

# Historicizing Subjectivity in Philosophy of Childhood

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## Introduction

Standard entries on philosophy of childhood (e.g., Matthews, 2005; Matthews, 1994) begin by problematizing the child as object of study and then tacitly follow a chronology that embraces historical developments emphasizing theories of cognitive and moral development (after Piaget and Kohlberg), children's rights, agency of children, the good of childhood (focused on aesthetics), philosophical thinking in children, and children's literature. Matthews' (2005) conception that is the entry for the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* is motivated by an Aristotelian reading and tacitly accepts a chronology that flows from Piaget's theory without elaborating the ways in which these approaches are different or, indeed, 'philosophical'. It does not mention historical approaches except for Philippe Aries's work, much on the influence of Freud, psychohistory, and psychotherapeutic accounts of childhood, or more recent social, cultural and political accounts. Michael Pritchard (2009) writes the entry for 'philosophy for children' that again begins with Piaget to focus on the empirical account of Gareth Matthews, Matthew Lipman, McPeck and others, before profiling The Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC).<sup>1</sup>

These standard or received views are predominantly psychological in the broad sense of the term and also cognitive, following a chronology shaped by Piaget work in child psychology. While these approaches are undeniably significant in the history of the study of childhood they have been supplemented and some would say, eclipsed, by new approaches that draw much more of cultural and political analyses, viewing childhood less as a stand-alone empirical and universalist account of 'development' shared by all children, and rather more as reflecting the new postcolonial emphasis on cultural difference and the fashionable historicism in the human science that tends to challenge developmentalism as an ideology.

Also, philosophers since Plato have had an ambiguous relationship to children and childhood. On the one hand many philosophers have seen the importance of childhood to their philosophical positions; on the other hand there are very few philosophical accounts devoted to investigations of childhood and children in its own right. This ambiguity corresponds with tendencies in the ideologies tacit in our many different approaches to children. On the one hand this ideology is very attentive to children and childhood: we care about children and try to understand them socially and psychologically; children's education are often debated issues among politicians and children's political, legal and moral rights are widely discussed; on the other hand, children rarely are understood on their own terms and children tend to be seen as cultural others in societies where the terms for the good life are set by adults. Despite our care for our children we may even speak of this tacit ideology as a form of racism, or in David Kennedy's words, a form of 'adulthood'.

The history of adulthood in the west—in the privileged, patriarchal West anyway, which is mostly what we have a record of—is characterized by an attitude toward children and childhood that I have called "adulthood." Like racism, ethnocentrism, and sexism, adulthood is based on what appear to empirical differences—in anatomy, neural development, ego-structure, psychoculture, size, and physical strength. These "real" differences very often lead to "subspeciation," or the tendency to regard treat certain human others implicitly as if they were members of a separate human species (Kennedy 2006, p. 63).

If there is some truth in this description of our lives with children it is well worth investigating how, when and if, 'adulthood' works out in different accounts of children and childhood. In this paper we briefly explore how adulthood may distort philosophical and psychological accounts of children and childhood, despite other strengths of the accounts. We investigate and profile a range of different accounts without claiming to cover

all that philosophers have said about children and childhood that may be relevant to our claims. However, the examples we have chosen shows that Kennedy's worry of adultism may be as much a worry in philosophical accounts of children as in more everyday approaches to children.

Though all these account provides some important perspectives on childhood we conclude by sketching out what is lacking in these accounts or approaches to children and childhood and what kind of philosophical works may remedy this. We suggest that what is needed is a philosophy that (i) can reveal where and when 'adultism' takes place (i.e. a philosophical cultural critique); (ii) a philosophy that can present ideological alternatives to the adultist tendencies we find in some of the philosophical accounts here; and (iii) a philosophy that can account for how positions on childhood is dependent on our previous and current ways of talking and thinking about, and interacting with, children. Accordingly we need a philosophy of childhood that involves is both historicized and which provides ways for us to work on our subjective experiences of children and childhood. We find that one point of departure for such a philosophy may be in Wittgenstein's discussions of seeing aspects. We suggest that Wittgenstein's considerations sustained by Foucauldian historicized accounts can help to establish a discourse concerning children and childhood the brings awareness of children similar to how postcolonial theory, feminism and queer theory has affected our experience in their respective areas. This is a move from an ahistorical and psychologized account of childhood to a historical and subjectivized account.

## **Part I. Philosophical and Psychological Views of Childhood**

### *Rousseau, Romanticism and Childhood*

No doubt there we find grounds for both hope and despair in many philosophers accounts of childhood. In Rousseau we find this as a general characteristic of his whole philosophy. "For Rousseau, nature is a wise guide, man is an open question, and history is a tale of horror" (Kelly 2001, p. 8). Rousseau believed natural state of man was inheritably good, but that man and his social institutions, though necessary, tends to spoil everything. Rousseau's hope is instead directed to the birth of the child as a new beginning (see e.g. *Julie, or, The new Heloise* V, 610 & 740-41). Accordingly, for Rousseau the child represents a return to nature.

This appears have been a major theme in Rousseau's *Émile*, which can be seen as Rousseau's answer to his discouraging view of history, of his understanding of the paradoxical condition of man as both a moral and historical agent, as both responsible and victimized. *Émile* is Rousseau's attempt to show how nature, as a new beginning, may work its way into society "without the awful wrench that most men suffer" (Kelly 2001, p. 25). It is not difficult to see why the child is of great importance to Rousseau's philosophical, political and literary project in general. However, we must remember that this turn to childhood seen in the light of Rousseau's other works is a means to manifest how man can exist both for himself and others, which makes *Émile* a pivotal work of Rousseau's.<sup>2</sup>

Interestingly many of Rousseau's views on children predate modern psychologists such as Piaget and Vygotsky in that it presents children's development through different stages. The first significant stage for Rousseau being the age of twelve. Before that stage education, he suggests, is to be purely negative in that consists in keeping the child harming itself, letting the child discover nature by itself (Rousseau 1979, pp. 93 & 171). This is developed in his discussions on infancy and childhood in *Emile* (Book I and II). Here the tutor simply sets the scene in which the child is faced with the necessities of nature. The next stage between childhood and puberty the child is presented with what is useful (Book III) and from there moral notions and distinctions (Book IV). Despite its similarities with modern psychology we must keep in mind that *Émile* differs from Piaget and Vygostky in that it in some sense is neither history nor theory. Clearly, *Émile* is not only a pedagogical treatise it is also a work of literature, something Rousseau seemed to have been very much aware of (O'Hagan 1999, pp. 59-60). Thus we should read the work as a narrative, telling a story about the growth and development of a particular child. Rousseau addresses the problem of how an individual can resist dependence on society by going through a particular kind of education. Which must, according to the

story in *Emile*, consist in Emile's own discoveries of nature. The boy Emile is led by his tutor to see particular aspects of nature that will help him find his way around his natural surroundings without imposition from the rest of society. In reading this as literature we are led to discover the nature of the child *Émile*.

Like the children of Arendt's (1961) "The Crisis in Education" *Émile* was to be kept and protected from society until he had the tools to approach public life. Although this aspect of *Émile* may seem somewhat limiting for the child it is a way in which Rousseau wants to keep the child independent. In *Émile* we are continually reminded that the child needs time to develop according to its own pace (Parry 2001, pp. 252-255). Which means the child both is in need of protection and someone in which we put our hope for a free and just society in the future. This may seem as a very reasonable idea. However, the view is far too idealistic. The focus on protecting children seems blind to children's actual circumstances. We live, and have perhaps always lived, in a world where children are introduced to society long before they are prepared to resist the pressures of society, not even the most horrific ones. In addition children has very few opportunities where their voices can have the bearing necessary to be fully involved in society. Thus children has neither protection nor freedom and Rousseau's *Émile* is in danger of just being a beautiful story, and perhaps even useless as a tool to give children both protection and a voice in society. As long as the *Émiles* in our post-modern world are involved in society, we rather need a philosophy that calls our attention to what captures children in society and liberates them from societal oppression. In short Rousseau's views are too romanticized and abstract to be plausible as doesn't deal with our realities where children already are deeply embedded in society (Simon, 1998).

Of course Rousseau's turn to childhood was both criticized and praised by other romantic thinkers. Schiller, for example, thought of childhood as an innocent state to which the individual and society should return. Childhood becomes at once a goal and a point of departure. Still this is no backward movement to Schiller. The romantic poet and philosopher always lead us forward and thus to a new state of innocence reached through a returning to an ideal state. As in Rousseau this is a return to a state of nature. However, unlike Rousseau, the romantic ideal of childlike state of nature, as it is conceived in Schiller, is an ultimate end. Also this ideal is not depicted as a frictionless move from childhood into adulthood and towards a new childhood. Rather, Schiller thinks of this progression as something like a Hegelian struggle. David Kennedy writes,

For Schiller the human ontological vocation is to build—in a dialectical overcoming of the polarization of spirit and matter, of reason and the sensuous— a "third joyous kingdom of play and of semblance, in which man is released from all that might be called constraint, whether physical and moral" (Kennedy 2006, p. 54).

This is a state where the many antitheses of human life may be synthesized. It is a new way of living where children's play represent a harmonious interaction between the self and the world, not subject to the outer world, but at the same time interacting with it. "Man plays only when he is in full sense of the word a man, and *he is only wholly a man when he is playing*" (Schiller 2004, p. 80).

The appeal of the romantic vision of childhood is that it recognizes that even the child is faced with a dialectical struggle between the world and the self. Education is thus conceived as a revolutionary process in which adults return to a state where they can have a playful interaction with the world. This return to childhood is not for the adult to become a child, but for the adult to reactivate her childhood in herself. The Romantics, like Rousseau and Schiller, seems to secularize the Christian idea that entering into heaven requires that we become like little children (Kennedy 2006, p. 52). Still, such a philosophy of childhood is fruitless unless it pays attention to our historical and present day conceptions of childhood, children's play and our interactions with children.

Jean Piaget explained in the first lecture of *Genetic Epistemology* (1968) that it 'attempts to explain knowledge, and in particular scientific knowledge, on the basis of its history, its sociogenesis, and especially the psychological origins of the notions and operations upon which it is based.' Using this method Piaget contribution to our understanding of human development and children's thinking is inestimable. Piaget himself noted that it is not possible to understand the psychology of human development without making epistemological assumptions which includes an understanding of the flawed nature of the central ideas of empiricism, nativism and functionalism. By contrast, Piaget adopts a form of constructivism that suggests that knowledge develops through the child's actions on the world and is tied to a particular structure that emerges as the knowing subject interacts with the world. Influenced by the French structuralist group of mathematicians called Bourbaki, Piaget identifies three cognitive structures that characterize children's thinking as it develops: sensorimotor, concrete operational and formal. While he provides formal and logical descriptions of these structures he also denies that there are any general stages or single structure governing all thought, emotion and action (Muller et al, 2009). Psychologists and educationalists have failed to understand Piaget's theory because they have not grasped the epistemological core of his research program (Marshall & Peters, 1986). His work was thus much influenced by prevailing ideas of structuralism and hermeneutics and, indeed, he publishes a book entitled *Structuralism* (1968) where he discusses the three key components of the concept of a structure: the view of a system as a whole instead of so many parts; the study of the transformations in the system; and the fact that these transformations never lead beyond the system but always engender elements that belong to it and preserve its laws. He also illustrates how this concept appears in mathematics and logic (group theory, general algebra); physics and biology (structural models of causality, homeostasis); psychology (the laws of Gestalt, the structure of intelligence); linguistics (synchronics, generative grammars); social sciences (analytic, global and anthropological structuralism); and philosophy (dialectic, epistemology). Piaget's cognitive structuralism has influenced many philosophers including Thomas Kuhn's paradigms, Jürgen Habermas' reworking of historical materialism, and Lawrence Kohlberg's stages of moral development.

Piaget's theory of the qualitative changes in representation and understanding that constitutes development has come in for criticism on the ground that many basic features of understanding are present at birth or shortly after and that stages are not invariant or indeed dependent on one another. Neo-Piagetians now tend to examine a wider range of behavior including the emotions even though they hold to the core of the research program which is anchored in a sensitivity to numbers, a reflection of the Bourbaki group's influence on Piaget. There is no doubt that Piaget is one the central figures in the cognitive revolution that took first an 'information-processing' and then a 'discursive' turn to close out the twentieth century. The new cognitive science initiated by Jerome Bruner and G.A. Miller and P.N. Johnson-Laird developed from computation as the prime example of mental activity leading to an understanding of the brain as hardware. It was based on the revival of mentalistic concepts in psychology and Rom Harré charts the rise of 'discursive' psychology based on Wittgenstein's critique of Cartesian picture of understanding as a set of inner processes and the assertion of the central place of discourse. The main principles of the second cognitive revolution understood psychological phenomena to be features of public discourse, where 'individual and private uses of symbolic systems, which in this view constitute thinking, are derived from interpersonal discursive processes that are the main features of the human environment' and 'the production of psychological phenomena, such as emotions, decisions, attitudes, personality displays, and so on, in discourse still depends upon the skill of the actors, their relative moral standing in the community, and the story lines that unfold' (Harré & Gillet 1994, p. 27).

Wittgenstein's philosophical critique of Descartes' mentalism helps to enable a discursive shift in psychology that leads to the fundamental recognition of the centrality of language and discourse (and also of narrative in narrative psychology) and what Harré calls 'positioning theory' that emphasizes the moral

contexts of intentional action (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999, Harré et al, 2009; see also Howie & Peters, 1996; Peters & Appel, 1996).

### *Children's Rights*

Much has been written about children's rights, both by philosophers (Archard, 1993) and within other disciplines treating more legal and political aspects of children's rights. To some extent UN's Convention of the Rights of the Child has resulted in a particular attention to this issue. In the U.S. a movement concerned with children's rights have to a large extent emerged out of the attention to unprivileged groups that can be traced back to the Civil Rights movement of the sixties. Similar movements were growing in Europe at that time which culminated in the 1970's (Archard, 1993 pp. 45-51). Still those movements may be said to have started much earlier in Europe. One example is the writings and works of individuals such as Janusz Korczak who struggled against governments to help orphan children. Those individuals, at least in Korczak's case, seemed take upon themselves the endless task of giving relief to children in societies where few cared about them. Korczak believed that this was the result of a tacitly learned attitude towards unprivileged groups. He said that we "teach indifference towards the weak by our own example" (Korczak 1992, p. 162). Korcsak's foremost example of such unhappy teaching was the lack of legal rights of children. We can hear the Korczak anticipating this declaration and UN's convention in his major text *How to love a child* (1920).

For years I have been observing the quite sadness of sensitive children and the brazen antics of grownups. The child has a right to be himself, has a right to respect. Before you make revolutions, before you make wars, think first of these proletarians with short legs, think first of the child (Korczak, in Kulawiec, 1992, p. xiv).

Even earlier in the constitution for his Jewish orphanage he writes about the children has "the right to be loved, to be right to be listened to, the right to respect, the right to past and present and to a future" (Kulawiec 1992, p. xiv). This invocation of the discourse of rights from individuals such as Korczak seems to have been a result of the frustrating insight that the work of one man or women or groups of people is not only insufficient, but incapable to promote lasting change. As so many feminists realize, to protect and empower children when need changes in both the mentality of the public and in the societal practices that make children particularly vulnerable.

Another European example, perhaps with a stronger impact on policy with more lasting effects, is the founding of Save the Children in the U.K. in 1919, its twin organisation Rädde Barnen (Save the Children) in Sweden later that same year and, together with other local organisations, the organising of the International Save the Children Union in Genève 1920. Though at first the organisation's primary focus where on professional charity for children (and mothers), the focus slightly evolved to promoting the establishment of laws and policy documents to protect children, which resulted in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child adopted by The League of Nations in Genève 1923. These are responses to more practical issues concerning the rights of children and the use of the discourse of rights is to make claims for children. These efforts of course culminated in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) ratified by all UN nations except United States and Somalia ([http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=IV-11&chapter=4&lang=en](http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-11&chapter=4&lang=en) 2010 May 11), with additional protocols added to respond attention to further protection of newly recognised violations against children.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed not only the rights discourse in general have been challenged, but also the idea of children's rights. Some argue that a rights approach seems too oriented around western institutions and practices and that is not as applicable in other contexts. Accordingly the level of commitment to the CRC differs radically between different nations. Others argue that the rights discourse is misleading when applied to issues concerning children. Although one may recognise that giving children rights is useful for protecting children, it can be argued that giving rights also result in obscuring children's need for protection by leaving them with the responsibility to claim their rights and thus conceiving them as independent and capable of

governing their own lives to further degree than they actually are (Benporath, 2003). This however confuses the use of the notion right as referring to CRC and similar documents and moral rights as philosophers discuss them.

Philosophers such as Locke, Mill, Kant, Bentham have all attended specifically to questions of the moral status of children and in such discussions worked on the notion of children's rights long before any of the discussion of children's rights responded to the need for conventions to protect children. The emphasis by all those philosophers was quite different. Locke, Mill and Bentham wished to qualify their different conceptions of freedom and claimed that freedom was dependent on having certain capabilities (though there opinions differed somewhat on what those capabilities where). The moral status of children is, they agree, a matter of paternalistic protection until children mature in the relevant capabilities (Turner & Matthews, 1998).

Kant had a somewhat more complicated view, at least if we turn to where he discusses rights within the family. To him it is impossible to fully conclude when children, or anyone, become free. Freedom, in ourselves and others, is just something we have to presume in moral discourse. We may then consider children as free and as such possessors of rights. Accordingly Kant acknowledges a tension between the rights and responsibility of the parent and the rights of the child and we are forced to consider both as having rights. Kant does not do a lot with these ideas, but he does point towards what seems to be at stake here. Giving children moral and legal rights inflicts on the right of parents, which are rights that gives them paternal responsibilities to protect children – i.e. the conflict between the rights of child and the child's need for protection (Kant 1996, 6:280-82). This tension appears both in considering children's legal and moral rights.

Concerning legal rights it is quite clear, assuming the law is well formulated, what the right consists in, who it involves and who's responsibility it is not fulfil. In the CRC this is quite clear. The ratifying nation and its institutions has taken the responsibility to fulfil the convention and it concerns children, defined as individuals under the age of eighteen unless the age of majority is reached earlier in the considered nation. Such legal approach to rights, depending on the right under discussion, must not involve any particular capabilities on the child's part and it is not up to the individual child to claim its rights. The legal approach to children's rights is instead subject for investigation a criticism of another kind. Do these rights really protect the child? Are they too controlling and limit the freedom of the child? Do they correspond with our moral responsibilities?

If children are taken as possessors of moral rights the role of individual child's capabilities are somewhat different. Locke, Mill, Bentham, and to some degree Kant, require some capability on part of the child (e.g. rationality or certain sensibilities). Nonetheless, if our conception of childhood is historicized and if our conception of children's moral status is constitutive of what we see them as – i.e. our (inter)subjective understanding of them – another approach to philosophy of childhood is possible. We need a philosophy of childhood that, without confusing the issues at stake, can reconcile the activism of Korczak and the legal and moral tendencies in the discourse children's rights. We believe that this is possible through working through a historicized and subjectivized form of philosophy we find in Foucault and Wittgenstein.

## **Part II. Historical Views on Childhood**

### *A Cultural History of Childhood*

'the history of childhood is a nightmare from which we have only begun to awaken. The further back in history one goes, the lower the level of child care, and the more likely children are to be killed, abandoned, beaten, terrorized, and sexually abused' (de Mause 1974, p. 30).

In *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime* (published in English in 1962 as *Centuries of Childhood*) Philippe Ariès (1960) documented the view that childhoods in Europe's Middle Ages and early modern period were not a happy time of transition and by contrast with contemporary childhood, these periods

lacked sentiment either in their preparation for adulthood through education or in terms of domestic affection within the family and household. Children were miniature adults and the notion of childhood was a social construction that appeared some time after 1500. Ariès detected the change in paintings of the seventeenth century. After Ariès and particularly in the 1970s the history of childhood was pursued assiduously by an army of researchers that took issue with Aries.

Aries' work on the purpose of the school and the social production of the child foreshadows an approach developed by Michael Foucault (1977) in *Discipline and Punish*, and work by his student Jacques Donzelot. Thereafter historians entered into a debate with Aries. Some argued that Aries did not take seriously enough the growth of welfare agencies that removed aspects of child welfare from the home. Others argued that the focus should be the growth of individualism central to the development of capitalism. Aries was taken to task on the 'discovery of childhood' emphasizing a history of continuity and uneven change. Materialist historians argued that Aries did not emphasize economic change strongly enough (see Frost, 2005).

Lloyd deMause (1988; see also 1974) maintained that 'the history of childhood had showed slow and steady progress over time, and that it was an evolutionary process which was determined mainly by psychodynamics within the parent-child relationship, rather than primarily by economic factors.' Reflecting on writing childhood history deMause (1988) argues that it has just begun and employing the approach of psychohistory, a field helped to invent, he writes:

If childhood history-and psychohistory-mean anything, they mean reversing most of the causal arrows used by historians to date. Rather than our historical model being one where an overpowering world inexorably impresses itself upon the tabula rasa of the mind, the world itself will instead be viewed as a tabula rasa which is only given meaning and form by each new generation by an evolving mind (and an evolving brain) (119) whose structure is formed by parent-child interaction. Such a paradigm shift will not be easy to accomplish.

The next paradigm shift was not psychohistorical but rather discursive, after Michel Foucault who also provided new insights into the regulation and control of young children through the analysis of disciplinary power and governmentality. Foucault's studies were relatively slow to impact the field of education (Peters & Besley, 2007; Besley & Peters, 2008; Peters et al, 2009) and only recently beginning to be taken up by those in early childhood education (Gibbons, 2007; Fenech et al, 2008; Cohen, 2008).

#### *Foucault, Donzelot and the Politics of Childhood*

In 1966 Foucault's *Les Mots and les choses* (translated as *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, 1970) was published. As he argued in that text: 'Structuralism is not a new method; it is the awakened and troubled consciousness of modern thought' (Foucault 1973, p. 208). Yet in the Foreword to the English edition, Foucault also remarked:

The problem of the subject. In distinguishing between the epistemological level of knowledge (or scientific consciousness) and the archaeological level of knowledge, I am aware I am advancing in a direction that is fraught with difficulty... I do not wish to deny the validity of intellectual biographies, or the possibility of a history of theories, concepts, or themes. It is simply that I wonder whether such descriptions are themselves enough, whether they do justice to the immense density of discourse, whether there do not exist, outside their customary boundaries, systems of regularities that have a decisive role in the history of the sciences (Foucault 1972, pp. xiii-xiv).

*The Order of Things* proposes an archaeology of the human sciences based upon discovering the laws, regularities and rules of the formation of systems of thought which emerged in the nineteenth century. Foucault distinguishes three epistemes or system of thought, each with its own distinctive structure: the Renaissance, the classical age and the modern age. Strongly influenced by Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*

(1887) and his 'critique of humanism', Foucault embraces a variation of the 'death of God' when he suggests: 'In our day, and once again Nietzsche indicated the turning-point from a long way off, it is not so much the absence or death of God that is affirmed as the end of man ...'and continues 'As the archaeology of our thought easily shows, man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end' (Foucault 1973, pp. 385, 387).

The shift from the archaeological to genealogical investigation in Foucault's writings is well represented in *Discipline and Punish*, a work that has direct relevance to educational theory. Like *The History of Sexuality*, *Discipline and Punish* exhibits a Nietzschean genealogical turn focused upon studies of the *will to knowledge* understood as reflecting both discursive and non-discursive (i.e., institutional) practices and, in particular, the complex relations among power, knowledge and the body. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault is concerned with the body as an object of certain disciplinary technologies of power and he examines the genealogy of forms of punishment and the development of the modern penal institution, discussing in turn torture (beginning with the gruesome account of Damien the regicide), punishment (with clear echoes of Nietzsche's [1956, pp. 213] famous list of meanings in the *Genealogy*), discipline, and the prison.

The section on 'discipline', organised into three sections, respectively 'docile bodies', 'the means of correct training' and 'panopticism', includes an account of the ways during the seventh and eighteenth centuries the disciplines became general formulas of domination. Foucault claims that this new political anatomy was evidenced in a multiplicity of often minor processes at different locations that eventually coalesced into a general method: 'They [i.e., disciplinary techniques] were at work in secondary education at a very early date, later in primary schools; they slowly invested the space of the hospital; and, in a few decades, they restructured the military organization' (Foucault 1991, p. 138). Foucault talks of disciplinary techniques in terms of 'the art of distributions,' (the monastic model of enclosure became the most perfect educational regime and "partitioning" (every individual had his or her own place)). 'The rule of functional sites' refers to the ways that architects designed space to correspond to the need to supervise and to prevent 'dangerous communication.' Foucault argues 'the organization of a serial space was one of the great technical mutations of elementary education' (ibid., p. 147) that made it possible to supersede the traditional apprenticeship system where the pupil spends a few minutes with the master while the rest of the group remains idle.

Foucault also details 'the control of activities' including the timetable, what he calls 'the temporal elaboration of the act' (e.g., marching), and the correlation of the body and the gesture (e.g. 'good handwriting... presupposes a gymnastics', as well as other aspects.

He writes:

To sum up, it might be said that discipline creates out of the bodies it controls four types of individuality, or rather an individuality that is endowed with four characteristics; it is cellular (by play of spatial distribution), it is organic (by the coding of activities), it is genetic (by the accumulation of time), it is combinatory (by the composition of forces). And, in doing so, it operates four great techniques; it draws up tables; it prescribes movements; it imposes exercises; lastly, in order to obtain the combination of forces, it arranges 'tactics' (Foucault 1991, p. 167).

He discusses the means of correct training in terms of 'hierarchical observation' as he suggests 'the school building was to be a mechanism for training ... a "pedagogical machine," (ibid., p. 172) normalizing judgement, and the examination. The examination "transformed the economy of visibility into the exercise of power,' introduced individuality into the field of documentation,' and 'surrounded by all its documentary techniques, ...[made] each individual a "case"'(ibid, pp. 187-88). Most famously, Foucault, discusses 'panopticism'— a system of surveillance, based on Jeremy Bentham's architectural figure, that operates by permitting the relentless and continual observation of inmates at the periphery by officials at the center, without them ever being seen.

*Discipline and Punish* is concerned with the operation of technologies of power and their relations to the emergence of knowledge in the form of new discourses, based around modes of objectification through which human beings became subjects. It is a theme that Foucault develops further in his work on the history of sexuality. Foucault asks:

Why has sexuality been so widely discussed and what has been said about it? What were the effects of power generated by what was said? What are the links between these discourses, these effects of power, and the pleasures that were invested by them? What knowledge was formed as a result of this linkage? (Foucault 1979, p. 11)

It is in the course of his inquiries into sexuality and the proliferation of associated discourses that Foucault coins the term 'bio-power' considered as a kind of anatomo-politics of the human body and control of the population at large.

In his so-called final "ethical" phase, Foucault is said to move "back to the subject", to the ethics of self-formation considered as an ascetic practice. Foucault argues that "work" done on the self is not to be understood in terms of traditional left wing models of liberation but rather as (Kantian) practices of freedom, for there is no essential, hidden, or true self, for Foucault, "concealed, alienated, or imprisoned in and by mechanisms of repression" (Foucault 1997, p. 283) that is in need of liberation but only a hermeneutics of the self, a set of practices of self-interpretation. Foucault emphasises that freedom is the ontological condition for ethics and, in his works on the history of sexuality, he returns to the Stoics to entertain the notion of "care for the self" which has priority over and develops earlier than "care for others."

In *The Policing of the Family* (1997) originally published in 1977 Donzelot gives us an historical review of the French government's attempt to engineer society and homogenize family structures. He documents the 'preservation of children', 'government through the family' (normalization and moralization), 'the tutelary complex' and the 'regulation of images'. Donzelot traces the transition of control from the Church where priests constructed the images of the 'ideal' family to educational, judicial, medical and psychiatric constructed images of the ideal family. In his Preface 'The Rise of the Social' Gilles Deleuze describes the forcefulness with which Donzelot reconstructs the genesis of 'the social' in the 'juvenal court' and in the 'whole circle of tutors and technicians who press closely in upon the shattered or "liberalized" family' (p. x). As he also explains 'Donzelot's method is genealogical, functional, and strategic which bespeaks his considerable debt to Michel Foucault and also to Robert Castel' (p. xi). He speaks of three lines of mutation in the French family: first the criticism of wet nurses and servants and a bad public economy that encourages the poor to leave their children to the State; second, the way in which marital values detach themselves from familial values; third, the conjugal family frees itself from the head of the family that is illustrated in rising divorce, increase in abortion and loss of paternal authority; fourth, the new alliance between medicine and the State.

In the Preface to the English Edition Donzelot recounts how the book was addressed to three discourses: Marxism, feminism and psychoanalysis. 'The family' he suggests, 'is the concrete locus where these discourses implicitly converge' (p. xix). As he goes on to explain 'For Marxists, the family is an apparatus indispensable to the bourgeois order' and its function is to reproduce the ruling ideology; for feminists, history is weighed down by the patriarchal domination essentially unchanged for centuries; for psychoanalysts, the Freudian theory of sexuality provides a pseudo-scientific explanation of sexual racism yet it was the only discourse that could help resist the fascist discourse of eugenics. Donzelot uncovers in each the hard core of ideology and its limitations in representing the family. He also take issue with Aries and others and by contrast to the attempt to reconstitute the reality of the traditional family he details governmentality as the method that makes the family intelligible only by studying 'the system of relations it maintains with the sociopolitical systems' (p. xxviii) thereby gaining an insight into the changing form of the 'liberal family' or rather the family form in liberal societies. He also forecast the changing center from laws reorganizing family life at the end of the nineteenth century to those pertaining to labor and he asks 'how did

we pass from a usage of ‘the social’ understood as the problem of poverty, the problem of others, to its current definition in terms of a general solidarity and the production of a life-style’? (p. xxvii).

### **Part III. Towards a Historicized and Subjectivized Philosophy of Childhood**

The historicized approaches to children that we find in part II clarifies that childhood and children are subject to how we see them. The ways we live with, think of, talk about and treat children (the grammar of “child”) manifest what a child is and what the word “child” means to us; as Wittgenstein says: “Grammar tells what kind of object anything is” (1953, § 373).

One problem with the romantic philosophy of childhood was that it instead of investigating the grammar of “childhood” assumed an ahistorical ontology of childhood that served as a guide to how to approach children and their education philosophically. The Piagetian approach and the rights approach also seem insensitive to how we actually live with children and in particular to the role our interactions for understanding children. This is deeply problematic since although children may not have many opportunities for expressing their voices in those interactions by not paying close attention to those interactions philosophy cannot be sensitive at all to how children give voice to themselves and how they construct themselves in those interactions. Philosophy, instead of liberating children, runs the danger of reducing them to complete silence. Philosophy of childhood may be as adultist as the adultism it attacks.

Accordingly to introduce a philosophy of childhood that can have the same kind of bearing as, for example, feminism we need to see our social worlds differently and this vision needs to be based on our actual interactions with children. We need to see aspects of our lives and possible lives that we previously been blind to. We should direct our attention towards Wittgensteinian grammar – i.e. how we speak to and about children; and how our linguistic practices themselves gives us views on children that blinds us of further ways to understand and interact with children. Here Wittgenstein’s work on seeing aspects is helpful.

In many ways we speak of children as a special kind of human being. We see some human beings as children who in many of our institutions are treated as human “not-yets” (Ohlson 2009). As our institutions are constituted children are “not yet” ready to participate in political deliberations, to vote, to drive a car, to work, to make certain decisions about their lives. They are “not-yets” because our attitude towards them is different than our attitude towards other beings we interact with. We do not expect animals to ever be involved in deliberations the way we expect children to.

In Wittgenstein’s analysis of seeing aspects there is no necessity in seeing a certain aspect of something. Wittgenstein distinguishes between two ways of seeing or two different uses of the word “seeing”. We say, “I see that man” and refer to our perception of that man, but we can also say “Oh, now I see a resemblance between those two faces.” The latter is matter of seeing a certain aspect and is according to Wittgenstein not “a part of perception.” Rather than being a perception of something, seeing an aspect, or seeing something as something, is shown in our attitude towards what we see (Wittgenstein 1953, p. 152, 175, 182). Our attitude to a face that we come to see as smiling is very different from the attitude to the same face if we do not recognise its expression as a smile.

Similarly it is a certain attitude towards children that give us the impression that they are “not-yets.” As Cavell says in giving an example of a slave-owner who is able to see some human beings as slaves, we have that kind of power over the other (Cavell 1979, p. 377 cf. Johansson, 2009). This power is not only conceptual, it’s not only about grasping something, to see something as something, a human as a slave, or as a child, is as much about our sensibilities and attitudes towards a certain object (we behave differently towards a human that is a slave or a child), it is a thinking with the body, or perhaps better put, “the conceptual is at the same time , and sometimes primarily, sensible and mimetic” (Krebs 2010, p. 127). To see our power relations with children differently concequently means to live our lives very different; it means that we feel and response to children to children differently; and it means that our institutions must allow us to interact with children as something else than “not-yets”. Thus philosophy of childhood must not only be historicized, but also subjectivized. It must work on our sensibilities as much as our minds.

The accounts of the romantics, in psychology, in the rights discourses quite clearly have had an impact on our lives and views of childhood; and the historical accounts clearly shows that the grammar of childhood has evolved and gone through several dramatic changes. Our attitudes towards children have changed in the past and are likely to change in the future and there is hope for what a historicized and subjectivized approach to philosophy of childhood can accomplish.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> In this regard we can mention also the journal *Childhood and Philosophy* at <http://www.periodicos.proped.pro.br/index.php?journal=childhood&page=index>. The focus and scope of editorial policy makes interesting reading as the following excerpt indicates: 'Childhood and philosophy is a journal which has been waiting to be born at least since Socrates sat down in the unique (at least for us) shelter of the 5th century BC pólis and founded a discipline. The journal's conception lies much, much later, in the fateful historical meeting between childhood education and philosophy. This meeting, in turn, had to wait for Rousseau's mantic pronouncements of the *Emile*, sent like a letter in a bottle to the approaching revolution, and for the slow development, over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, of a kind of adult actually capable of listening to children, much less of hearing them. This, in turn, required the romantic deconstruction of that very enlightened (male) adult whom, we must admit, made revolution possible.'
- <sup>2</sup> In the *Confessions* (p. 529-30) Rousseau admits that he considers *Emile* to be his most important work.
- <sup>3</sup> One example of this is the protocols added 2000 on children in armed conflicts and (see United Nations Treaty Collection: *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict*. [http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=IV-11-b&chapter=4&lang=en](http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-11-b&chapter=4&lang=en) & United Nations Treaty Collection: *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography* [http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=IV-11-c&chapter=4&lang=en](http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-11-c&chapter=4&lang=en)).

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