind of triangle. The way it's going, it would have to stand on its head. It's as if you would need a triangle made up of inner holes which would show a dynamical relationship of the structural aspects. (That word "structural" is not right. There's another term here). Anyway, this hole is made up, I'm rather persuaded, of three things. But a funny thing about this is that it is all polity. Behind any polity there's a people. A people relative to polity is a spirit. I've got deep problems here. I pushed this in collegium when I came back from Singapore. In each hole there was an inner parallel triangle, and in the center hole there were two parallel triangles. If you looked at it carefully there was just a radical inconsistency, because in the center triangle were the words images, signs, and symbols. This is correct in terms of something else, but not what I'm after here, because I don't know what to put there (I think maybe you may come up with it.) On the Parish triangle are the words universal humanness, which has to do with programming; universal concern - care; and universal justice, which has to do with the social structures. I mean these to make manifest what I mean by spirit. I mean, I am the local church--the local church in the dynamic we call the parish--I am the local church.

When being the local church I am in the dynamic of the parish. The spirit I manifest is universal humanness, universal concern, and universal justice. That is what defines the interior being of parish. That's what I mean when you work with political theory. You always have a people.

The second is the symbol system. I pushed at this in collegium, pointing out the ancient polarity between work and worship. You're clear about that in theologizing. In each of the three outer holes, which are not 3 different things, but one, there is a rhythm between worship and action and work. To me this is simply crucial. That's your symbol system. I don't have any easy solution to the question people bring up of where in the local church model people worship. I don't know. This has to do with the symbol system. Is there such a thing as worship here? You notice I've been tempted to move the term "temple" in the very center. Perhaps that's where it belongs. If you do so, you've got the temple, the ecclesia, and the ecclesiola, as a part of the structural construct of the local church. The second dimension is worship, which I've put in the center.

The polity system (I don't know what to call it--network?) is the third thing; so that you have a spirit, a polity system, and the symbol. I've worried a great deal about the business of the spirit, because I'm well aware that if you don't have spirit you don't have a symbol system. You can see my little perplexity there, as to whether that is not a sub-category. The thing which helped me was the concept in political theory--the people. You don't define them by geography...you have no way to define people except in terms of common spirit. Underneath any kind of political structure is a people, defined by the spirit. I don't really know, in one sense, what I'm talking about as I pull that towards polity, because I want to center in here, but I have to be clear that this kind of relationship is there. Sometimes I've drawn it this way to myself--there is polity, and the subjective part of that is spirit--or the community in the sense of spirit; and then the objective side of that is the symbol system. If you take away spirit, you could draw up all of the polities in the whole world, and they wouldn't mean a thing. This is another way of saying that the New Social Vehicle is utterly grounded in the New Religious Mode; and without that New Religious Mode you don't have, and couldn't have, a New Social Vehicle. But my God, what does that mean when you're thinking of the globe, and not some two-bit little group of people like us?

When I say I don't know what I'm doing, I don't--except that polity has got to be in a context that at least involves this. I hate to say this, because I've spent my whole life coming down on the other pole (my whole intentional life)--the context around this is mission. To use that old theological polarity of worship and work--that's the work part. But what I hate to say is, that even by doing the NSV, my colleagues, we're coming down on the pole of Order. Church is a polarity between mission and order, and you're always hammering one pole. (Wouldn't life be great if you could play the xylophone and come down on both poles. But that's not the way life is; it's this note, that then it's that note). The way it looks to me is not that we've got to shift, but that we have. This whole business, including the NSV, is really coming down here hard. But you don't get away from the other poles. But when you're thinking on poles, you bracket one part of it to get here. That in itself spells for me discontinuity. This has to do with dynamical sociology. The polity question is breathing down our necks.



You must remember that this triangle is not our community. If you do that, then you have literally reduced the wisdom of the last 1,000 years away. This is the political dynamic of our community; yet our community is a great deal more than that. My fathers fought in the Revolutionary War to get that clear, no matter what other perversions came. The Ecclesiola is a great deal more than a part of a polity construct. If you're like me, you need to say that over and over again. For we are lost souls if the polity construct becomes the most important aspect of what is meant by community. It'll gobble up part of it, because in this area more than any other, the temptations of what the Stoics call "the sense of honor" operate—we call it "status-craving."

I want to put the decision-making process as this whole thing. The other part on the corner of the Administering Bureaucracy triangle are the units or sectors. By unit I mean the least common denominator in terms of operating groups. Look at the finance office and the three souls in there. They make decisions on our behalf; and if we knew what they were we'd be scared to death. But that's the way it is. With the Presbytery, I'd like to draw about six more triangles and put it as the smallest, just to make clear that that is not running this outfit. But it's a crucial part of the administering bureaucracy.

The biggest theoretical problem for me (not existential or practical) is the right triangle. Communication system is not the word, because we've reduced what communication is. If you expand that word, that would be it. There's a lot more to it than just passing information. In December I said that the PSU had solved for me a crucial problem. The PSU and the units, I think, are related; and I see the Council and Division/Eccl. related. Council may not be the word. Perhaps it ought to be "plenary." Words don't make too much difference. The PSU is nothing without some sort of plenary. And I'm not sure we've found the best way to do a plenary. I think in December we did not run it very well, mostly because of time. There should have been a week of hard work, then back to the Council, with the wisdom of the whole Council. We've done this before, but skipped that step this time.

The third thing I'd call Control, in the broad sense of that word. I've been tempted to put Research here. Research is really not here, but without it this cannot take place.

What the Symbol, Imagining is going to look like, I'm not quite sure, but there must be guardians to see that everyone, as far as possible, is up on as much as possible all the time. I see that kind of function in our midst; and it is crucial. The responsibility is to get out an operating vision, which gives people the inclusive picture out of which they operate. This cannot be a decision-making body. That's very clear. It's as if you take the goals, see that they are responsible, well-organized in the sense of interior relations and exterior relations, and put into a vision---and that vision is kept red-hot.

Whatever this structure look like, there must be guardians of the vision; but not in terms of the vision becoming some kind of doctrine. They are guardians of the comprehensive, of the scope, and the depth. I see that operating in the possibility of choosing ten people in this room, and that whenever they smelled reductionism, they moved in. That was their role. You can enlarge upon that.

And the third (and this you cannot avoid), I don't want to call them people---this construct becomes the Symbol. You never had polity and you never will have without that symbol. It's a complex thing. It is like, the Word of God could never have come into history through a jackass on the south slopes of the Alps braying in 1486. It had to come through a man. Therefore, when you're dealing with human polity (if you're dealing with canine polity, then it's got to involve dogs), its got to involve humans---but not personalities. I don't know how to get that said. You let a personality wallow here, and one wallow there; but the total group has got to see that it doesn't wallow there. That means you're going to have to be awfully forgiving. It means you've got to have symbols more than humans. There's got to be a whole symbol-system that's in this, although it's got to involve human beings because you're dealing with human beings.

We have to "sweat out" our conditioning as a democratic humanbeing. Nobody in this place has a chance to voice their ideas as much as I do. How do you put up with that? And don't you tell me that it's because my ideas are good, because sometimes you know very well they aren't good. How are you going to deal with this? This comes back to Coronation. Mark you, just because George Washington decided to be a President and not a King, he didn't get rid of coronation at all. Certain temptations were avoided, opening up new possibilities and perversions. I could mention a few presidents where this becomes obvious. (This has to be talked about sometime at great length.)

What would this symbol look like? I talk these days about: the Pangyiat. Sometimes I think you ought to deal with seven. I suspect it's going to be a combination between a troika and a twelve, and a Pangyiat or a seven. It wouldn't surprise me if there were that kind of complexity. This is why we've got to develop collegiality, collegiality, collegiality until it rolls out your ears, just to deal with this one problem.