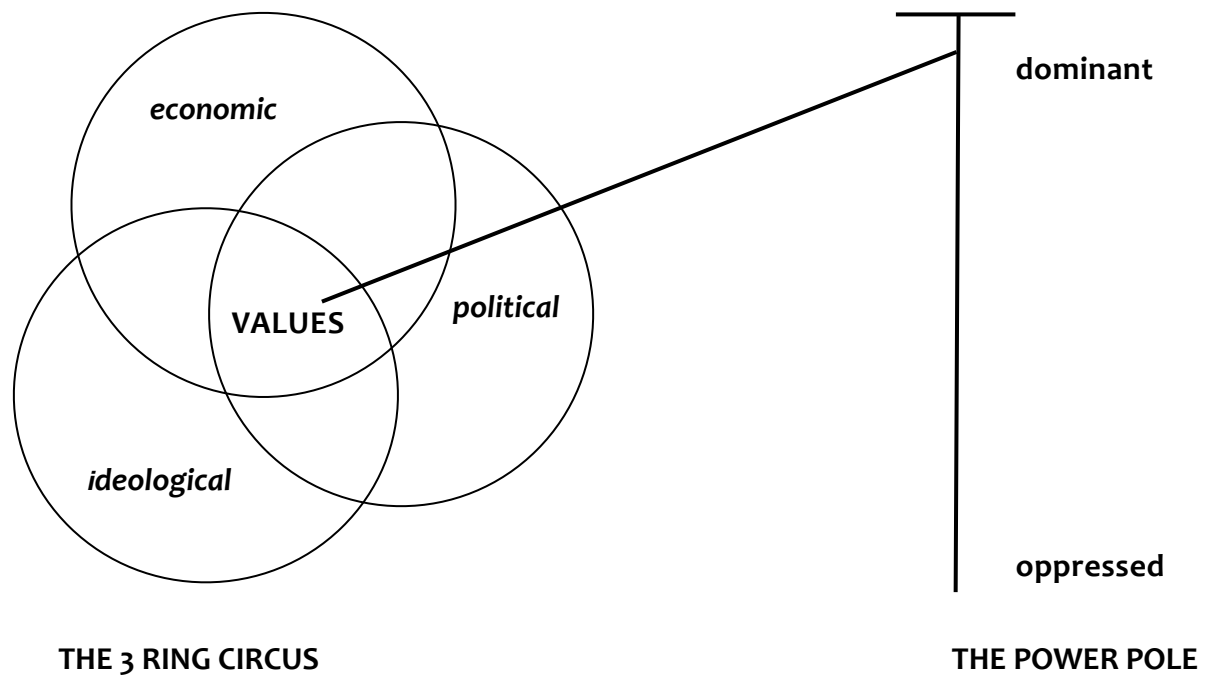


The Three-ring Circus



Sources of power

Power over¹ tends to be defined by and derived from the institutions of a society. Institutions are social practices that are regularly and continuously repeated, are sanctioned and maintained by social norms, and have a major significance in the social structure. The power associated with institutions may be:

- **Economic**, associated with the production and distribution of goods
- **Ideological**, associated with the transmission of ideas
- **Political**, associated with the making and enforcement of rules.

Any society may organise its economic, ideological, and political functions in many different ways. The beliefs of the dominant group in a society, those with the most power, determine which goods will be produced and distributed and how, which ideas will be taught and how, and which rules will be made and how they are enforced in dominant institutions. Only people who operate according to these beliefs will be successful in dominant institutions and organisations.

The power-over others of groups or individuals is based primarily on their positions within an institution or organisation, so this type of power is also called positional power. It is derived from:

- Perceived legitimacy of the position—its 'authority'²

Associated control of or authority to distribute economic, ideological or political rewards and punishments, including approval, love, safety or material goods and services.

¹ For definitions of power see: <http://www.powercube.net/other-forms-of-power/expressions-of-power/> See also the Power Pole activity

² Authority depends on the perception by all that those with power have the right to exercise it and that others must comply. Even if this perception changes, the dominant group's control of resources that are desired by others is likely to ensure that they retain more power