

Chapter 4

The Essential Processes of Every Society

Every society - primitive, archaic, middle periods, modern, and postmodern - has economic processes. Every society uses the resources of the physical, biological, and human planet, produces useful goods and services, and distributes those goods and services to those who need or want them. That is what I mean by the term "economic processes."

Similarly, every society has political processes. Every society defines its geographical districts or hunting grounds which it uses, protects, develops, and defends. Every society makes group decisions and allocates power in such a way that those decisions are carried out. Every society has laws and principles or taboos and customs which inform its citizenry about what is expected of them and what the costs will be for violating those expectations. These and other basic decisions and decision-making processes are what I mean by the term "political processes."

Thirdly, every society has many social processes that are neither economic nor political. Among these are educational processes; communication processes; research processes; common memory processes; artistic creation and sharing processes; the processes of language usage; the processes of religious practice; and life-style processes such as modes of association, moralities, customs, etiquettes, definitions of roles for men and women and children and elders and other classifications of people. All these and similar processes are what I mean by the term "cultural processes." Some use the word "social" rather than "cultural" for these processes, but I think it is better to reserve the term "social processes" to mean all processes – economic, political, and cultural.

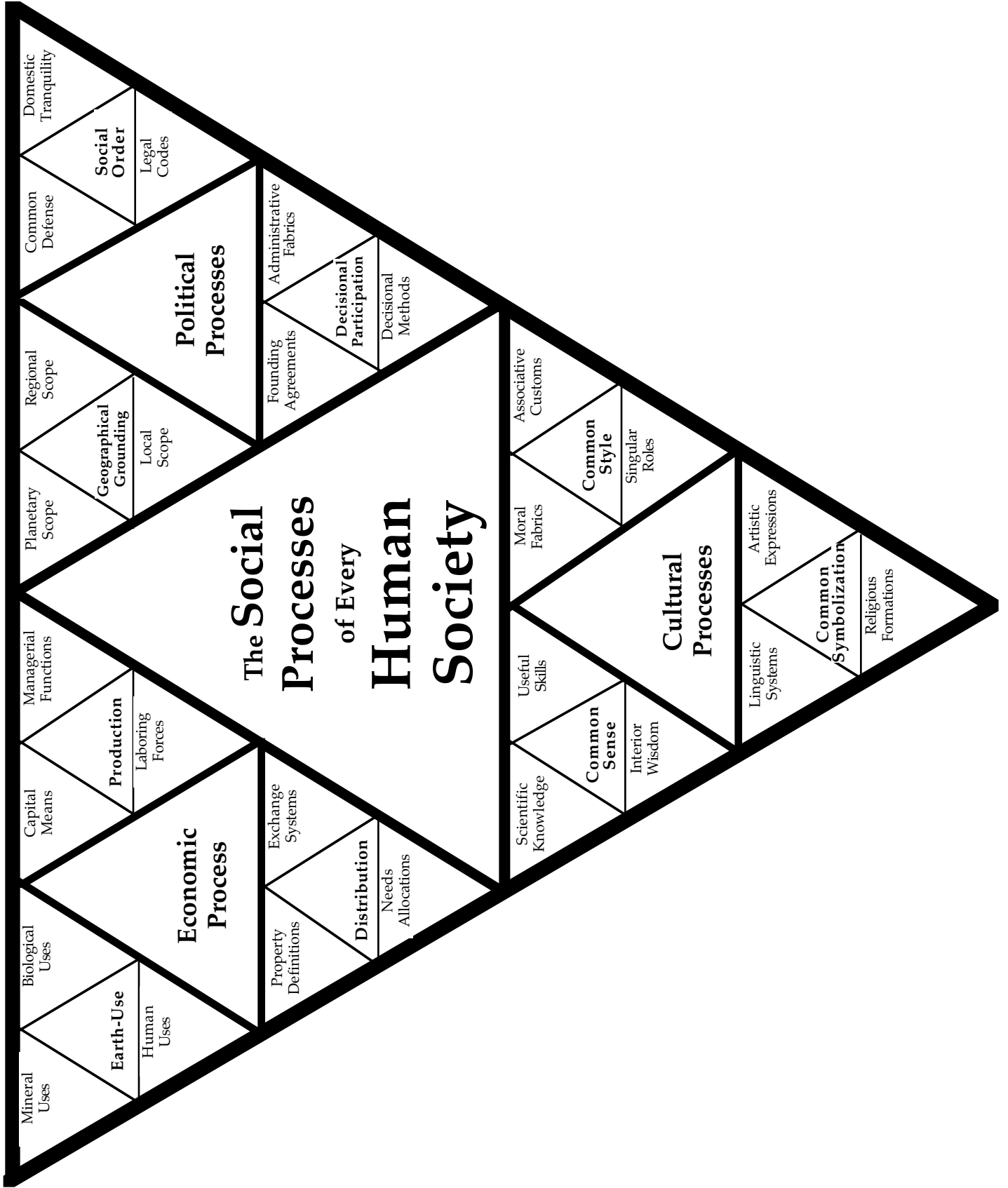
Economic, political, and cultural processes form one overall whole. They are three inseparable aspects of every human society. And these three types of social processes are inclusive: that is, there is not a fourth type.

The dynamic relations that the economic, political, and cultural have with each other can be used to subdivide each of these three categories into their three inclusive subparts. For example, the political-leaning aspect of economic processes is the process we usually call "production." The cultural-leaning aspect of economic processes is the process we usually call "distribution." and the economic-leaning aspect of economic processes is the process we usually call "resources" and which I prefer to call "Earth-use."

A similar sort of reasoning can be used to subdivide the political processes and the cultural processes. And this same method can be repeated to subdivide each of these nine essential social processes into 27 essential social processes. For example, the essential processes of production can be subdivided into capital processes, management processes, and labor processes. These three processes define what we mean by "production processes." (See the appendix for details on doing this triangular analysis.)

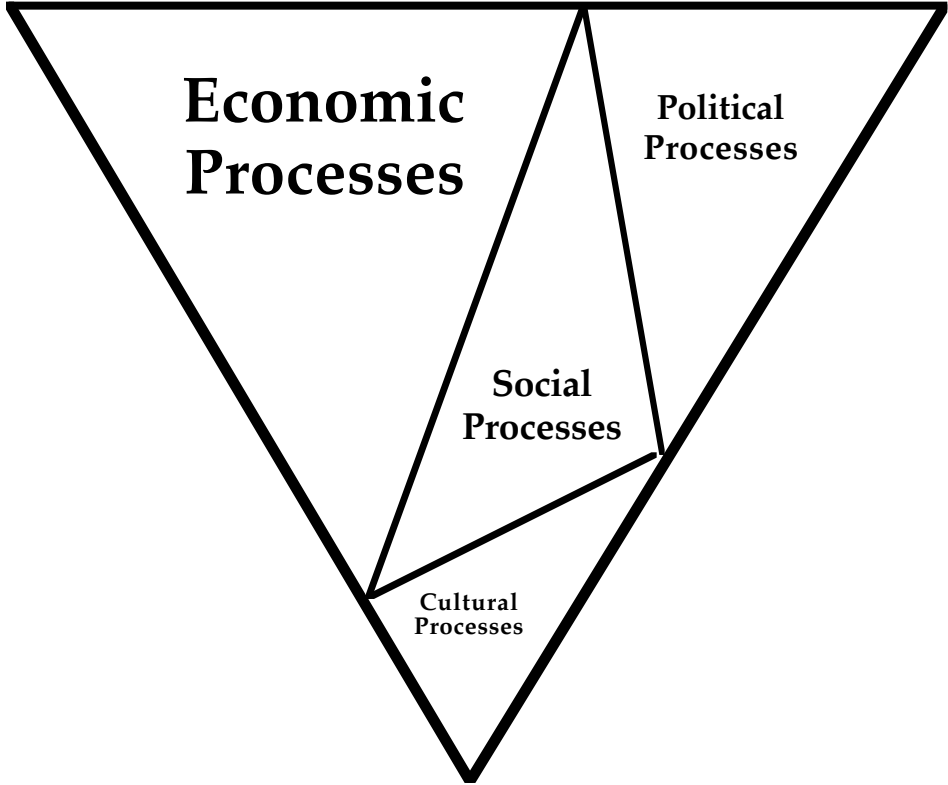
The following chart contains the results of my most recent thinking on this topic. Obviously, this is a rational model, and all rational models can be changed. This particular model has been drawn and redrawn and redrawn by me over many years. It reflects my study of social processes and my intuitions about how these many processes inherently relate to one another. I do not claim that this is the best model or the only possible model on this topic. But I do claim that it is a very useful model, and I will use it throughout this book.

Finally, I want to reiterate that I am not describing a particular society with this model. I am attempting to picture **essential society** – that is, the processes that exist in every society humans have devised or ever will devise.



I will not illustrate at this point what I mean by each of the word-titles used in this diagram, nor am I going to insist that these are the best words to use. Nevertheless, I understand this triangle to be an analysis of essential society. Each word on this chart is intended to point beyond the specific social structures of any given society. These words are meant to point to the underlying dynamics of all human societies – dynamics that each specific historical society manifests in its own particular manner. In each societies some specific social processes will be strongly and usefully manifest while other social processes will be inadequately manifest. In this chapter I am not going to discuss how these processes need to be manifest in the current history of planet-wide social development. At this point, I only want to note how a model of essential social processes can provide guidance for choosing the historical social structures of our future societies.

For example, the above triangle indicates that all these aspects of essential social reality need to be manifest. Also implied is the need for some balance between these various components of a functioning human society. One of the meanings of “justice” is “balance.” Justice is often pictured as a feminine figure who holds in her hand a balancing scale. Current industrial society can be viewed as out of balance. The structures of economic functioning are overpowering the political and cultural functioning. This is often spoken of as “big money in politics.” Huge corporate interests have gained undue access to political power. They are unduly influencing elections and the whole political arena through their large financial contributions to political campaigns. The major media and other cultural institutions are owned by these same forces of economic power. Even universities shape their research directions in order to secure contributions from wealthy corporation sources. The details of this warping I will discuss later, but for now I want to simply present the following diagram as a picture of such warping.



How can such imbalances be corrected? We can do this by building up the power of the cultural and the political structures and using them to restrain the economic structures. The defenders of economic power claim that the problem is governmental regulation. They want to

be allowed to do whatever they wish, and let the magic of the free market correct their excesses. They claim that this will benefit all members of the economy. This is an exaggeration. In some cases it is a deliberate lie. A careful examination of the history of free-enterprise economies shows that free enterprise works best when the economic playing field is firmly and fairly regulated by democratic governance. I will discuss this further in later chapters. In this chapter my aim is to indicate the importance of having a rational model of essential social processes.

This model of essential social processes raises a further question: what larger essential actuality contains this triangle of social processes as one of its parts? Is there a more inclusive triangle that has "Social Processes" as one of its three subparts? I will answer that question in the next chapter.