

The Ecumenical Institute: Chicago
 PSU Plenary
 June 20, 1971

0 LEVEL DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL THEORETICS

Now all of us are aware that as a foundation for the summer we are working on two projects. One is the triangles, which we have called doing the social theoretics. Then, the other one is doing the social dynamics, or we sometimes call that dynamical sociology. It is held, I suppose, for most of you in some kind of a figure like that (cloverleaf), in which you see reality in terms of just dynamics, which means you cannot see society because you can't see a dynamic. What you are after, relative to this triangle (1st level), is what it is in itself, that is, in relationship to the total dynamic, and then you're after what its relationship (counter clock-wise) is to this triangle and what its relationship (clock-wise) is here. That is to say by relationship, what is this (economic) without-which this (political) cannot be what it is, if you see what I mean. What is this (economic) without-which this (cultural) cannot be what it is. And you have to stand over here (political). You're dealing with this cloverleaf here. What is this triangle (political) without-which this triangle (cultural) cannot be what it is. You get the inner dynamic all the way around.

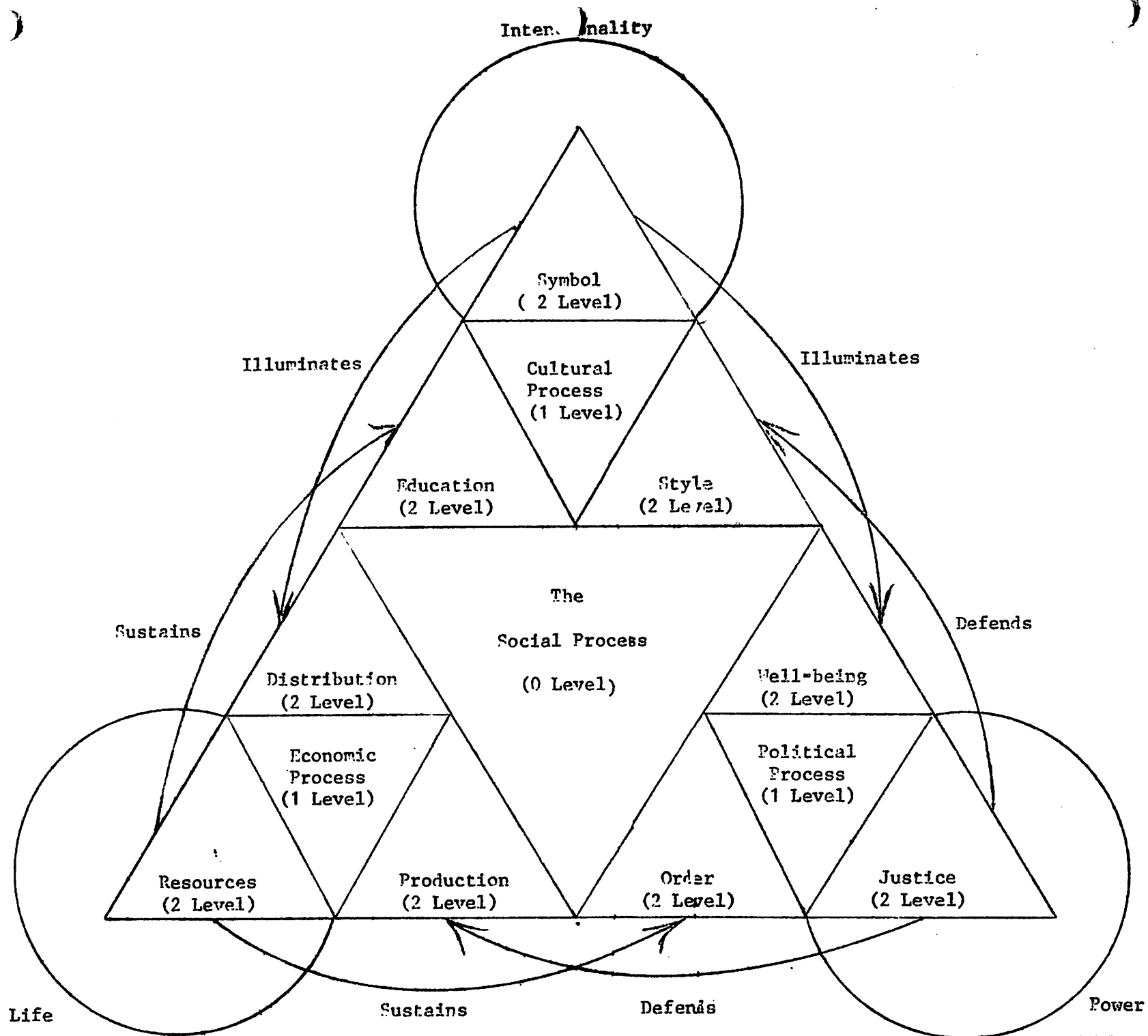
One of the problems that I've wrestled with, even last night it was slowly coming clearer, is that these two procedures of the triangles of the dynamics are not two; they're one. You're coming at the same process perhaps in two different directions. When we were trying to do the final cleaning in the Economic triangles here, we had to pause and do the first job of the dynamics, actually, before we could finally clean this up. Now I suppose that what sort of fools you here is that in this area you know so damn much about these triangles that you've got an over-abundance of information. It's when you attempt to organize them systematically in relationship to one another that you are forced to state the dynamics before that organization comes clear. Now if you take this the other way around, instead of starting with the triangles, you start with that cloverleaf. It some time ago became clear to me that you could not even begin to state this cloverleaf, if you are not doing what we are doing in those triangles. For it was what (2nd level categories) you finally put in this (1st level) triangle relative to this whole (0 level) triangle that began to tell you what this (relational arrow) ought to look like in terms of getting some content into it. So, what I'm trying to say, and we toyed one time with only writing one document in which we would utterly mesh the so-called triangles and the so-called dynamics, and probably when we get a little brighter, we'll be able to do that very simply. Anyway, it looks like, though we might have two documents, that actually those two will be one. Or to put this another way, it may very well be the only document we hand out to people this summer is what we call the triangle document and allow them to use that as seeding or the priming water to prime their pump for them to write these dynamics. Even though we have done work on that.

For your numbering system, this center which is dealing with the social process as a whole is number 0. The Economic Process and the Political Process is number 1, along with the Cultural Process. The next level down is known as the second level. If you're like I am you've got to get this written out or you never can remember it. This is number 2 and these are the Resources and this is the Production of the Economic Process and this is Distribution. All of those

have the number 2. This is Order in the social process. This is Justice in the social process, and this is Well-being in the political process as part of the social process. This has to do with Education, and this has to do with Style, and loosely held, this has to do with Symbol. That's the second level. Now those triangles have been taken down 6 levels. That's four beyond what you have on the board. To get all of those levels on triangles that look like this, it would take 91 sheets of paper to get down on the 6th level, which is a very important bit of data.

Now as we begin to work on those triangles, the first PSU that we had in this final rush to get ready, which was, oh, getting close to two and a half months ago, broke through with the idea on the Cultural that to get a feel after the process in all cases here that you had to see that in each case what you were after was commonness. The social process is constantly attempting to develop commonness in getting done what it's out to do. That is to say, there is commonness relative to what we mean by culture that is being developed, or you don't have a social process; you have something else. There's commonness relative to the economic aspect of our being. There's commonness relative to the political aspect of our being. Now in that commonness, however, you've got three major different dynamics. It is extremely difficult for me to say, finally, what you mean by a dynamic, here; therefore, I've not worried too much about that. I've felt that if we go on and build what we're building here, in that process clarity is going to come. Now, you have to have some clarity, or you couldn't even get started.

One of the things that has been clear to me is that if you do not have a fixed point, you do not have motion. That means that if there isn't something equivalent to the fixed point, you do not have a dynamic. Therefore, when you are dealing down here in terms of the basic order, without-which you do not have society--if you do not have order, if you have not organized raw force, you do not have society. And of course the irony is that you and I sit here, very charitable people, but we're sitting on top of brute force that's been organized. You cannot just think of brute force. You've got to think of structures in order to get clear on your dynamics. That is, you're not talking about anything etherial here. You're talking about po-lice. You are talking about pen-ta-gon. You got that picture? If you don't see that, if you are not working with structures, you can't see the dynamics. This means that these dynamics are concrete, and they are always set. Now what you and I would like is a kind of fluid society, but you don't mean an unset society, unless you've joined the human beings on the other side of the river. You hope you have the kind of a set society that can be, with relative low degree of trauma, unset and reset. It's got to be pfsht (dynamic), but there's always that setness. Now this is where the work on the triangle is constantly informing what we mean by the dynamic. Yet, you are not talking on the level of the po-lice because, in principle, what we are doing here has to fit any kind of social coagulation--a family, a fraternity, a religious order, as well as a state. I said before to some of you that, if you're going to do this in depth, you very likely have to have, and you don't do this in a vacuum again, you have to have the most complex form of social coagulation to get to the bottom. Which means, in this case, not less than a territorial people, or let's call it a nation. Whereas with the family you, (and you can take this down to the 6th level, maybe to the 26th, I don't know, I wouldn't want to be



engaged in it. But the family you) can't get down there really even to the sixth level. Now in our family we have a po-lice force, but it's a little namby pamby. But I mean it's there. And if it isn't there, you haven't got any family, period! So, our court svstem in our family has always been just a little bit too fluid, I suppose. But, by God, we've got one! Some forms of it I never liked very much myself, but we got one! But down to that sixth level, as yet nobody in our house puts on powdered wigs and sits up behind benches. We've thought of it. The weaker the courts got, the more we thought of powdered wigs to help us out. That again shows this see-saw.

In terms of the broad dynamic, the economic process is dealing with sustaining life. The political process is dealing with organizing power. And the cultural process is dealing with rationalizing reason, if you'll allow me to say that. Or you're dealing here with life, and power, and intentionality. Now, the broad dynamic is that life--this economic dynamic relative to this political process and relative to the cultural process--is sustaining. I still don't like that word there although it sustains. It's basic function is to sustain the life of the total community, which means it is the ground without-which you have no need for political order and no possibility for rational development. Now, the basic political dynamic is that the political process defends the cultural process and it defends the economic process.

You let your mind go back in history. I've pointed out to some of you before that at the time of Thomas Aquinas, society was ordered into the family, which was a natural community, and the state, which was both a natural and a complete, or perfect, community in that it was able itself to carry out its own functions. A family was not; therefore, it was not a perfect community. The third was the divine community; in many ways he was there fooling with this cultural dynamic in that the religious community represented all the cultural process. The family was the closest thing to the economic process. At that time the economic order had not emerged as a distinct order in civilization; that came with the full development of bourgeoisie man between the 8th Century and the 16th Century, perhaps. At that time your basic tension was between the political and the cultural dimensions, and you can see why. Then, when this economic dynamic emerged, ohhohohoh! The economic castrated the political dynamic and destroyed the cultural. That's the situation you're in today. Now our task is to recover the cultural dynamic, but since the economic is the only huge manifestation of the devil, you employ the political to control the economic in order to defend the cultural, which is the political function. You've got something of that dynamic there.

Now, in connection with that, and I think in order to get ahold of the cultural dynamic, you've got to get it tied into history somewhat in this fashion. Now, something has happened to all three of these in our day. First of all, the economic dynamic has come into being, and not only come into being but has become a fantastic giant, and I'm not depreciating this. I tell you, our time has brought this dynamic, that was always there, out in the open and put it on its own feet as an important dynamic. That alone has made it possible for a group os people to come along and say, "All the goods belong to all the men." If the economic dynamic hadn't become apparent,

you could no more have said this than you could have flown to the moon. Therefore, the economic dynamic, demonic as it's become in relationship to the other dynamics, has been the gift of our times, which, I suppose, need not to be said.

What has happened in the political, and therefore as far as I'm concerned has been a great gift, is that the economic aspect of society crushed the hell out of the political dynamic, and made secular men of us all. You understand that this is what did that? I mean, by secular, both something positive and something negative in this sentence. Usually I mean something positive. I mean both now. By destroying the political, the economic forced, to blast itself open this way (up) and blast itself open that way (down). I'm trying to say to you again, because of this (the destruction of the political by the economic) which has defined our times, you and I are fooling in the cultural dimension as not before.

Now, I want to come back to the Middle Ages. In the Middle Ages the church ruled the cultural dynamic, or to put it another way, the church was that dynamic. Now, if you're still a little sick liberal, especially a Protestant liberal and are still beating this world view (Aquinas) over the head, you don't know what you're talking about. I mean, in that construct the church was all of the cultural dynamic in fantastic glory. What we've got here is your post-modern equivalent of what this was in the Middle Ages. The church is not a natural for them. It is a super-natural order. The family is a natural; the state is a natural and perfect; the church is discontinuity, radical discontinuity, a divine order. Now to put that in phenomenological language of our time, what you're saying is that you finally, in our day, are defining man in terms of the cultural. Now when the economic rules, it defines man in terms of the economic dynamic. Or when the political rules, at the time of Hobbs, and Locke and Rousseau when it had beaten the cultural (the economic was a child then, and later castrated and debilitated the political) these men defined man as political man.

Something has happened here that is quite different here. You've exploded. When you say man is consciousness of consciousness what you're doing is locating it in the cultural. But we have exploded the cultural in a way that I think has never been in history before, and in such a fashion that it includes the economic and political dynamics, too. If you do not have the cultural dynamic then you do not have the economic and political dynamics. It's a kind of a wholeness that was never grasped, it seems to me, in history before, relative to what the church was representing and doing in that time. Now, whether or not you buy what I am saying now is, in a way, beside the point. But when you go into this summer, and I'm talking to teachers of teachers, you have got, for yourself, to get what's going on here that produced this kind of a vision of this dynamic. You've got to get that clear to yourself and get it tied into history.

Now, I would like to say (and one of these days, the Lord willing, I'm going to know what I wish now I knew) I wish I knew a great deal more about the history of China. I know enough to sketch it, but I don't know it deeply enough. I would be willing to say you could rewrite it in terms of the dynamic that I've been talking about now relative to history in which I used the West

as an illustration. Bear that in mind. I might say as an aside, that I'm suspicious of people who wander too quickly into other cultures before they've gotten ahold of the bottom of their own. They are just like shooting ducks when this happens. Or to put it as I put it the other day, when somebody goes out to build a new social vehicle by trying to get the wisdom out of China, India, Africa, Latin America, and get it into the stew, you're not building a new social vehicle, you're trying to patch up the damn one you've already got. The only way you build a new social vehicle is to take where you stand--if it's in Japan you take that--and you knock the bottom out of that, and then down there you're able to begin to carry on a dialogue that is actually beyond your little cultural, petty cultural, formulation of the social dimension of humanness. I think that that kind of thing has got to be shoved hard this summer.

I forgot another point here, but I think it's important. Something else, and this has just come to my attention recently. Servan-Schreiber was the first one who got that through my skull, but now I've seen it in several other books, that up to this moment in history, because the economic dimension was not an independently acknowledged order of its own, man always lived in the economic aspect of his being in terms of scarcity. Now, because of the coming of age of the economic, we are and are going to continue to live in affluency--in abundance. Now, you're not raising the questions about people starving in India and not starving here, yet. That is no longer necessary. Now, you can't read the final future. It may very well be that once again something is going to happen, but it won't be because the economic wasn't there. The economic and the edge of it, which is technology, has made this possible. There's a radical change happening here.

I just was aware now of what I was really doing, but I didn't know it. I was doing proposals. When you begin to do proposals you have got to get to the broad historical dynamic such as I was fooling with here before you're genuinely going to be able, down on the 3rd or 4th or 5th level, to get an authentic proposal. And whether you agree with me or not that this is what's happening, the key thing, or one of the two key things then, is that you've got to get clear on it yourself relative to what's happening here, and we've been talking about this, all of us, for some time now. It's hard for us to believe that the city state or nations was not there from the beginning of Babylon or Egypt or back further even. That is a relatively recent and Western invention. It's like we say about the missionaries--that the theology that they took from the shores of the West to the East was dead and gone before their ships ever sailed. It's by the time that nationalism was forced on the rest of the world, it had already started to go out of history. What I'm trying to say is that there is a radical shift already way down the line. The very fact that the Santa Barbara people have said that the United Nations is useless is indication of what I am saying now that all of this is gone and a brand new form is coming up. I say we've talked about this for some time. I happen to believe that the new form that is coming to be is cities. Boy, I was excited when the mayor of New York suggested that New York City secede from New York State, which was great. I've become a Southern gentleman all over again. Oh, that was tremendous. And, you don't care whether it happens, the important thing is that he got that idea into history, and that, in my

opinion, ought to happen tomorrow in terms of Chicago. Or, I could think of what I would consider a better organization after such a seceding or secession took place. Something is happening here which is going to throw this on a far more global level. No matter if United States of America as some kind of an entity lasts for another 500 years, it's already gone. And to put it over dramatically, when the mayor of New York City made his suggestion, he was saying, though he didn't know it, that the United States of America is gone. I feel like we ought to have three minutes of silence.

I sort of touched on this, when I say that a brand new religion is coming into being, but damn it, I don't mean religion in the sense of the Gospel. My God, the clarity here is the Gospel has broken loose in history like no other time since the beginning of the church, I would want to say, and is seen in all of these relationships. It's the container by which men are able to experience reality as the awareness of what we call the center of being. That's your new religion. And it's come into being--however it may frighten an old man like me! However, it does something to the young ones. It always looks like there's an old one looking out on the young ones. It always looks like that's what's going on--I wouldn't mind giving three or four or five years to a nice thing like that. How would you describe that posture? That's the way it looks to me. I'm sure it doesn't if you're a young one.

Anyway, boy, oh, boy, it's getting more and more clear to me, save you've utterly gotten on top of this, the dynamics of the triangles, you're going to be useless in terms of the proposals. Maybe if you got an idea, somebody who is on top of that could use it, but you couldn't use it.

J.W.M.

Question: It might help if you anchored that a bit more in history.

JWM: Well, you are all aware that that triangular structure was born of Aristotle, I'm pretty sure. He saw really two basic propensities and then what John Wesley called secondary drives or artificial drives. Aristotle saw the basic drive was self-preservation. And that's what you've got behind the economic dynamic. His second drive was rationality, but he saw that when you brought the drive of rationality into a relationship with the drive of self-preservation, there was a secondary drive toward order or the social. We are a little different than that. We see sociality as much a part of humanness as the drive to sustain your life. A little something different, but you can see where that came from. Obviously this is the way in which Aristotle defined man. Existence was really for the sake of rational existence, though this was a primary drive. Now the church, thinking of Western Civilization, but the church as a part of Western Civilization, developed the cultural part, oh, in a fantastically skilled and complex sense. I think that this was really worked out in the 17th and 18th Centuries. It started in the 16th Century. It was after the Holy Roman Empire was going to pieces, and then Europe began to break down into different entities that they had to take the political seriously. And of all the people that I think was just the hard-headedest thinker in this area was Hobbs. You remember, he said that a man is predisposed to dill every other man in the light of preserving himself. What he was trying to say is that you can't say that's good or bad, but that's just the way it is. Then, man comes

to see that if he will surrender so much of that power of raw force, if the other party would surrender so much of that power at the same time, that it would be so much easier to preserve yourself, so to speak. He called this a contract, and that's how the state began. So that the state, or the community, is built on raw force that is contracted about relative to the entities that make up that society, whether they be other groups or other individuals. And this is the basis of contract. This, of course, came to the fore and then began to clash with the cultural, especially with saying that man was fundamentally defined in terms of only being able to exist if sociality existed. With the rise of the economic dynamic, which was on the rise at the same time this was going on, the political was finally choked and the cultural dynamic wiped out. And look what's happened--this separation of state and religion. Why it's the function of the political to defend the cultural. But you see the cultural has gone to pot. They thought of it as little two bit denominations with some kind of a little sectarian outlook. Why, without the defense of the cultural, and mark you, in this was your whole educational structure, your whole family style, not just some little petty thing--that's the way it looked. When the cultural didn't have the political defense, why it was a sitting duck for the sleeping giant that was coming awake. The economic destroyed your educational system. It destroyed your family system. It destroyed your symbolic system. I'm not trying to beat the economic over the head, I'm just trying to understand it. This is why Servan-Schreiber, I think, is right when he says that the cultural is really going to grow up from a waddling little baby where it can take its role as a part of the dynamic that defends you, but mind you the political has got to move. It has got to fulfill its basic function and dynamic.

Question: What's the third one? Sustain, defend and _____?

JWM: I had a hard time with that. Illuminate! You see the organization here in the economic, and this is organization of natural resources of productive power and the distribution of usable goods. That flows out of the cultural. The symbol part of the cultural dimension is the conscious-unconscious world view, or weltbilt I like better, of the whole people--the conscious-unconscious. It's that which informs, but it's this flowing through communal wisdom that keeps informing the economic. It's the customs and the mores, here that keeps the political informed and enlightened. The cultural illuminates, where the political defends, and you know those are awful hazy words, and the economic sustains, but I'm not pleased with this at all. The political is that-without-which the economic cannot function. You'd simply have chaos. No matter how poorly it does, the political is the power that finally demands that some equity be in the distribution of goods. No matter how you might criticize the given equity, it's the power that sees that that's done.