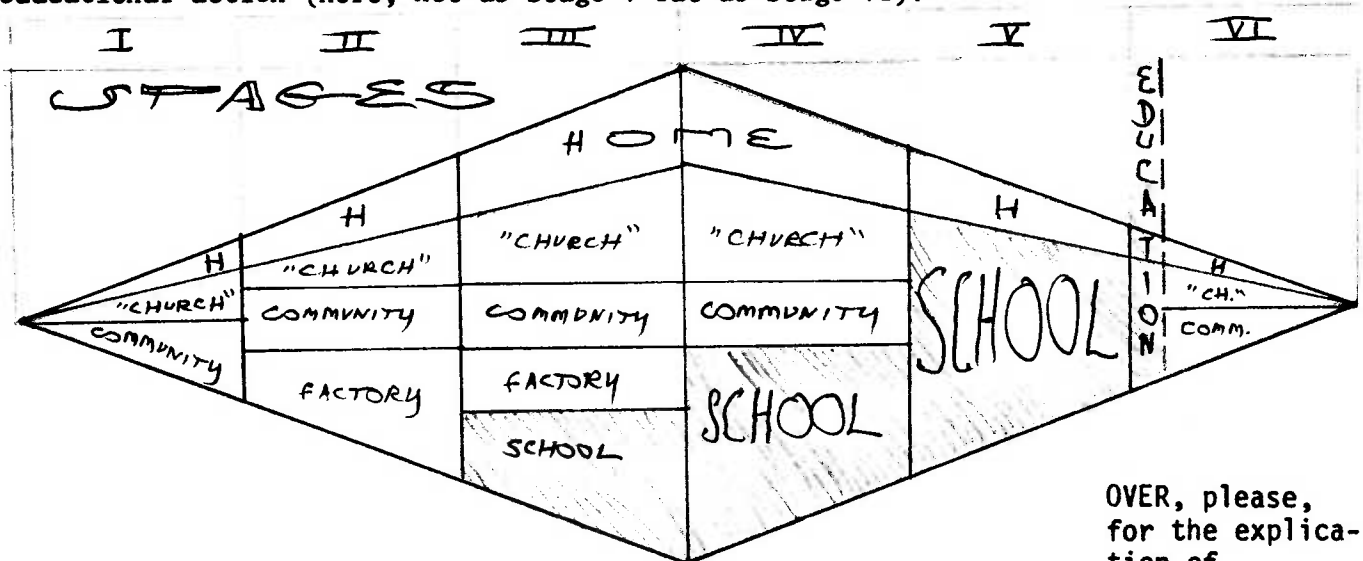


Sociological jargon, especially the sociology of knowledge, includes the phrase "social construct," meaning an unnatural fiction ("nature" being anything God made "without our aid," and "fiction" meaning something we "made" [the etymology of "fiction"]) instead of having made something else--the implication being that [1] we're responsible for having made it, and [2] we're able to unmake it, or at least depotentiate it by shifting the energy into the making of an alternative). This thinksheet suggests, accordingly, that it is time to eliminate "youth"--a word which means certain human beings (whom I don't suggest eliminating!) and also an industrial-society artificial life-stage (which I do suggest eliminating). To the writing of it, I was at least teed off by Ellen Goodman's historical thinkpiece in the 8 Mar 79 PATENT TRADER (BOSTON GLOBE/79).

1. The Apostle Paul, living prescientifically and therefore pretechnologically and so preindustrially, never got to be young, a youth, an "adolescent" (Latin for "in-process-of-becoming-adult"). He moved, as he says in 1 Corinthians 13, from being a child to being a man, with no stopover in between. If "adult" economically means taking your place in the workworld, he began to be adult while still prepubescent; and the trade he then was learning--tentmaking--stood him in good backup stead for the rest of his life. (Whenever accused of making money as his motive for preaching Jesus, he took to making tents while preaching Jesus.) Now, briefly during World War II I was a tentmaker in a factory, the only sensible place to make tents by that time; so, translating, we have Paul as a factory worker, but in the socio-context of home and community rather than impersonal economic institution. A further sanction for "child labor" of Paul's type (certainly not of the sweatshops of early industrialism): at that time and for many centuries thereafter, Jewish religious leaders and scholars (Paul was both) were expected to have a trade.

2. I propose that we think of what I'll here call the Pauline paradigm of economics as natural and normative, and so try to build at first skymodels of a schoolless society --rather in the mode of Ivan Illich's DESCHOOLING SOCIETY, but my proposal differs from his in respects those familiar with his will easily recognize. To take an Eastern-hemisphere example, Ghandi's return to the spinningwheel was more dramatic than luddite, and E.F. Schumacher's appropriate-size technology (the machine with a human face, as over against the man with a machine-face [machine-mindedness, powerfully set out in Donald M. Mackay's THE CLOCKWORK IMAGE]) is a real though nonlinear descendant--a developed descendant--of Ghandianism. The visual below shows that far from wanting to decrease the specifically educational structures, I propose expanding them over the whole range of the human reality--not as pedagogical imperialism but as participatory educational action (here, not as Stage V but as Stage VI):



OVER, please, for the explanation of this visual.

STAGE 5: This pushes Stage IV logically, students now feeling programmed....STAGE VI makes "education" the joint and mutual responsibility of home/"church"/community--of which models are beginning to emerge

GENERAL STATEMENTS: 1. The picture here I would call "general American": it's an across-the-board condition in the silk-stocking school, the ghetto school, and all in between (as I can testify as a teacher of clergy and laity at all the advantaged/disadvantaged layers of our society)....2. I have put "church" in quotes, to include synagogue and temple and any other social institutions ministering from intimacy to ultimacy with the biofamily as well as individuals....3. By "home" I mean primarily the biofamily, whose demise is being greatly exaggerated; but also any other subsociety meeting Robert Frost's definition that "when you go there, they have to take you in."....4. By "community" I mean the social surround inclusive of home and "church" but also of the total human reality other than home and "church (and thus also of, here, "factory" and "school"); but note that the meaning shifts through the stages.... 5. Stage I was, and Stage VI is prayed to be, unalienating in the Marxist and post-Marxist senses; the interstitial stages are, in varying degrees, alienating and thus dehumanizing as mechanizing, depersonalizing, and (paradoxically) hyperindividualizing....6. If one wants category-adjectives for the Stages, I suggest as follows: Stage I is "domocentric," Stages II and III are "erogcentric," Stages IV and V are "scholiocentric," and Stage VI (I hope) will be "anthropocentric" (centered in humanity, and in the depth sense "theocentric").

PARTICULAR STATEMENTS ABOUT THE STAGES:

STAGE I: Here, education for life is shared by home and "church," and education for work is shared by home and community (chiefly in the apprenticeship system functioning in the small, immediate community)....While Stages I-VI are a timeline in American cultural history, I'll not establish dates for the Stages, for the process phenomenon shown in the visual is worldwide, and various cultures are at various stages.

STAGE II: Throughout the stages, the older generation is in the upper, authority position (no matter the degree of power exercised through the authority!). With the coming of "experts" and specialized institutions, the original parental authority was distributed among other "authorities" (police, schoolteachers, counselors--what Larry Breen calls "the referral syndrome," parents' tendency at Stage V to refer their children's problems to other adults and to institutions other than the home, and then by projection to blame those "others" for "what went wrong with my child"). Stage II, is early industrialism, sucking the family into the cities and then splitting the families into the factories (first, in Britain). As I see it, city suction has occurred three times in history: ancient Mesopotamia (Sumer and Akkad, then the empires emergent from this urbanism), industrialism, and welfarism (though the second and third are related phenomena). A derivative phenomenon is suburb suction; now exurb suction is beginning, together with reurb suction (the voluntary cycling back into, and "redeveloping," cities).

STAGE III: Here began the leisure/work-related school--on Sundays (by Robert Raines, concerned to teach factory children, on their only day of leisure, the Bible and the 3 Rs), therefore called "Sunday school" (a movement taken over by the churches, as Raines hoped would occur). This movement was the parent of the public-school system we have today, as well as the systems of religious education which are "church"-based.

STAGE IV: Progressively throughout this and the following Stage, society began to lean its educational load onto the public school, which became workplace (at Stage IV, with the disappearance of child labor) and then (at Stage V) "church" and community! Added to this abrogation of responsibility has been, since the Depression, the desire to ghettoize youth, as surplus labor, as long as possible in an institution (compulsory!) which keeps the labor market from glut (as, till recently, women were kept off the market by "A woman's place is in the home"): the school as "a holding pattern for aging youth" more kept than educated (Goodman). I may say, "inmates" cooled by extracurricular activities, drugs, and TM.