

9. Family and church are the person's two traditional defenses against state power. Both have been losing ground to the state. Where church strengths the family now, church is gaining power.

This is a few quick notes on my thinking from reading Christopher Lasch's 30Oct82 syndicated (for me, CAPE COD TIMES) "The family's role in society" (in MORAL CHOICES: COURSES BY NEWSPAPER).

1. Only the family is natural: "the individual" (seen as a separate entity from person-in-community) is a fiction, and "the state" is a bipedal heuristic construct ("bipedal," because having one leg in theology, assuming some roles from God, and having the other leg in biology, assuming some roles from the family; and "heuristic," because ever seeking the most functional power-overstructure to limit the power-expansion of persons and families).
2. The natural organum of family power has been destroyed, leaving the family in chaos. That organum went by such words as "patriarchy and "matriarchy" and "oligarchy": my point here is that the organum, i.e., a working system of powers and limits whatever the role-assignments, did "work" in the whole world, but has now ceased to work in "the West," and around the world is weak in proportion to the strength of Western (especially American) influence.
3. Fragments from the American explosion of patriarchy (the biblical family-organum or political principle) dot our psychosocial landscape and cut our feet, reminding us both positively and negatively of what has been lost: negative, oppression of women and children by men; positive, the viable-cohesive nuclear-extended "family."
4. Fragment #1: The adult male feels (no matter what he thinks) that he should be family breadwinner, and therefore feels threatened by "working women" who achieve enough income to be "breadwinners."
5. Fragment #2: The adult male feels responsible also for the family's noneconomic shaping and support and survival. Any social functionaries beyond the family--church, school, lawyers, shrinks, "welfare workers"--are distrusted, resented, resisted, no matter how much the man may objectively admit his family's need for particular help. (Historically, the church has been resisted least; next, the school. Presently, shrinks are resisted most: almost all American HH--"head of household"--males fight "going to a psychologist.")
6. Fragment #3: In deep confusion and frustration over his declining power-over and in the family, "himself" more and more inclines to get the hell out--so matriarchy is on the increase.
7. Fragment #4: The psycho-distance between man-husband-father and child is increasing. "They're your children" used to be only a copout: now, what with more "sexual freedom," many men wonder if it is not also a bio-statement (i.e., "Are those children carrying my genes?"). Genetic doubt is only one reason why the adult male's motivation to be faithful to woman-wife-mother and child is steadily eroding.
8. When the price of the "new family" (non-family?) is generally experienced as spiritually, psychologically, socially, morally, legally, and economically excessive, we may (1) return to the old family (not losing fresh insights, I should hope) or (2) collapse into the all-powerful state. (I am convinced the state is not yet as powerful as it must become in regulating birth and death, i.e., in saying who-when has the right to bear, and who has the right to continue to live.)