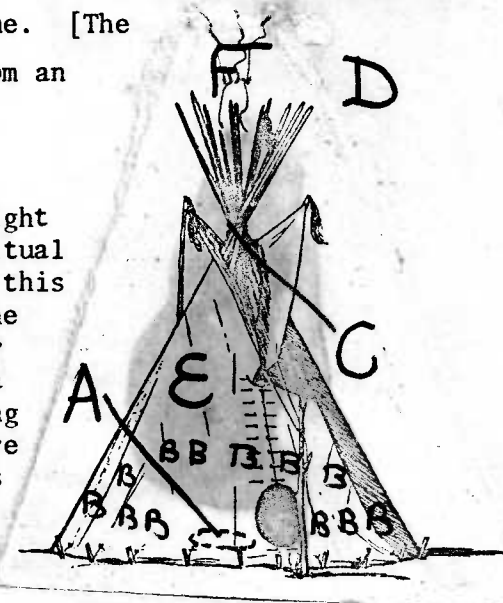


For some years I've use the cone (a cold, solid-geometry figure) to represent the full dimensionality of human community, especially as experienceable on retreats. It just occurred to me (Jan.'73) that it'd be at least fun to play around with the tepee as allegory (especially now that homo arcaecus Americanus is back in again), and I invite you to do the same. [The letters are mine, but the tepee is appropriately from an issue (Fall '70, p.32) of WHOLE EARTH CATALOG.]

A is (variously) the community focus, for the nonce "the center of the earth," the fire of warmth and light and (through cooking) sustenance and (by smoke) spiritual ascent. While for therapy and relational education this center may be the human material-in-group itself, the normal situation of community or retreat is a center other than the humans present--a theme, a concern, a beyond-the-group goal, individual/group self-offering to the god. Right now in America, some Americans are spastic-rigid in claiming encounter-and-horizontal as all (excluding both heteronomous centering and the vertical), others are on a sheeplly vertical (non-communitarian, non-heteronomous-task), still others are trying to get "it" (inner/outer, self/other, human/divine, horizontal/vertical, sacred/secular, personal/societal-change) together. Only this third group is humanly "normal," though individuals who are temporarily on either of the other trips may be doing business preparatory to this pilgrimage to the City of God.



B [the poles] are "the individuals" who, here, are persons-in-community cinched together [C] temporarily (for brief or long time, for simplex or complex agenda) and destined to community-dissolution [D as existential loneliness and death]: the separation of the poles above the apex shows that the community points beyond itself, opening out on a realm that in community perspective, as seen from within the community, is "death" [though beyond the community the experience of the person may be of larger community and profounder individual-potential].... Again, let's see the converging poles (up to the cinch) as the immanence meaning of human community, and the diverging poles (above the cinch) as the community's transcendence, as though here the poles were fingers of hands joined at the wrists, fingers as a serving receptacle for smoke-prayers: the humanity of the community depends on individuals' self-offering to the Beyond-community, to the More-Than-community, to the god ["God" for each person in the community if the community has a common god]. The strength-function of each person-pole is from its being itself-in-transcendence-of-the-community, and its being bound [at C] with the other poles: each pole independently holds up part of the fabric through dependence on the other poles: assertion/submission.

E is the community fabric, its "skin" (lit., the teepee's hides) of self-definition in space-time from other communities. It protects the community without overprotecting; it represents in its sturdiness security and in its fragility and portability resignation, acceptance of mortality, and the pilgrim style. It conceals the individuals from without but not from within....

F [the smoke] is the community's worship (shared-values-in-ritual-dedication). The community is in itself but not for itself: avoid futurism and narcissism.

Make something, if you wish, of the stakes, the two outer poles holding the vent-regulating flaps, and the door; and that "ti-pi" in Dakota = "dwell-use."