

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

WHOSE EDUCATION IS IT ANYWAY?

AN ESSAY PAPER IN

EDER 655.08 L01

PREPARED FOR DR. Y.M. HEBERT

GRADUATE DIVISION OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

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DECEMBER 2005

In an earlier essay exploring world systems-theory and capitalist globalisation, I wrote about scale and the various scales of economy, democracy, the individual and the organization and asked this question: “Who determines these scales and where one sits upon them?” As per usual, I came away with far more questions than answers. I then delved into the issue further by looking at the affect on, and of, personalized learning within the ongoing trends of globalization. Again, more questions than answers ensued. And now I sit with a vexing question that asks if education in general is for the betterment, lets say improvement, of humanity and the human condition, or has it always been for the perpetuation of existing society? What I mean is, has education *ever* been for a liberal, perhaps more hopeful, future or has it always been for a status quo traditional past with a few skills thrown in with which to make an honest living and our parents proud and someone else is fabulously rich and powerful? And that is as much the heart of the question of the value of, and the value’s within, this whole idea of the *education* of our young.

Much has been made over the years in all areas of inquiry and justification regarding the difference between training and education and their role in western society. What is interesting is the play between the two, the flexibility and the malleability of the concepts and of the people to use one or the other or a construct of the two to varying degrees for their own purpose. These

ideas coupled with why and how we perpetuate traditions both economic and political, sometimes change them slowly or radically and create new, can lead to a greater understanding of the primary motivations for what is done to youth in terms of what they learn and how we teach. People who have much to lose or those who have much to gain from this atmosphere of tradition versus change create the history we learn. Let me begin with a necessarily brief and broad discussion of this history to set the stage for my thoughts on tradition, change, education and training.

THE HISTORIES (apologies to Herodotus)

The people of the world have always been figuratively global in their view, it is just that initially their view and their knowledge was from the hilltop, then the mountain and as maps were made by explorers the view representationally expanded to its present state literally including the whole of the world. And people have struggled over the ideas of tradition and change since the first clan sat around a campfire and could coherently complain about the same food day after day. We would need a mind to imagine and a vocabulary to show us the future, but more importantly could preserve the past so that we could learn from it and move forward into the future with new plans. Once progress towards the day when people could predict, plan and execute an operation that would feed the group well enough often enough to make them prosper and multiply to larger numbers a true culture would then come into existence. Time moved slowly, change wasn't something anyone really feared and any successful technical innovation, fire

hardened wood or bone spear points and scooped bones for spoons, razor sharp stone points and carved wood for bowls, the spear thrower then the bow and arrow and ceramics for pots and the storage of food, were looked upon with enthusiasm.

Any young person could learn technical skills of interest by ingratiating them self with the individual who had the knowledge and skill and was willing to pass it along. Traditional senses of power and who would garner it, whether patrilineal or matrilineal, the chief for the earthly issues and the shaman for the heavenly, men for warfare and women for childbearing, were for the primary purpose of survival of the community. As people developed status within the society, a stratified hierarchy of importance to the community began to be organized as social cohesion and traditional activities within the culture was passed down as ritual and living memory (Bronowski 1973).

Individual social skills of youth were largely learned from the family and from watching and participating in society itself (not much different than today really). This education for 'socialisation' certainly fits Kieran Egan's ideas in his essay, 'The Ideas That Run Schools', where his first 'theory' of education for socialisation explains that "...you look at the society around you, make an inventory of skills, knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes that make it work, and teach those to children." See the Chart 'A' for a description of Egan's three theories of education.

Traditional gathering and hunting gave way to nomadic herding with the domestication of animals and then to sedentary agriculture with the domestication of plants - the Agricultural Revolution. The ideas of political and theological power

grew as societies became more and more complicated and sophisticated. As the agricultural revolution grew, so did population, and as competition for resources between quickly expanding groups of successful people occurred, conflict usually ensued. With increasing rapidity important changes took hold in these societies. These new methods of social organization, writing to remember and verify, new methods of industry, wealth and power, led civilisation from the stone age to copper to bronze to iron all within a few short millennia from the early city states of Babylon and Ur in Mesopotamia (Pritchard1973), to the Egyptians (Gardiner1974) and the Greeks of Alexander () and the Romans of Caesar.

Here, during the development of the great city states, Egan's second theory of education, that of academia, solidly applies as he believes it was developed where "... to educate someone you must teach particular kinds of knowledge – regardless of their utility and relevance to current social needs – in order to shape the mind to perceive the truth." Here philosopher-teachers, such as Aristotle, Socrates and Plato to name but a few, were totally removed from the production of utility, foodstuffs or wealth, for the society and could flourish and 'educate' beyond "current social needs" (Egan 2005). This makes sense, but it must be made clear that while important thoughts and discoveries about the human condition were made, only the very privileged few were able to move beyond the older 'socialisation' form of education that continued unabated for the remainder of the population.

Labour to work the fields and the mines was in short supply and so captured enemies and their children created the slave class and slave society. They were the

great exploited under-class of the time and in Marx's theory of the Historical Dialectic where whoever owned the "powers of production" ruled the world. The slave owners were the ruling class as they owned the primary means of production and the landowners the emerging class (see Chart 'B').

The slave based society continued through to the fall of the Roman Empire. During the chaotic period of the ensuing Dark Ages (400-800 AD) through the Middle Ages of Charlemagne to the the Renaissance (1450 AD), the landowners, the feudal landlords, of the time became the ruling class as slavers were being cut out of the system by the dissolution of slave labour society and its replacement by serf labour as the primary means of production, chattered to the land and the liege lord of the feudal system (Painter 1958). The up and coming class, continuing with Marx's Historical Dialectic, were the capitalists who initially began as freemen within the feudal system and were 'free' to pursue money income as a means of making a living.

In the simplest of terms the earliest form of education, then, for the huge majority of people, is about learning specific skills, that is training, useful in efficiently performing repetitive tasks both at work and within society, whether that is learning to bake bread as a baker or work metal as a Journeyman within the Guild or being ever respectful of religious or kingly authority. Retraining means the task has changed by being improved or even eliminated and so new tasks need to be learned. The person who used to do the "old" task must now be retrained which is done by someone instructing new tasks to these people or the person is

replaced, often discarded, by those who know the new ways. During the Middle Ages this doesn't necessarily evoke feelings of fear or foreboding, it may have been quite normal particularly if the change was not too drastic, was an improvement and may be beneficial and acceptable in general to the prevailing society. Some changes are just good ones and fall within the traditional societal boundaries from the start. To people who rely on the traditional ways any change can seem threatening. This is not such a bad thing when one is younger, it is quite simple to accept new ways, but as one ages retraining becomes ever more stressful and doubtful of success especially when it concerns long held beliefs in the structure of society. This has most certainly been the primary form of learning from the very earliest of times.

The traditional social values within training are important and fairly simple to grasp; utility is the key. How a task is done, skill development and accurate repetition of the social and labour tasks are all desirable as are the values of persistence, obedience and orderliness among others. Training seems to evoke feelings of tradition and cooperation both on the job and within society, the way its supposed to be as determined by someone else, some higher authority that gives the guilds, universities and monasteries the right to teach youth and with that right their belief as to what the 'education' should be. These 'formally educated' youth from rather wealthy families, as opposed to the generally poor home educated, initially are very few in number, but eventually increase in number as the general wealth of the population increases during this era.

Interestingly one begins to recognize that within 'education' is a duality of purposes. One purpose is solely for the maintenance of the old social ways regardless of any changes in the labour process as labour was part of the society, in effect training. Much work was ritualized and demonstrated a degree of continuity both historically and into the future. Social structure was mostly based on what you did and so was important as it filled a necessary niche and afforded those people in those niches a certain sense of purpose, importance and belonging to the society. And training within those niches does allow people a certain degree of intimate knowledge and expertise of a particular task and naturally, it seems, discover new and better ways and means of doing things.

Some inventions were simple yet made huge differences in the lives of people at the time of their invention. The horse collar, for example, led to the abandonment of the ox as a means to plow the fields, the draft horse was faster and could perform multiple duties. The iron plow led to plowing more marginal land and increasing agricultural productivity. The Gothic arch led to the development of the cathedral and then to the roman arch, the dome and to the ever-expanding grandeur of God (Painter 1958). Of course, none of these lead to the wholesale change of the traditions of society, rather some may in fact have helped to entrench them. Even great advances in techniques of production did not change society much through the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, though it made people wealthier, life better and easier and made population grow. But it was that very 'better and easier' life coupled with an expanding population that motivated some people to

make an effort to change social society as they saw it as the one most in need of change.

Generally speaking, significant change of traditional societal ways is difficult to achieve as those in highly elevated social positions do not easily wish to relinquish these positions. Those in the lofty positions often try to entrench their positions by using new ideas within the old, the idea of divine-right monarchy for example, to justify themselves and their like and make it as difficult as possible to affect any societal change at all. Resistance by the elite to any changes of the traditional order of things often leads to rough and cruel treatment of some members of society, particularly and especially those who wish to change it. Religious hierarchies of the Renaissance and Reformation era and absolute monarchies of the seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe and dictatorships of the twentieth and their lethal efforts to attain and maintain power immediately come to mind.

Specialist owner/labourers as merchants, Journeymen and Master craftsmen, lawyers and accountants for the new commerce often gained great wealth in money and so made higher learning available to the sons of other wealthier freemen affording more similar opportunities to an even greater number. Over time this capitalist, bourgeois, class grew in numbers, wealth and power and required ever more education for their employees as well as their children. Soon universities for this capital rich class also grew as the demand for higher levels of learning could be paid for and more 'professors' (specialists) found employment as instructors. This

latter period of the Renaissance (1450) to the beginning of the Industrial Revolution (1750), called the Enlightenment, was a period of great learning, turmoil and entrenchment of traditional ideas of power and legitimacy of the ruling feudal landlords to prevent their loss in the coming new age.

The discoveries of luminaries such as Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Bacon, Descartes and Newton, changed the power and control of the church authority from absolute to scientific deism and those in positions of power, kings and popes, knew their time was running out if they did not do something to either stem the tide of social change and lose their power or imbed themselves in change in some way. The idea of 'divine right' within absolute monarchy as a means of dynastic survival was one such method of maintaining their status in this changing world. The Catholic church reacted with the doctrinal stormtroopers known as the 'Society of Jesus', or Jesuits as they were known, to collect converts and strengthen their fold.

The Enlightenment, however, with Gutenberg's printing press creating the need for formalized language with grammar and spelling, brought about the easy and widespread sharing of ideas, inspiration and designs to an eager group of well-educated persons by nearly eliminating all other dialects settling with national languages. Kieran Egan's third theory of education begins here. It is the idea that "... to educate people you need to understand their individual capacities and facilitate their fullest development." Thinkers such as Rousseau, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Locke and Smith became the driving force behind the coming final destruction of the already teetering upon collapse traditional feudal system and its

restrictions on individualism and freedom of thought and social being that capitalists and capitalism required.

In the name of these new capitalist values the revolutions of England, America and France, in the seventeenth and eighteenth century were fought. And for the first time were fought with weapons made plentifully and cheaply by the new wage labour Industrial Revolution means of production. Marx, in his Historical Dialectic, shows that after the clash of these revolutions in England, America and France the capitalists became the ruling class and wage labour, or the proletariat, the exploited class.

But something curious, brought about by capitalism and the Industrial Revolution, also changes within the idea of labour as a social factor. Change in labour activity is only accommodated if the person or persons in control, or ownership, of the company want and allow it to happen. Change must occur only with the goal in mind of improving profit margins for themselves and their shareholders. Where we all own a society and participate in it by maintaining it or rebelling against it, we do not all own all businesses and it is the responsibility of the businessman, the owner, to make profit as he sees fit, not the society in general. The advent of the Industrial Revolution, then, and the notions of private property, ownership, contract, labour and profit brought about the split of labour from society, the societally important little niches and generalist skills of the cottage and Guild industries that everyone used have and participated in were destroyed. These activities became distinct and orchestrated jobs, with out much if any social status,

and so must now be thought of differently as the division of labour developed. This is where we lost the commons of our ancestors in exchange for private property as land became enclosed, serfs became “free” and were evicted from the only land and life they had ever known only to become the new exploitable class, the proletariat. This is the beginning of the alienation of labour and rise of the accumulation of vast sums of wealth as the determinant of social status.

With the growth in power of the individual, particularly the newly wealthy, or bourgeois, business owner/professional came new ideas on social structure. At this point thinkers were able to see justification for change; Rousseau’s ideas on general will of the people towards governance and their right to replace government they have no faith in, Locke’s thoughts on liberty and property, Montesquieu’s ideas for the separation of powers within government, Voltaire’s freedom of religion and speech and Smith’s laissez-faire economy. And this change within society can lead to the deposing of those in positions of power and allows realignment of people within the strata of society. A complete and total change occurred in the structure of society where the once downtrodden, in this case the up and coming capitalists in ever greater control of the means of production, take positions of control usually achieved through defeat in war with a rival power (the American Revolution of 1776), or violent revolution and overthrow of the existing domestic power (France in 1789). See Chart ‘C’ for a description of this as well as Toffler’s (1980) analysis in Chart ‘D’.

In business, however, labour cannot just overthrow management; it is not

theirs to do, that is the purview of the board and shareholders. A person's labour is abstracted into a 'thing', a commodity, away from its former niche role within society and can then be sold, by contract, to an employer who treats it separately from the person who sells it. So the 'labour - business person', or the proletarian - bourgeois relationship is a strained one from the start with very few avenues for meaningful dialogue. To the employer labour is separate from the person, it is an expense, whereas to the seller of the labour it is without a doubt a very dear part of them. Seen as alienated labour, workers, who sold their effort in exchange for money, were pulled out of the decision making process of "work" and its position in society and were left with even fewer rights than they had as serfs tied to the land and the liege lord in feudal times. And once stripped of that important society/work niche and turned into the commodity of labour, businessmen could do as they pleased with 'it' as justified by many proponents of this new wealthy society ensuring labour's definitive and lowly position in industrial society. This new exploited class 'wage labour' owes the justification to its existence to the following philosophers and their ideas: Spencer's "survival of the fittest", Ricardo's "iron law of wages", Malthus' geometric population growth with war, disease, pestilence and starvation as 'nature's methods' for the control of the overpopulation of poor unemployed people in times of plenty and Carlyle's "Great Man theory" justifying leadership of the 'rabble' by a ruling elite and a single person.

It is at this period during the mid 1800's, that the great minds among the 'robber barons', that is the 'industrialists' and the politicians who are supported by

them, see an opportunity for the 'training' of the masses for their economic purposes and the creation of a docile factory workforce for their social purpose becomes modern mass 'education' for the greater good of society and their new 'nation'.

BACK TO MODERN EDUCATION

Whereas training assumes inculcation of specific utilitarian knowledge, education assumes the individual to be more active and independent in their learning, to be more curious and critical, to delve into ideas and thoughts on their own that may reveal great disparities and difficulties in both work and society. Education has usually been thought of as the progressive, or higher, form of learning. That is when the expectation that one can continue to learn because one has learned how to learn by oneself. The values within education are much more complex and controversial with skepticism, critical and analytical inquiry and empathy but a few examples and no topic is out of the realm of investigation. Education seems to have a sense of liberalism and individualism to it, a means to change. While this may be of great profit advantage in a business, this can be a dangerous thing to a traditional society. To be sure there are many values within education that can be bandied about, but what of the value of education itself? The same can be asked of training. The boundaries between them are today blurred as many see different aspects and values of both training and education as essential to society. However, to be 're-educated', unlike retrained, has a decidedly negative connotation. It usually means the change created, or proposed, by the educated has

crossed the boundary of acceptable change and is threatening to *somebody* in a position of power. Interestingly this is true as it pertains to societal change outside some bounds of political acceptability and has been the basis for societal change since the beginning of time, but as change at work it is only acceptable as long as it creates profit and business advantage in the marketplace. And begun in the late 1700's, this has not demonstrably changed since.

So change within society has different guidelines than does change in business and at work. In fact while creative, liberal thought is a boon to business and quirky behavior by the highly educated seen as just eccentrics, this is not true for society. While business leaders can accept liberal, fanciful blue sky and wild thought in their think tanks, planning sessions and marketing retreats searching for new ways to make money, they are decidedly against it in their production lines and therefore in their society from which most production workers come. They need to toe the line of decisions made by the managers. The reorganization of much of American business during the 80's and 90's was distinctly fascist in its approach and beliefs toward workers and how they can and should be manipulated for the business' bottom line (Hammer 1995).

In today's economically globalising world we encounter 'liberal' ideas as much as we encounter 'conservative'. However time does not flow backward, even though society might for a short (historically speaking) time seem to retrench in 'old' ideas for a time (ie At the 1815 Congress of Vienna, Metternich's short lived 'turning back

the clock' to absolute monarchy after the Napoleonic wars). My question now is could all this political neoconservative policy and economic neoliberal policy we see today actually be a reactionary effort to forestall progress toward a peaceful, democratic, just, egalitarian world? Could the last 10,000 years of human development lead inexorably to this point in time? Rather than globalisation being such a bad thing, could it also be the very thing Marx talked about, the beginning of the "classless" society, where the growing underclass of the expanding proletariat will someday take over from the ruling elite. Or does that mean that there is still a class system out there just not one based on accumulated capital, perhaps intelligence. It makes sense that the powers that be would resist this change with all their might. And of course it would center on how they educate the youth as reactionary to any sense of this progress toward egalitarianism.

I have included a diagram of Globalisation and Wallerstein's Capitalist World-System (Chart 'E'). It is interesting to note that while he may be heavily criticised for a theory that does not explain everything, it is none the less of value when compared with the other charts of political and economic change. Perhaps there is a meld of charts that will reveal a more 'universal' application of history. Most certainly there is a broad general consensus that the Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions were great advances in human history, that education in those time changed for some but not for all. It can be argued, as Marx identifies, the changes did come about with advances in the economy of people as the driving force. These changes must have made education change, update, improve as more

and more knowledge came into being. The political powers that existed at this time would certainly have had the drive to make youth learn whatever they decided they should. And it makes perfect sense that the elite would want a populace that was loyal, subservient and compliant. When we attach Kieran Egan's theories into the mix, then the motivations and actions become quite clear.

Education has always been about teaching the majority, Marx's exploited classes, Wallerstein's peripheral groups, how to "learn what is needed to fit into society" (Egan 2005). It has remained the purview of the people in power to determine what this education will be. They are, after all the ones in power and presumably, even in a democracy, what they say goes. And they will ensure that the present state wherein they do so well shall be perpetuated indefinitely. As technological and sophisticated as we are now as compared with even 150 years ago the question remains - How do we choose what and how to educate to our youth? Depending in which social strata one belongs, which political beliefs they hold and their own degree of education, the options to the answer to this question are many. This is after all what history and our lives are made of. One can only hope that people would choose what is in the best interest of youth, but we know this rarely happens.

In spite of reactionary efforts, if this 'brave new world' should happen, the mega corporations would not necessarily expire but their attitudes toward profit, the public good and sustainability would dramatically change. AND it is this change

that 'they' fear. This change would mean a loss of power, of wealth, but not necessarily leadership.

Through learning by young people of skepticism, critical analysis and empathy, can we assume they will make the present system better once they become adults? Or is education really training of youth to become better more efficient producers in the workplace and strong believers in traditional values of what adults want in order to become wealthier?

The youth of today deserve an education that will take them into a brighter life than we have brought them into. The older people, of course, would rather things stay the same or go back a decade or so. This would give them a comfortable, sure and reliable comparable advantage for the duration of their lives. We have yet to come to an educational middle ground in this even though there is much research and positive talk, particularly among educators, about best practice and the future of schools and that of students, but this is at odds with the enduring sense of society returning, politically and economically, to a safer and more predictable past. The question is whose education is it anyway?

Chart 'A' **EGAN'S THREE THEORIES OF EDUCATION**

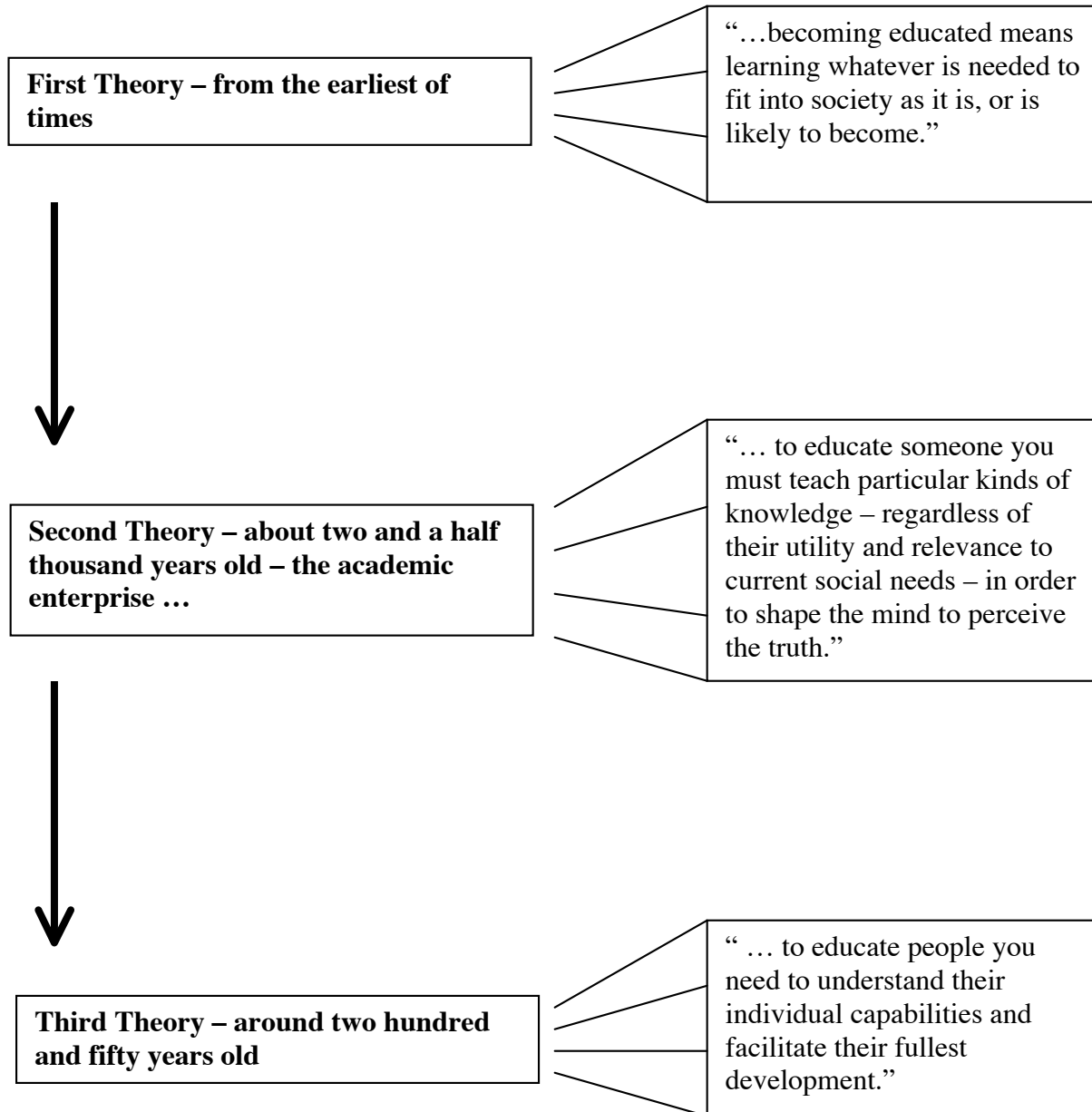


Chart 'B'

Marx's Historical Dialectic

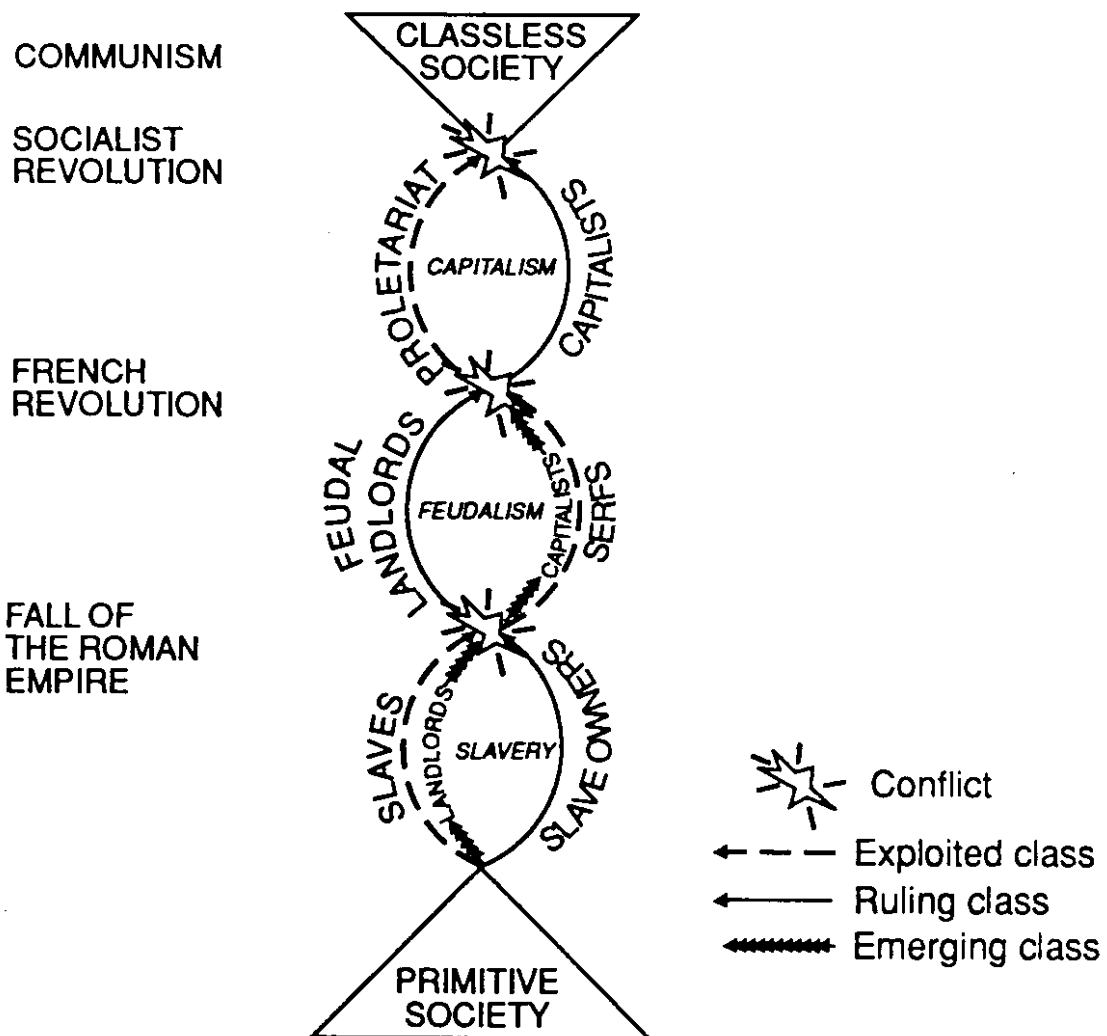
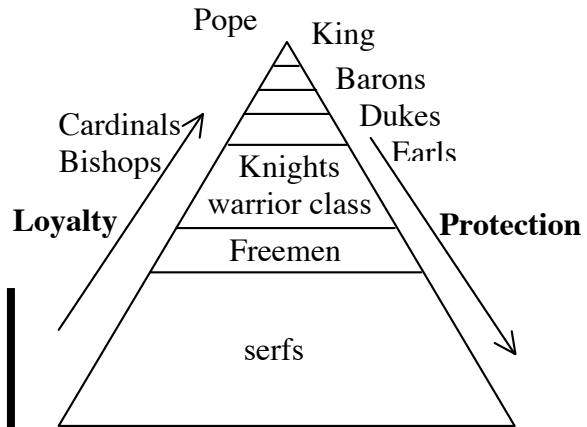


Chart 'C' Successive Pyramids of Political and Economic Control

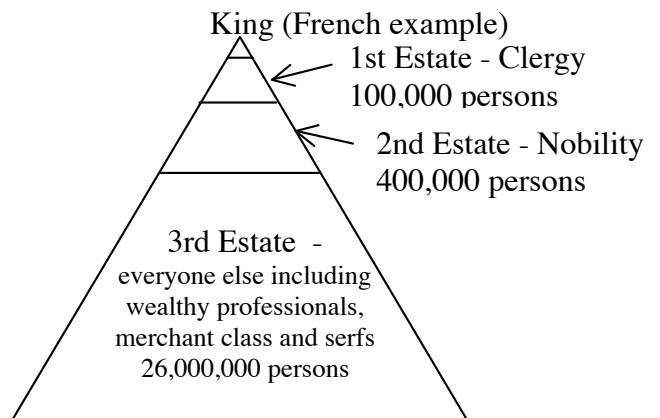
**Feudalism's Lord-Vassel Relationship
400 - 1648 AD**

- in return for protection from the Liege Lord loyalty is expected
- struggle for supremacy between church and state
- serfs tied to the land and in return for protection give loyalty and food to lord
- agriculture based economy and barter
- Freeman 'free' to pursue a living anyway possible



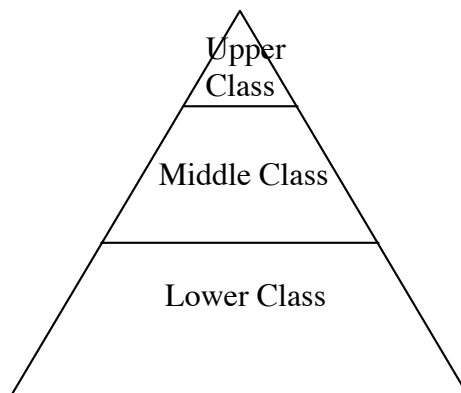
1648 Treaty of Westphalia - end to Christian religious wars

- Absolute Monarchy - Divine Right rule exemplified in Louis XIV's reign in France
- Block voting - 1 per Estate in Estates General ignored by French kings for 125 years until 1789



Republicanism - American Revolution of 1776, French Revolution 1789 through to the present.

- dissolution of the monarchy by overthrow by the wealthy professionals and capitalists
- most other countries in Europe are Constitutional monarchies
- importance now dependent on capital accumulation, wealth and national power
- economy is Capitalism



Global Corporatism, the future?

- the greatest expression of Capitalism
- struggle for power between Corporations and Nations, business free to do
- the split could be between Corporate Boards and the remainder of the population
- cultural tribalism instead of Nations and

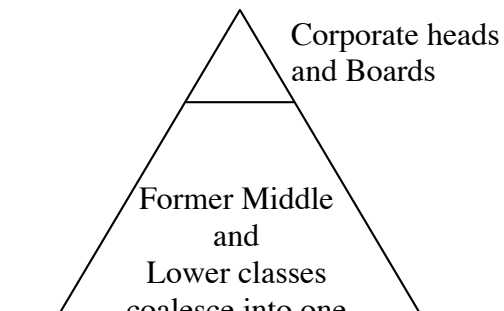


Chart 'D' *Toffler's WAVES of CIVILISATION and their Characteristics*

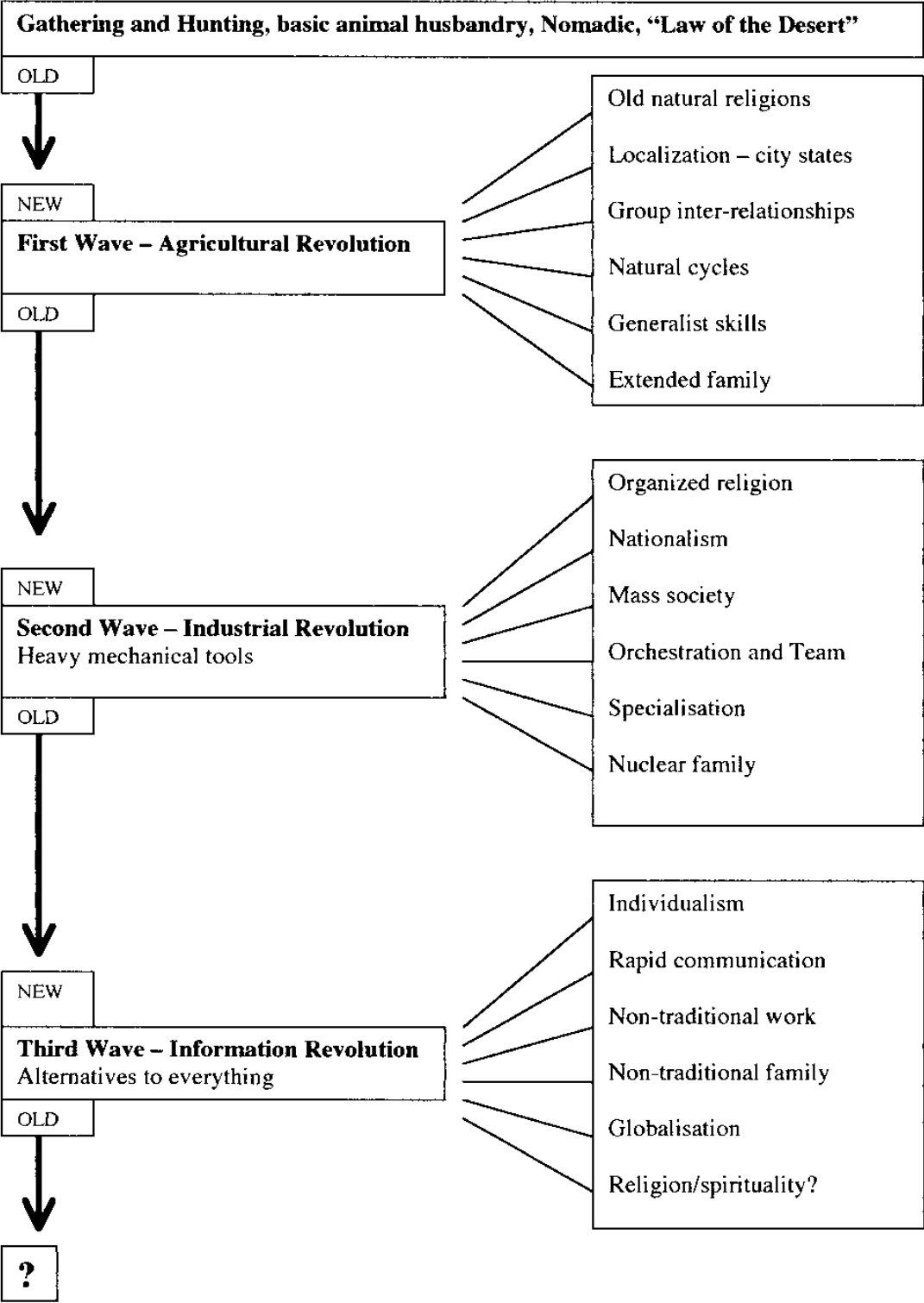
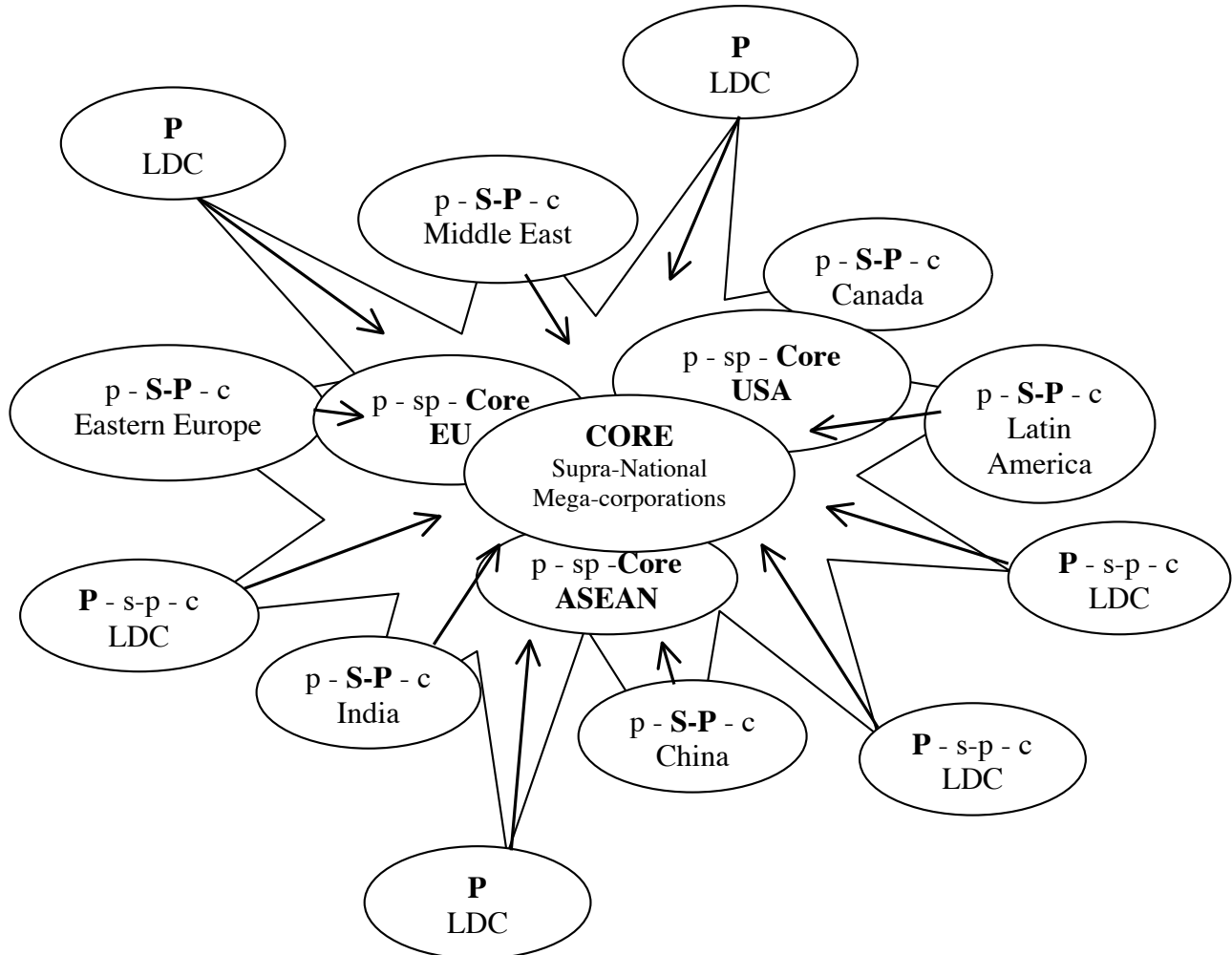
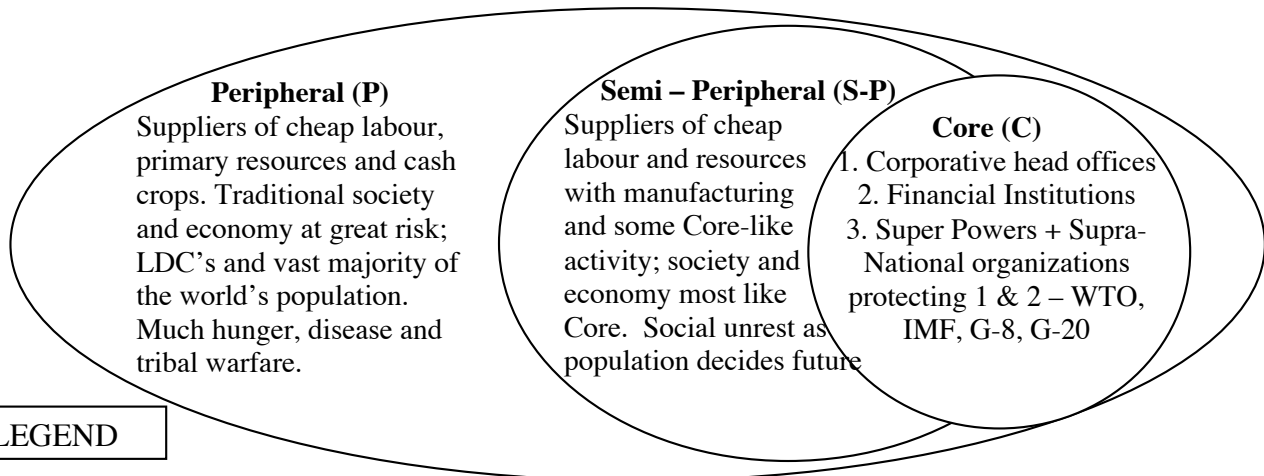


Chart 'E' Globalisation and Wallerstein's Capitalist World-System



All countries have all activities: peripheral, semi-peripheral and core. Each country, or economic zone, has a predilection of emphasis and so has a set amount of independence, or lack of, from other economies, national or corporate. The flow of wealth and power is all towards the center core. As the CORE accumulates ever more wealth, and the other areas become poorer as a result, the globe may devolve into a small class of Have's in the Core controlling an enormous Under-class in the remainder of the world.

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