

The Ecumenical Institute: Chicago
Summer 1971
The Cultural Triangles

First of all let's try to identify culture a bit. Culture is that which sets man off from the animal. The animal is related to his environment, which is fundamentally what the economic process is concerned with. And then the animal is an aggregate, he exists not alone. What sets man off from the animal is what we commonly call culture. The earlier anthropologists divided themselves into physical anthropologists (they were concerned with things like race and so on) and cultural anthropologists. Now, anthropology cannot be classified in that simple way anymore. But this category has remained. It is pretty obvious that it is used in many different ways and that is why we need to talk about it. Man is in time, that is to say he deals with past and future. But so does the animal; he is located in time. He tells time differently, but the hibernation of the bear is an illustration of what you mean. But man is in space and, by the way, this helps you get ahold of what internal space is and what internal time is. Space is the relationship to the environment. And then, man is in society, that is he cannot exist by himself. He cannot even get born if there is not a coming together of people, to say nothing of the interiorization. This has to do with his relations and his organization. Culture is that which enables him to self-consciously relate to these factors.

What we have tried to do is to see this kind of relating as what we mean in the broad by this triangle of culture. Obviously, in terms of that kind of a statement, culture is that without which you do not have the economic or the political. This dynamic we call culture is that which brings humanness to the economic realm and the political realm as over against that in which the animal participates. In one sense, this top triangle we call culture is the whole triangle. And this is where you have had some kind of debates. But in pulling that out and looking at relationships it became clear to me in working with resources that you don't have a resource when you have gold or coal in the ground. Only when you bring human consciousness to it or what I'd like to call organization to it, do you have a resource. And it is the cultural dimension that determines that organization. This is what I mean when I say that culture is the illuminating factor to both of these poles.

Now this dynamic of culture we have divided into what I want to call the Weltbilt: and this is the universe that anybody who lives in these three dynamics has or it's the universe that creates the dynamic. So that this triangle is really the whole triangle for in the broad you only get the world view or the universe in all three of these; it's focused up here. So that the symbol is this whole triangle and if the cultural triangle is the whole social process, then symbol is this whole process. Or you only have culture in material expression, and if you call the economic dynamic a material expression, it is an expression of the cultural. And the same is true in the political in the sense of institution being a material expression at the moment. Now obviously in terms of proposal writing you've got something extremely crucial here. But let's say that on this top triangle is the foundation, or the very limit - the foundational expression, of the world view.

Education is the dynamic of transmitting that world view fundamentally. You have to say stronger words. It is the dynamic of, in the rich sense of this, rationalizing the world view and transmitting the world view. Maybe I'd better say this. Any culture is both at the same time static and dynamic. The illustration that a man who I was reading used was: when you see an old movie and you notice the strange clothes, well, that not only happens at this moment, that has happened ever since there was culture. You know back in the cave-man days when he showed an old movie,

he grinned exactly like you and I grin. And the most important changes in culture are not the obvious ones perhaps, they are the subtle ones. But at the same time it's static. And the effort of culture is to be static. That is to say that being in society is to maintain that society; it is to maintain that society. That's where you're static element is. Maintain has two meanings there - to keep it going now and to be sure it continues in the future. There is no such thing as a culture that does not have both of those elements of maintaining in it. Sometimes we think we have children because at night from time to time we have intercourse. Oh no, no, how stupid! You have children in order that you maintain the culture. If you remember that most of what you have up here is on the unconscious level, that is, you do not pull it to consciousness - but it's there that you have children for the sake of maintaining the culture.

Maybe this is the point to say that culture is the cement of the whole thing, its the glue. You guard culture with your life, the economic with your left arm and the political with your right. So here fundamentally you have the transmission of the culture, of the world view. A way of getting at it, if I can use old images, is to say that the dynamic of culture is to the dynamic of the political and the dynamic of the economic like the soul is to the body. If you think in terms of natural environment, you understand that what we mean by culture has been called man's second environment which seems to me to be rather crucial. It's learned but you learn it before you have any awareness of any learning process. You wake up, so to speak and the job has been done on you. This is why culture points to the unavoidability of brainwashing. So that you never really criticize brainwashing, you criticize the end for which brainwashing is done, because brainwashing is just a part of what it means to be a human being. And by the time we come to any consciousness - well, lets say that consciousness is impossible unless an unchangeable brainwashing job has been done on you. You can alter it but you can never get over it and that's before you are aware of anything that's going on. Richard Niebuhr in Christ and Culture pulling from many sources, sums up culture as first of all, social - there isn't such a thing as culture except in society, and secondly, it is achievement - when you become aware in depth, you understand that man created this. This is what we mean when we say that man invented man. Or, when you look at what we mean by culture, man invents the universe. There is no such thing as a universe save through (this is Ortega, you well know) man's inventions. Or what you would mean when you say that man invents God. One of these days we are going to see with great clarity what the anthropologist knows, that in this top triangle and in the top triangle of that which is religion, that the symbolic is the crucial foundation of all culture. It cannot be separated from language and it cannot be separated from the practical expression of it in art. Sometimes I think that it's art that mediates between the top pole of religion and the rest of this and therefore, on down. Right now in our society when its popular to say you have no religion, the tragedy is that you're closing your eyes to the most crucial reality relative to any social vehicle because its the most crucial point of culture. Now to read what that religion or faith is in a culture is extremely difficult. We've hidden for a long time the necessity for really spelling out for ourselves what the operating religion is for the man on the street. Maybe we're going to have to do that this summer and do it in some kind of real depth.

Now, I'm really ready to talk about this dynamic up here. You have before you four sheets of paper. One of them is the whole triangle. This is the grand master that covers the economic, political and so on down to the third level. And then you have what we call the masters, that's the ones that cover the whole

thing down to the third level. That's what you ought to have before you to take a quick glance at and particularly on the cultural. Now, the next thing is the three sheets that are the sub-masters, the one that deals with education and the one that deals with style and the one that deals with symbol. Get them out in front of you and a copy of the master of the whole cultural. The numbers up at the top show you the levels. The levels of those sub-masters are level 2, 3, 4, and 5. What you do not have before you is level 6 and if you need to refer to that at any time, that would be on the basic charts. In the process are the same thing on triangles, they are simplified into the two basic categories. I think that you ought to be recollected again to get on top of this, of the sentences. There are 13 that read like sentences in terms of keeping hold of the dynamics.

Now lets look at culture. The culture dynamic. The triangle I'm drawing goes from level one through four. I want to start here with communal symbols, language, art and sacred or religious symbols are dealt with here. The beginning of any complex symbol system has to do with language. This is what I meant the other day when I said that all art was based on the first uh-uh-uh, and whether or not that be true (some people believe that the beginning of art was this - pounded on table), I would want to include that in language which I want to come back to in a moment. You will notice that in the language you're dealing with expressing - you're dealing with what's been called there the expressive formation. And (look at the final chart on language which takes you down to the 6th level) now I think that to go over this pretty fast, I do not see any way in which I would go about building a proposal upon this - now I don't mean there can't be, but I don't see any way whatsoever. The first one is the expressive formation. This has to do with enunciated perception and what that means is that you say words that come to you from sounds from outside, i.e., in English you got the word buzz either by listening to a circular saw or a bumble bee as it flew by. Here is the very beginning of forming language. And then linguistic analogy has to do with sounds, yet, but of one sound creating a similar kind of sound, but not the same sound within your head, and through that process in the third category on the sixth level you finally create a sign and that means, in one way, a word. This is the process in which words come into being as signs that point to things. Finally, you come up with the word breeze that becomes a sign which you might say could be the beginning of consciousness and the beginning of sociality or the beginning of society itself.

Then the second level is image articulation and the re-occurring. I see this as the process in Golding's book on the primitives - The Inheritors - in which images are formed in the mind as responses by the use of this first process that gave you your initial signs by which you can identify and hold onto situations. For example, when I was a little boy, X happened, the image I have of that and the ability to articulate it with sounds which have become words means that here I am an old man and I'm still able to hold onto that. Or it's the way you build up experience. And then second over there, accompanying affections, is the way you begin to recognize your emotional dimensions of life by their relations identifying them in relation to identifying or articulating or imaging concrete situations. If you would divorce your emotional structure from the image of the situation, you wouldn't have any emotional structure. Do you see that? It's my image of a certain man that makes me fear that man and I recognize this emotion in relationship to that image. And it's out of this that you begin to build the complex montages or the montages that hold together the array of images and begin to build your interior universe. As a matter of fact, this who's section is on the process through which that universe inside of you comes to be.

And then the third category is the situation interpretation. And this is where you begin to systematically and rationally classify (reflective classification) what has happened here above so that the rationality or that which holds the universe together comes into being which means then the second is that you have enumerated precedents - this is actually building the universe. Reflective classification is beginning to classify these montages and enumerated precedents is to begin to bring them together into a universe out of which comes your meaningful conclusions or your capacity really to make judgements. Now I still don't see how this is going to be turned into proposals. But if you pressed me and gave me some time- I could spell out the fact that the ghetto child who was denied participation in these stages relative to other children's participation and who has been thoroughly denied (I feel that I'm in this class too) any understanding of this process. Now I'm not really denying because as you get me talking about this in my terms, I can make some speeches on it, but I don't mean that I should. We have got to be loyal to the people who run this discipline and as far as I'm able to tell, that's what we have been.

The second part, and we can hurry now, is the linguistic structure and this is society's reflection upon its own process really. And it has to do with grammatical structure in which you can almost see sounds inventory and accepted vocabulary and the practical grammar. It's this then that you can see is transmitted.

And then the abstract relations, and this is really logic - induction and deduction and the analogical method.

And then the actual communication process. You start out with a situation, you perceive, observe an array of facts out of which you conceive an idea and then go through the process of vocal articulation of that. And here is what it means for us to converse, actual communication or conversation.

Now the last, the societal world, is really an attempt to grasp the intellectual understanding of the world view of the community. Even to make that kind of statement is bad because there isn't such a thing as a world view that isn't articulated. If there isn't language, there is no world view. In one sense your language is the world view, no matter what comes into it. Basic typifications. That's fairly easy, it's a matter of naming objects, finally. Actually it's coming to common agreement. Some say water and some, water, only we come to agreement that we know what we're talking about when we say water or, water. The second one is designated actions. I've been struggling with some of my young colleagues who know more about this by far than I do. My concern is to get clear that in language through verbal signs you are pointing to objects and then you are pointing to relationships to those objects and you have to identify them and this, as far as I am concerned, is what that second one means-designated actions. And then the third is recognized obligations. Now those of you who know something about linguistics know you've got somewhat of a problem when you get that kind of a category in there. But no matter how you talk about them, obligations occur in the process of designating objects and relationships to objects and these can be classified also. Now if you remember carefully, that the community symbol system, although it's divided up into three systems, is inter-related dynamics that save you have what I'm going to come to up here and what I'm going to come to over here, this actually does not come to be. You can't finally separate them and that's helpful at least to me to consciously remind myself.

And the next one, the interpreting schemes is to say that when you and I learn, you and I don't really start back with the chalk and the action, what is communicated to us is huge schemes, highly complex schemes a part of which process is learning that this is chalk. Do you see that? You learn that there is not such a thing as chalk without a blackboard and you never learned that, it just happened to you sort of, and if you don't have an eraser, your hand gets all yellow and so on.

And the last one is the reflective conduct. The exciting thing about that for me is that language - very frequently the people who operate in this field talk as if language is some objective thing that doesn't have anything to do with society. The only reason language was invented was to glue this thing together. The function of language was for conduct or was ethical action, social action in the broad sense. If Mao were here he would agree with that statement in terms of his statement about knowledge, and perhaps that's enough on that.

I can't escape from the practical aspects of this in terms of analyzing the problems of our times - Oh I'm sure it crucial to us - but I'm so stupid that I don't see it. If this lecture on language I gave had been a good one, it would have been the greatest on you'd ever hear on language, I want you to be clear on that. Now our experts in linguistics, like in other disciplines, go off into what I always want to call statistical linguistics, which I'm sure somebody has to do but that's not what you're out do do. You're out to see that it's a dynamical part of the social process and therefore, I finally have decided that this is a tremendous job here that some of your colleagues have done.

Let's look at art. Now language is the hardest one of any up here by far. The second hardest one for me is art. You'd like to give a long history on this. I tell you we had knock downs and drag outs on it. It's hard to see that art is a social process and not emphasize its social function. Although you deal with function, you're not trying to analyze social function, you're trying to get down deeper than that. And to grasp the dynamic of art in the whole dynamic we call culture in relationship to this whole process that we call the social process. And in doing that - if only Slicker were here - we were forced here in the last months to do things that we had been putting off for years - one of them was to get at the bottom of what Susan Langer was doing in dealing with art. That's what we started with.

The first category says interior awareness and what they're saying in that, first of all, is that art manifests the deep tension in humanness itself. And the tension is relative to inward space, inward time and inward happening.

And then art is that which is constantly occasioning the internal reconstruction in the effort to harmonize the tension that it makes manifest. And this is an effort towards unifying your environment; for when this internal tension is manifest, you experience it outside, as out of harmony with your environment. And then secondly, emotional equilibrium is tension inside and by tension here you're talking about a state of being, not simply an emotion. This state of being has emotional accompaniments. You're after bringing back a state of equilibrium which has reconstructed your universe inside. And then, what happens is that your world view is disturbed - the pigeon holes which make you sing - the tension splatters them like dropping a puzzle on the floor and scattering the parts and you try to

bring back your ideological universe into a form which reconstructs.

Then you begin to experience what they called here objectified subjectivity. Now I've learned a lot from this about things I thought I knew something about before. The most objective thing in the universe is what the psalmist is talking about. That objectifies what you experience as subjectivity. This is a part of what I mean when I say I cannot even remember a time when I had a personal problem. You objectify. You talk about a psychological state of hell. Have you ever seen the person who pulls everything into his little private problem. Well this is exactly the reverse of it. You take this inside and put it out utterly objective. Which has to do with humanness and when you begin to draw the dynamics in which I'm not particularly interested today, you begin to see how that process is a part of the cement which culture is.

Now the second has to do with eventful consciousness. Now you're over on the social side. Appropriated humanness means that art enables one to participate in the objective journey of mankind. And you see that the first box talks about the human journey. It's like Patton said - the first division was over there, and over there and over there, which battle happened how many years before, 1100? Or it's like, have you ever had the experience of literally feeling that you were Moses striking the rock or that you were one of those shriveled-up followers of his who, when the Lord sent the water, began bitching for quail - in which you become history, or you become humanity. This second one, prevailing moods, this is what I mean by sensing after the times. After the times puts the mood out there. And this again is appropriated humanness or history anyway. And then, of course, historical values. I'm screaming more and more about this. Like you have a PSU and another PSU and another and your colleagues work and work, and then the next PSU comes along and doesn't even read the thing and they start from scratch and every single time, without exception, that's a pile of horse manure. The next guy who comes along has got to go back and get this underground work as if that last PSU has nothing to contribute at all. This is what you mean by participating in the values of history. Or put it, billions and billions and billions of people who have lived, who struggled to articulate what it means to be human and this is participating in the values that they have created. This is why you study history, not because it's interesting that in 1492 some grimey Italian with Spanish money stumbled upon what ever it was he stumbled upon.

You'd like to have some even better terms. This is reconstructed externality which I think is pretty clear. Art is that means in which my little naive, but they seem always inclusive and sacred to me, understanding of what is going on in this time and in time itself is called into question. Think of Guernica in terms of what that does when you allow it to scream at you not simply in terms of your interior universe but in terms of your understanding of the world in which you live. You've got to remember that fundamentally art is contentless. The content of it is your life and your world. You can see this revised content delivering you towards an increased susceptibility to the first intrusion. That's what you mean there by contentlessness. Finally, you and I become contentless in our radical content. We become more and more susceptible. That is, some people you have got to pick up a two by four and hit them on the head and others, you wink at them and they get the whole story.

The last one is experienced transparency. Well I suppose that's fairly clear to you. I was talking to Pierce in Manila the other day and I winked at him over the phone and he got the whole story. I didn't even wink at Slicker today when he called and he got the whole message. He's been telegramming for two thousand dollars and we haven't sent it. He called today and didn't even mention it. . . . I feel like giving my speeches here and the people who did this will get after me later, but I've got to take it out of my own life. One of the things when you talk about turning spirit into matter and mark you, without a heart you haven't got the slightest - what are you laughing at now? He thinks I'm going to give the same old speech and I was, I was even going to mention that Buddha down there in Ceylon with that back top of the Himalayan Mountains behind it where I tell you matter turned into spirit for me. And one aspect of that dynamic is that that one little unique situation gets shoved into the midst of universality and beyond - and you begin to participate in the primeval origins. Let's get that in another kind of language. This is beginning to experience yourself not as just coming out of some woman's womb but when the God of the Sun sent the Goddess of the Sun. . . . you've got this, me! So who are you to tell a son of the Sun Goddess. It's this kind of participation. You can easily slip into RSI here. I think what we ought to do is to have art form conversations in RSI! I really do. Then the potential destiny you can grasp and mark you - I liked it when they called it something about social art, social art, yes, this isn't propaganda. Without religion up here I could not say this that I am saying about art. Finally, not realized eschatology but constantly occurring eschatology; you begin to participate in not simply the meaning but the transsocial meaning of every happening (eternal meanings). Art is that dynamic in society which constantly not only enables me to experience my experience but to experience it more deeply.

Now we're down here to the transparent pole itself. They used the term here radical projection and I questioned them on that and they insisted that that's what ought to be there - it's radical letting loose of myself in being which is, at the limit, sheer creativity. This is the box in which you realize you can't say I have creativity; I am creativity. My being is creativity. This is the experience of literally bringing something out of nothing. You don't raise that as some damn metaphysical question. It's a state of being phenomenological statement out there. Now interiorized externality. This is the reverse of what's up there before. But this is where you start, where the external situation becomes your interior event. This is what's behind what Scott says about news. News is the internalizing, bringing into, sucking into, your history, the Viet Nam war. Or the fact that Bethany Seminary is going out of business. If I might add, and in a way sort of apologize for myself, you're not in the moral realm here of nicely participating in it or un-nicely participating in it. I had told a group that I've been having wicked Walter Middy's about going out to Bethany and walking in and saying I'll offer you \$200,000 for your outfit and we'll throw in this thing here. That is wicked. That is internalizing the external. Then revelatory awarcesses. I think that's pretty clear that art calls forth the increasing capacity to experience externalities as changing points in your interior history. Like if we were the resurrected man, if I can misuse the term this way. Usually we're such slobbs that about once in every 50 years some revelatory happening comes to us. Instead of once every 50 seconds. And it's in the midst of this that what they've called discontinuous wisdom or to use our language, the heavenly secrets become yours. Or the capacity to see - to use Graham Green's figure - the heart of the matter. Art, art, art, you're talking about art.

Then the interior dialogue. And the best place to go to read for this is Gealy's article in which all of life is dialogue; not that life has dialogue, life is a

dialogue. And art enables you to engage in dramatic exchange with all of life. Not only do you have purple cows when you have eyes to see, but literally art enables you to grasp that buildings talk with you and that you, if you're going to be human, are going to talk to buildings and that dead rats speak and that you speak back to dead rats. And most of this yak-yak that we do with one another, that's not dialogue. What would it mean one time if really he spoke to you and you spoke back to him. And then the capacity to draw together what they call inclusive gestalts. It's like you spend a day of really speaking and being spoken to, that out of that you forge brand new contexts in which to carry on dialogues with life. And it's in the midst of this that the radical imperatives come into your life. The reason that most of us have little imperatives and surface imperatives, is that we do not participate in the radical dialogue of life.

Transparent creativity. That's the experience of creativity. Oh, we're so poverty stricken in this area of art, most of us. When you think that I don't have any better ear for music than I have, it's a disgrace, it is really a disgrace. It is in this that you find a grasping of the fantastic potentiality that you are. Relative to creativity. And then the intellectual side of it is that when one experiences himself as creativity, maybe the people who wrote this won't like my kind of illustration. Did you ever sit around, were you ever with a person who was just exploding inside in terms of one wham in a universe of ideas. If you've been around a person like that, that is what they're pointing to. Art has to do with that dynamic of life. Most of us get ourselves a little vista and we go along in that for 10 years or even 10 days which from what I'm talking about is like ten centuries as over against who was it who said God takes your world away every moment and hands you a new one? It's something like that. This is in one way what I mean when I talk about the dance of life. And this last one, I mentioned it when I was talking about culture as a whole. Here you literally experience what we sometimes so abstractly talk about when we say we are creating the universe—that we are inventing man. When you realize, whether you do it well or poorly from anyone's point of view, that your life is itself creating history, your life itself is defining man.

The tragedy is that I have gone through only 2/9ths of this. Of course, those are the two hardest. Well, what shall we do? What shall we do?