The Child

FIRST ISSUE

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FIRST ISSUE—THE CHILD

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About a Boy

JULIE E. HELDT

Nick Hornby, *About a Boy* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1998).

Will Lightman is a 36-year-old modern-day Londoner, a perpetually unemployed bachelor living off the royalties of his father's pop Christmas hit song. His time is spent watching daytime television, calculating his "coolness" factor with the help of glossy magazine questionnaires, taking the occasional weekend getaway, and some causal dating. "It was all a dreamy alternative reality that didn't touch his real life, whatever that was, at all" (p. 82).

Nick Hornby's story begins with the development of Will's latest "occupation": masquerading as the recently divorced father of an imaginary son at a local single-parent support group. Will's purpose and hope is to meet beautiful single mothers who, from his deductions, are subconsciously only interested in sexy rebound relationships. Quite comfortable in his shallow existence, Will unexpectedly finds himself caught in the middle of a potentially meaningful relationship when he meets the twelve-year-old son of a depressed hippie single mother. Marcus is prematurely wise but terribly "uncool." He begins to threaten Will's alternative reality. Will "had imagined entering their world, he hadn't foreseen that they might be able to penetrate his. [Marcus] was one of life's visitors; [Will] didn't want to be visited" (p. 105).

Marcus, who in many ways is Will's polar opposite, interferes in Will's current scheme to maintain an endless stream of superficial relationships when he begins to frequent Will's flat, uninvited. "Will didn't like the connection he had made very much, because it meant that if he had any decency in him at all he would have to take Marcus under his wing, use his own experience of growing up with a batty parent to guide the boy through to a place of safety. He didn't want to do that, though. It was too much work, and involved too much contact with people he didn't understand and didn't like, and he preferred watching *Countdown* on his own anyway" (p. 141).

It is during these afternoon visits that Will begins to surrender himself to a relationship. Giving Marcus, who is often the victim of middle-school cruelty, lessons in pop culture and the art of being cool, Will is given the opportunity to recover his notion of fatherhood, damaged by having been raised by a "batty parent." "The thing was, Will had spent his whole life avoiding real stuff. He was, after all, the son and heir of the man who wrote *Santa's Super Sleigh*. Santa Claus, whose existence most adults had real cause to doubt, bought him everything he wore and ate and drank and sat on and lived in; it could reasonably be argued that reality was not in his genes" (p. 117).

The beauty of the connection is that what Marcus needs is exactly what Will can give: the skills to survive the demands of his daily life. By becoming present to Marcus despite his own initial resistance, Will teaches him something simple but vital: how to be a twelve-year-old boy. And it is this experience that begins the maturing of Will's own heart, preparing him for an encounter with something and someone beyond himself. Rachel is a beautiful, intelligent woman who belongs to a group of friends

"who could not control themselves, or protect themselves, people who, if only temporarily, were no longer content to occupy their own space, people who could no longer rely on a new jacket, a bag of grass and an afternoon rerun of *The Rockford Files* to make them complete" (p. 191). Accepting that such substitutes for reality have made him "ugly and monosyllabic", Will slowly begins his entry into this community of real, beautiful, and vulnerable men and women.

About a Boy is a story about two boys: a man who still behaves like a boy and a boy who grew up too soon. Each liberates the other. But both "had to lose things in order to gain other things. Will had lost his shell and his cool and his distance, and he felt scared and vulnerable, but he got to be with Rachel… and Marcus had lost himself, and got to walk home from school with his shoes on" (p. 306). It is about how to be a boy, and how to begin to be a father.

FILM: Temple Grandin

SARA PERLA

Mick Jackson, *Temple Grandin* (HBO 2010).

Temple Grandin is an example of a film with an implicitly pro-life message. Based on the true story of Temple Grandin, a woman with autism who became an expert on animal husbandry, this biopic shows the inherent value of the person in the face of limitations or disability.

Claire Danes plays the title role with grace, never becoming a caricature of a disabled person. Temple's unique gifts are highlighted, as well as her differences and struggles. At various points in the film, the audience is given a glimpse of the world through Temple's eyes, and challenged to consider that autism may not be just an obstacle to overcome, but a gift that allows the person to see things in a way that others cannot. It is precisely her autism that allows her to design humane treatment in the cattle industry.

Temple's mother Eustacia, played by Julia Ormond, refuses to believe the psychiatrist who blames her for Temple's autism; the dominant thought in the 1960s was that autism was caused by a lack of bonding with the mother. Confident in her own love for her daughter and willing to work with her no matter what, Eustacia continues to expect great things. She is an excellent example of motherhood; she loves Temple unconditionally (and Temple knows it), challenges Temple without becoming demanding, and gives her space and freedom to grow.

Other important characters in the film, including an aunt and a science teacher, show a beautiful willingness to see beyond Temple's autism and encourage her to develop her potential. They see that she is more than her disability. If only we all were as able to see beyond appearances.

Test Tube Babies

JULIANA WEBER

Robin Marantz Henig, *Pandora's Baby: How the First Test Tube Babies Sparked the Reproductive Revolution* (Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, 2004).

Henig writes a journalist's history of the drastic transition in public opinion that in vitro fertilization (IVF) underwent from the heated initial public debates to the time when it became "no longer monstrous[…] almost mundane" (p. 233). The transition cannot be over-stated. A 1969 poll indicated that "more than half of American adults believed[…] in vitro fertilization, artificial insemination, and surrogate mothering" were "against God's will" and would "encourage promiscuity" (p. 50); the same poll taken in 1978 after the birth of the first IVF baby indicated that sixty percent of adults thought IVF should be available to anyone who wanted it (p. 201). Truly, "for the general public[…] once baby Louise arrived, the case was closed. The moment she came out so pretty and pink, IVF had proved its worth" (p. 177). Such a volatile change in public opinion is obviously worth studying more closely.

The main strengths of the text are a colorful writing style, familiarity with the science of IVF and cloning, and a well-researched history of the characters who pioneered IVF and the times in which they lived. At first glance, there appears to be a major disparity between the attention paid to those aspects and the attention paid to the actual public debates, but Henig's point seems to be that, since the debates dragged on with no clear winner, public acceptance of IVF depended on the initial results of IVF. Since the first baby appeared to be just like any other, IVF appeared to be just like the usual means of procuring children.

If the book illustrates one lesson in vivid detail, it is this: never use the slippery slope argument. It only takes one brave researcher to go ahead with experiments and to discover that your slippery slope was an exaggeration. Your slope is a guess beforehand and an almost certain mistake in hindsight, but it is regrettably easy to understand, to remember, and to retell in public debates. It assumes wrongly that people are logically consistent, that they will follow their own logic to its extreme conclusion, something people only ever do slowly. Most fundamentally, the slippery slope argument misses the point: whether there is something wrong with IVF *in itself*, an which is entirely separate question from the question of whether IVF might be used for a darker purpose sometime in the future. Slippery slope arguments stop just short of articulating the essence or inherent logic of the act in itself.

Henig mentions more thoughtful arguments including, among others, the separation of love from procreation (p. 174), the invasiveness of the technique into the intimacy of married life (p. 175), the question of whether IVF enhances the nature and life God has created (p. 174), the time of ensoulment and the predicament of what to do with unnecessary embryos and mistakes (pp. 64, 81, etc.), Ramsey's qualms about the child's inability to consent (p. 71), and C.S. Lewis's fear that we might become petrified in time, no longer advancing as a species (p. 13). However, all of these are passed over quickly without discussion. The one pervasive argument presented against IVF is in fact the slippery slope argument, while the argument in favor is the experience, hopes, and dreams of the persons she

describes.

Henig offers some interesting asides, however. For example, she points out that the longer debates continue ambiguously without clear legislative restrictions and without federal funding, the *less* control over new technology society will have (p. 11). As a rule, private funds come with fewer ethical strings attached. As this trend continues, more becomes normal, even necessary in the minds of some citizens, than might have been the case otherwise. Now, any restrictions at all seem ludicrous to the general public.

I recommend this book highly to anyone wishing a vivid illustration of the problem with slippery slope arguments, the science behind IVF, the history of the general public debate, or some compassion for the couples who so desperately want their own children and for the scientists who want to help them. All of this is essential to thoughtful debate on the issue. And, while I have reservations about Henig's too-brief mentions of substantial arguments, even the oversight or unwillingness itself becomes instructive for the purposes of pastoral and cultural research.

Falling Birthrates

AGATA ROTTKAMP

Phillip Longman, *The Empty Cradle: How Falling Birthrates Threaten World Prosperity and What To Do About It* (New York: Basic Books/Perseus Books, 2004, 240 pages).

On October 31, 2011, the world's population is supposed to have reached seven billion people. Though the Associated Press reported that this milestone was "celebrated" by countries around the world, the popular reaction seems best summed up by the response of a South African woman who named her son, born that day, "Gwakwanele," meaning "enough" in Zulu. Enough - enough children, enough people - the little word perfectly encapsulates the firmly embedded common belief that the world is indeed getting *too* populous, that we are in the midst of a demographic boom which, should it continue, will eventually bring humanity to the brink of extinction as natural resources are depleted and can no longer meet the needs of mankind.

Phillip Longman, demographer and Senior Fellow at the New America Foundation, tackles this notion head-on in *The Empty Cradle: How Falling Birthrates Threaten World Prosperity and What to Do About It*. Taking on the task of teasing out "the deeper, slower movements in history" behind demographic trends, Longman points out that the modern, secular worldview depends on the perception that the world's population will continue to grow. Capitalists, policy makers, environmentalists, feminists: in order to further their agenda, all interest groups rely on the popular belief that there will always be more people. This notion is either touted as a boon, as, for example, in the case of policy makers who consider a growing population necessary to support established social security systems, or as a drawback, as in the case of environmentalists who regard a booming population as *the* problem facing the planet. Most frequently, these two extremes coexist in the public imagination: a fear of what the Malthusian-like population explosion will do to the earth coupled with an unspoken hope that economic growth will continue indefinitely as the upshot of an ever-growing base of customers and workers.

There is truth to the claim that the world's population is increasing; the absolute number of human beings is still growing. However, this growth is taking place against the backdrop of an unprecedented fall in fertility rates - current global birthrates are just half of what they were in 1972. This "loss of momentum" is particularly true for the developed world, but is in evidence in all geographic areas. European countries are seeing the lowest birthrates in recorded history, but rates are also falling in areas once considered highly fertile, such as the Middle East and Asia. Indeed, some 59 countries, home to approximately 44% of the world's population, currently have fertility rates below replacement level. Given these figures, Longman makes the case that it is already inevitable that rapid population aging will take place, and that an absolute fall in population is likely.

More interesting than the statistics, however, is Longman's analysis of this downward trend - its underlying reasons and possible solutions, as well as potential consequences. This analysis, which makes up the bulk of *The Empty Cradle*, is heavily colored by Longman's interest in fiscal policy, but he

weighs cultural aspects in addition to the political and economic. He draws a clear link, for example, between feminism and fertility, pointing out that the best predictor of how many children a woman will bear is her educational level. Longman's writing is at its best when he explores the notion that falling birthrates are the result of a profound change in the human environment. A contrast between primitive and civilized societies illustrates the point: in primitive societies, it is the most powerful and successful members who have the most children, while *the opposite* is true in civilized countries where "materially successful men still have more sex, and more sexual partners, than their less fortunate peers, but produce fewer offspring" (p. 30). What has taken place is a cultural shift resulting in a new paradigm: success means having few, if any, children. Brazil, which never introduced "family planning programs," is a clear example. If not for government intervention, then why have Brazilian birthrates fallen? The answer is simple yet breathtaking: the introduction of television. Exposing the populace to a certain cultural message which is reinforced by "telenovelas" and held up as worthy of imitation has had a dramatic effect.

Longman also examines another common reason cited for choosing not to have children: the high costs associated with raising kids. Though money is never the primary motivator for procreation, he points out that the economic dimension cannot be ignored. In modern societies, parents are expected to bear the entire burden of childrearing without garnering any benefits but pride and joy, if that. That is to say, parents *alone* take responsibility for forming and educating their children. These same children eventually find jobs and pay into programs such as Social Security and Medicare which, in turn, profit *all*members of society, even the childless. Also, couples dealing with a high debt load as a result of an expensive education, and facing the ever-greater expectations on those who would be parents, simply feel that they cannot afford children. It's not a matter of selfishness, Longman insists, for statistics indicate that many wish they had had more children. The problem is not moral, but political: institutional arrangements designed to better society, such as more educational opportunities for workers, income support for the elderly, and greater expectations for child welfare and safety have simply made the cost of parenthood too high.

Longman's ultimate goal is to explore how falling birthrates "threaten world prosperity" and to consider possible solutions to this greater problem, and it is therefore no surprise that the three-pronged approach he proposes addresses human factors in the economy other than fertility rates, such as productive aging and strong families. The final chapter presents a series of policy prescriptions: 1) The introduction of "parental dividends," i.e. substantial tax relief to parents with children under the age of eighteen, which would shift some of the benefits of having children to the parents; 2) policies that encourage more productive aging, such as ones that promote the benefits of physical exercise for the elderly; and, 3) an Allan Carlson-inspired proposal to make the home "the locus of economic activity" by encouraging home-based employment and family businesses. In short, a scenario where there are natural advantages to having children, and where human capital isn't "overconsumed" by making material goods too cheap and children too expensive.

These proposed "solutions" are somewhat disappointing. Early on in the book, Longman claims that "if human population does not wither away in the future, it will be because of a mutation in human culture" (p. 35). And yet, it is not culture that is addressed here, except by way of fiscal policy. Is that enough? By Longman's own admission, European countries that give generous family allowances see some increase in birthrates, but none have reached replacement fertility levels. Indeed, the high cost of children frequently is a real deterrent to procreation, but is there not something more sinister lurking beneath the surface? A lack of understanding of what the child is - not just an investment, or one that gives joy and comfort like a pet, but a gift, an expression of love between the parents and a sign of hope. "Telenovelas" in Brazil do not deplete a family's resources; rather, they introduce the ideal of a

consumption-driven individualism that precludes the very possibility of welcoming another human being for their sake alone. Yes, there is a need for a dramatic change in "the economics of parenthood" - but it is for naught if not accompanied by an internal shift which is capable of seeing a person in terms of love rather than in terms of numbers indicating productivity.

Throughout the book, Longman makes the mistake of seeing man as *homo economicus* - whether this is expressed in terms of falling birthrates (i.e. not enough workers and innovators for the future) or decreased output by the elderly. Therefore, though he (wisely) proposes the need for revaluing the family, by this he means merely a shift from considering the family as a unit of consumption to one "most responsible for human capital formation." In both cases, however, the family remains a group of individuals who remain *per accidens*. The constitutive bonds between family members, relying as they do on the selfless self-giving of the parents, are not worth the mention. But without the categories of love and self-gift, how can the "value of children [be restored] to their parents, and of parents to each other" (p. 196) - which, Longman claims, is the only way that societies can hope to have a future?

A fascinating thread is woven in throughout the book which may explain Longman's reluctance to look at non-fiscal, non-policy - that is, theological or philosophical - solutions. When discussing the potential consequences of falling birthrates, in addition to pointing to the risk of the failure of programs like Medicare and to financial crises which could lead to political unrest, Longman repeatedly returns to the menace of fundamentalism. Even if birthrates continue to fall, there are those who will continue to have children, despite the economic disadvantages this brings. These are people who are "at odds with the modern environment," those who "reject the game," that is modernity, and for whom faith is a primary motivator. These are "fundamentalists," who Longman defines as follows in the Preface (xi): "all who rely on literal belief in ancient myth and legend, whether religious or not, to oppose modern liberal and commercial values," whether Catholic, Islamic or Protestant. Should current downward trends in fertility rates continue, Longman warns that the future will fall into the hands of "those who reject markets, reject learning, reject modernity, and reject freedom" (p. 169), i.e. fundamentalists who will "create an anti-market culture."

Longman's definition of fundamentalism is startlingly broad, and, given the very frequency of warnings against it, his fear thereof just as great - for fundamentalism, in his mind, seems to signify the end of life as we currently know it. And yet, isn't the very culture that Longman wants so badly to preserve the one that is at the root of the problems to begin with? And is it really true that, for example, Catholic "fundamentalists" reject learning and freedom? These allegations raise more questions than can be discussed adequately in the present forum. Suffice it to say that something in the modern environment is preventing couples from welcoming children into their lives, while those who stand apart from "modernity" because of their beliefs still have open arms. Would intellectual honesty alone not dictate exploring the reasons for this? After all, do we want to live in a world where human life is celebrated? Or one where the response to each child is "Gwakwanele" - enough?

Religious Potential

RUTH ASHFIELD

Sofia Cavalletti, *The Religious Potential of the Child (Liturgy Training Publications, 1992)* (Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Publications).
Sofia Cavalletti, *The Religious Potential of the Child 6 to 12 Years Old: A Description of an Experience (Liturgy Training Publications, 2002)* (Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Publications).

"The religious experience is fundamentally an experience of love... We believe that the child, more than any other, has need of love because the child himself is rich in love." So states Sofia Cavalletti, a noted biblical scholar and educator who lived in Rome and passed away in August 2011 at the age of 94 years. She once reluctantly agreed to a friend's request to give Bible study classes to three children, and was so struck by their interest and joy that she devoted the rest of her life to listening, observing and working with children in order to better understand and nurture the child's relationship with God. Together with Gianna Gobbi, a Montessori educator, she developed the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, a unique and profound religious formation for children aged 3-12 years which is now present in North and South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia.

In two beautiful, fascinating, surprising, and sometimes challenging books, *The Religious Potential of the Child* and *The Religious Potential of the Child 6 to 12 Years Old,* Cavalletti offers insights from her 45 years' experience of living religious formation with children, and describes the themes and presentations which make up the program of catechesis. However, as Cavalletti herself explains, "the primary intention is not to propose this program but to share what we have glimpsed of the relationship between God and his creatures." In a similar way this review will not explain the practical details of the catechesis, details which are certainly presented in the texts, but rather focus on Cavalletti's profound contribution to the question of the child and of religious formation, a contribution which the Church of today would do well to consider.

Cavalletti begins with the conviction, rooted in her direct experience with children, that there exists a deep relationship between the child and God, a bond which manifests itself even before any religious education or experience of Church, and which may be described as "the certainty of a presence, a presence of love that attracts with a great force... but appears to await a response." She describes the child as "a metaphysical being, who moves with ease in the world of the transcendent and delights in contact with God," and offers many astonishing examples of this in the first chapter of *RPOC*, "God and the Child."

The primacy of this relationship between God and the child governs the whole of the Good Shepherd catechesis. Cavalletti has seen this bond flourish best through a clear proclamation of the essential truth of our faith: God, who reveals his love through his Christ. She does not believe that deep truths need to be simplified or avoided with children, rather she has seen that "the child is satisfied only with the great and essential things." The child is introduced directly into the mystery of the person of Christ through a few essential themes from the Bible and from Liturgy, which Cavalletti determined upon

after having seen how the children responded to them with depth and joy (see *RPOC* chapters 3-8 and *RPOC 6-12 years* chapters 2-10).

The parable of the Good Shepherd is the central theme for the 3-6 year-old child, revealing the personal love and protective presence of Christ who calls us by name, knows us intimately, and to whom we learn to listen. "Through this parable the child's silent request to be loved and so to be able to love finds response and gratification." For the 6-12 year-old child this image is integrated with that of Jesus as the True Vine (John 15) which introduces the covenant relationship between the Father, Christ, and man, drawing the child into the mystery of a life-giving union with Christ which bears fruit for the world and inviting him to "remain" in this Love.

The depth of wisdom in such an approach to catechesis can be seen in Chapter 9 of *RPOC*, "Moral formation," where Cavalletti makes the strikingly simple point that if we wait to begin religious formation until the age of moral reasoning, as is widespread in the Church today, then "the meeting with God is confused with moral problems, and God will easily come to assume the aspect of judge." Indeed, we risk this being the primary way in which the person relates to God their entire life. Alternatively, Cavalletti has seen how the child who already knows the protective love of the Good Shepherd is able to navigate the moment of moral crisis in the certainty of being loved despited every incapacity. In this way morality can become an orientation of the whole person, a free response by the child to his encounter with the person of Christ, since "it is only in love, and not in fear, that one may have moral life worthy of the name."

This radically Christo-centric approach governs not only the content of the Catechesis of the Good Sheperd, but also its method; Cavalletti believes "method has a soul, and this soul should correlate to the content that is being transmitted." Since Biblical religion is that of the transcendent God who reveals himself in creation, throughout history and supremely in Christ, Cavalletti employs "The Method of Signs (*RPOC*, Chapter 10). A *sign* is something which indicates another thing different from itself; "it connect us to the sensible world while it urges us to reach toward the Invisible." It is an instrument in the education of faith, employed by Jesus himself in teaching in parables, kept alive in the Church through the liturgy

The children are pointed towards the truth that is signified, but left with the work of reaching the reality for themselves. In this way both the truth and the child are respected: "It is a method filled with veneration for the mystery; it does not claim to explain or define. It is a method full of respect for the person and his capacities."

Concretely this means that in the Catechesis the child is presented, through texts and sensorial materials, with the history of the life and death of Jesus, with parables, with the symbols and gestures of the sacraments, and with the richness of salvation history and covenant theology. Cavalletti offers many examples of the fruit such an approach bears in the children; their words and artwork (see the Appendices of both books) reveal a richness of faith, a great deal of joy, and an attitude of humility and wonder in the face of the unfathomable gift which is the Christian message.

It is this deep sense of wonder, naturally present in childhood, which Cavalletti seeks to foster and nourish, for "when wonder becomes the fundamental attitude of our spirit it will confer a religious character to our whole life." In the child, wonder at God's gifts inevitably flows into contemplation and enjoyment of the gifts, into prayer of praise and thanksgiving. The atrium (the name given to the room where the catechesis takes place), is a place of listening to God's Word, the basis of all prayer, and it becomes a holy ground where Christ is encountered in word and action.

Cavalletti's genius is to see, and to make a point of stressing repeatedly throughout her work, that the child and the adult *live together* this religious experience; the adult might proclaim the Word, but she too must listen. For Cavalletti a catechist is the "unworthy servant" of the Gospel, a mediator between God and the child who must withdraw as soon as contact is made between the Creator and his creature. "The catechist who does not know when to stop or how to keep silent, is one who is not conscious of one's limits and is lacking in faith, because one is not convinced that it is God and his creative Word who are active in the religious event."

I have been privileged to receive training in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd and assist in an atrium for the last three years, and I can say from personal experience that these insights of Cavalletti are life changing. I have glimpsed how seeking to live in a spirit of poverty as a catechist, as Cavalletti suggests, means accepting that what we transmit does not belong to us and that we cannot claim the fruit. The beauty of making this step is that it leads us to discover afresh the very truth we are transmitting, and it is the children who point the way.

"In the adult the space of acceptance is never whole, yet it is in the child. The child is really capable of listening impartially and unselfishly, the child is receptive to the greatest degree." Living alongside children who are discovering with joy the reality of God's presence, we learn again how to receive the gift of being loved by Love and we might even hope to "change and become like them" (Matthew 18:3).

Consumerism

COLLEEN ROULEAU

David and Tingstad Buckingham, *Childhood and Consumer Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

Consumerism, particularly in the West, is as ubiquitous as the air we breathe. There is no escaping constant advertising, whether in flyers delivered at the doorstep, brand-names stamped on shirts and shoes, telemarketers interrupting dinner, web pop-ups, and even advertising spaces in parish Sunday bulletins. We are immersed in a world of manufactured goods to be desired and purchased. Given the outrageous success of marketing strategies, it is doubtful that even mature adults are capable of resisting this endless stream of manipulated information. Yet how often do we consider the impact of consumerism on the child?

Childhood and Consumer Culture is a collection of fifteen articles spanning the work of almost twenty researchers from the USA, Canada, the UK, Norway, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, and Israel. The editors, David Buckingham and Vebjørg Tingstad, attempt to situate childhood and familial consumerist practices in a broader social and historical context. Typically, books on this subject are characterized by polarization - some arguing for the protection of the child's innocence from market influences, others celebrating the child's agency as a savvy individual who shapes identity through goods acquired. According to the editors, titles such as *No Logo* (2001), *Born to Buy* (2004), *Consumer Kids* (2009), *Toxic Childhood* (2006), *Kidfluence* (2003), or *Brandchild* (2003) fall into one of these two camps. The authors of this collection bring a more nuanced presentation forward, realizing that the truth lies somewhere between the narratives of children as either powerful agents or passive victims of consumerism.

The articles are grouped into five parts. Of special note in Part I, "History of Children's Consumption," is "Valves of Adult Desire: The Regulation and Incitement of Children's Consumption." Author Gary Cross provides a fascinating trajectory of the rise of consumer culture in post-war America. He examines the interplay between adult desire and parental capacity to provide amusement and satisfaction to one's children via purchasing power. "By giving to children, parents restored their own long-lost pleasure in things. Increasingly, adults identified wonder with the child-like (rather than say the cultivated religious or aesthetic experience)" (p. 24).

Cross contextualizes common things such as the teddy bear, the disposable camera, and the comic strip in the realm of this emerging consumer culture. He rightly concludes that concerned parents cannot be satisfied with a merely moralistic regulation of marketing practices, but ultimately must ask how their own desires "shape the desires of the young" (p. 29).

The third article, by Jacob Smith ("The Books That Sing: The Marketing of Children's Phonograph Records, 1890-1930"), is a window into the pre-Disney world of marketing, in which mothers were the target audience of advertising. It examines the confluence of technology in the home - mothers busy with new household machines (washers, vacuums, etc.), and children entertained simultaneously by

new devices (the phonograph). The "books that sing" were promoted under the guise of being educative.

Consider this magazine ad from 1920: "When your grandmother was a child, she loved those songs, and she, in turn, rocked your mother's wooden cradle gently to the same quaint, old nursery rhymes. And your mother loved them and sang them, just as you love them. Only you don't have to sing them to your children. They can listen to them to their hearts' content as they are sung by the BUBBLE BOOKS" (p. 54). Smith then traces the transfer from marketing to mothers to direct advertising to children, and explains how Disney was able to connect animated characters to experiences of shopping through licensing agreements with department stores.

Part II focuses on theory and method in this research. Daniel Thomas Cook, in "Commercial Enculturation: Moving Beyond Consumer Socialization," makes a convincing argument for broadening our understanding of consumption. His concern is that too often our structured understanding of the consumer is based on a progressive notion of personal development, i.e. moving from unknowing child to mature, responsible adult. In this model, which he describes as "consumer socialization," only the adult (with money to spend) can be a fully fledged "consumer."

Cook is rather proposing a "commercial enculturation model" as "a means to capture and emphasize the variety of ways in which children come to ‘know' and participate in commercial life" (p. 70). Limiting consumption to an actual purchase does not take into account the pervasiveness of consumption in our lives. Knowing, desiring, touching, and viewing goods are all part of consumption. For instance, branding is based as much upon "making a connection between a person and a symbol" (p. 72), as it is on actually owning the particular item.

The most radical article in the collection is that by Barbro Johansson, "Subjectivities of the Child Consumer: Beings and Becomings." She notes that research is shifting away from the person as "autonomous agent" to "dependent on ‘extensions' in the shape of other humans, as well as on artefacts, technology and texts (Lee 2001; Latour 1996)" (p. 81). Rather than seeking a more robust concept of person as being-in-relation, Johansson further reduces an already reductive view of the person as autonomous individual to simply a string of "becomings."

"Not only do the distinctions between being and becoming fade away," she concludes, "*so too does the teleological interpretation of reality* [emphasis mine]" (p. 91). This does not seem to trouble her in any way. In fact, she simply asks, what if childhood does not exist? Doing away with all distinctions and categories seems the only acceptable way forward, because in naming things we are continually putting up limits - and this, according to Johansson, is to be avoided at all costs. She prefers to speak of an "ontology of flow." The question must be put to Johansson, how one can even speak of "ontology" without things, being, and *telos*?

In sharp contrast, the article by Claudia Mitchell that follows seems a refreshing defence of "things," opening with this citation: "Imagine a world without things. It would be not so much an empty world as a blurry, frictionless one: no sharp outlines would separate one part of the uniform plenum from another; there would be no resistance against which to stub a toe or test a theory or struggle stalwartly. Nor would there be anything to describe, or to explain, remark on, interpret, or complain about - just a kind of porridgy oneness. Without things, we would stop talking (Daston, 2004:9)" (p. 94). This seems the logical outcome of Johansson's position. An "ontology of flow" is the obliteration of the "thing," even of thought and language, as Daston indicates. Mitchell argues that it is precisely "the thing" that allows us entry into the study of the world. She then contemplates the function of childhood objects in memory. [For further reading on the "thing" I recommend Kenneth L. Schmitz, *The Recovery of Wonder:*

The New Freedom and the Asceticism of Power (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005).]

Part III, "Practices of Contemporary Marketers," includes a fascinating essay on children's virtual worlds by Janet Wasko. In 2009 there were over 200 youth-oriented virtual worlds, which today attract an estimated 20 million young people. Wasko's research focuses on the "immersive advertising" of many of these sites, particularly Neopets and Webkinz. Industry leaders view these ventures as an enormous marketing extravaganza. Courtney Lane, Director of Mattel Girls Online, stated, "It becomes addictive… It has tremendous stickiness, and that helps us gain the exposure we need" (p. 119). On Neopets, children can shop, play the Neopia stock market, and even gamble on virtual slot machines. The author's primary critique concerns the sites' promotion of capitalism and consumerism, although she does not question how technology itself is shaped by consumerism. Secondarily she notes the deceptive nature of the sites' claim to foster unlimited creativity, when in fact the child is only clicking a mouse, "choosing" someone else's pre-programmed ideas. Wasko's criticisms do not go far enough. A more serious critique of technology itself is needed to fully appreciate the problematic nature of virtual worlds for children.

Parts IV and V, "Social Contexts of Children's Consumption" and "Childhood Identities and Consumption" respectively, include several articles exploring children's perception of brands, clothing, and their desire for and/or lack of consumer goods. The most noteworthy article is "The Stuff at Mom's House and the Stuff at Dad's House: The Material Consumption of Divorce for Adolescents," by Caitlyn Collins and Michelle Janning. Just as all household objects from the marriage, formerly signs of unity, are translated by divorce into signs of disunity, so the children themselves risk becoming objectified in the process. There is no attempt made by the authors to present this as something normal or easy for the children. In fact, statements from the children interviewed indicate how painful the experience of divorce can be.

The authors of these essays raise challenging questions about childhood and consumer culture, going beyond a simple analysis of marketing techniques and satisfaction surveys. This is laudable. Their research is critical and reflective, and is often keenly insightful. However, the almost exclusive reliance on social science is somewhat limiting. The explication of gender and even childhood as *constructs* undercuts their ability to make a final judgment on these matters. Without an understanding of the person's dignity, religious needs, and ultimate desires, it is impossible to decide whether or not particular consuming practices are detrimental or beneficial for children - or even to rightly grasp the essence of childhood and "things" in themselves.

Despite this lack, reading the essays is informative, and the topics covered are sure to raise awareness in the reader. Parents and educators will find the articles a springboard for further reflection on these issues. Anecdotally, over the course of reading the book I began to notice how often my children spoke of "buying" as a "solution" to a problem - whether it was a food item we were out of, or wanting a second identical toy so they would "not have to fight" over the one we already own. Noting their vocabulary (need to buy, need to get) and perceptions concerning family consumption - that a lack is naturally solved through a purchase - was, at times, unsettling.

Posing questions about one's own children and the items one provides for them is a critical and necessary part of parenting, one that requires perhaps more reflection than is often given. How does one foster solutions other than consumerist ones? Instead of buying, how can making, imagining, creating, sharing, even going without, be encouraged? As I finished the book, I was both amused and perturbed to realize that my bookmarker was an old receipt.

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Children and God

CARLA GALDO

Jerome W. Berryman, *Godly Play: An Imaginative Approach to Religious Education* (Augsburg Fortress, 1991, 179 pages).
Jerome W. Berryman, *Children and the Theologians: Clearing the Way for Grace* (Morehouse Publishing, 2009, 276 pages.).

"Godly play", Jerome Berryman's name for the Montessori-influenced children's catechesis he developed, is the inspiration behind both *Children and the Theologians* and *Godly Play*. When read side by side, it is clear that the latter work, published eighteen years after the former, is an attempt to build on the success of this catechetical method, which has become increasingly popular in Protestant congregations.

In *Godly Play*, Berryman takes pains to introduce his method not just as "a way to teach" but as a perspective on existence. One may choose to see life as inescapable drudgery; but one might, instead, approach it with an attitude of playfulness. By entering into life as a "game" one discovers one's identity as a child created in the image of God. Berryman's classroom, then, is a sacred space in which children are encouraged to discover through play the deeper meaning of the traditions, stories, and people that define the Christian religion. Godly play is akin to the Catholic, Montessori-style "Catechesis of the Good Shepherd," which Berryman acknowledges as the inspiration and starting point of his efforts to design a new kind of religious education.

Four of the seven chapters of *Godly Play* are spent detailing Berryman's method. A typical session takes place in a classroom which has been designed very intentionally to reflect the whole of the Christian tradition. In typical Montessori style, the written word takes a back seat to the sensory/motor experience of the learner, who enters into a space that "teaches" without a single word needing to be read or spoken. As children enter the classroom, they see a shelf with a small display of the Holy Family and an image of the risen Christ, resting upon a cloth with the liturgical color of the season. Surrounding shelves contain figures depicting various parables of Jesus, episodes from the Old and New Testament, and prominent scenes in the life of Christ. Class time is structured in a rhythm that echoes the Eucharistic celebration - coming in and being welcomed; hearing the word of God *via* an oral story-telling presentation from the teacher; responding to the lesson creatively by "wondering" through art or manipulation of the figures; a sharing of a small "feast" (snack); and finally departure.

Berryman's method outshines more traditional methods of catechesis based on rote-memorization primarily because he understands the child as a person, with the same existential questions and need for meaning and relationship with God that an adult has, though not fully articulated. He sees the purpose of religious education as cultivating a sense of wonder so that the child can more authentically enter into the meaning of religious language, rather than simply parroting phrases learnt from a teacher or textbook.

Beyond the specifics of how one creates a Godly Play classroom, and how it works, Berryman discusses the philosophical and psychological underpinnings of his method; most insightful being the chapter-long reflection on the phenomenon of language, religious experience, and theological knowing that comes at the close of the book. He describes our experience of God as moving in a cycle of four (often wordless) stages: from awe and wonder in the presence of mystery; to awareness and insight; to articulation of the experience; and finally to a stage of silent knowing, from which theology is ultimately born.

Children and the Theologians is, in contrast, a more theoretical book, and in many ways less satisfying. It undertakes a big task: tracing the understanding of children from the time of Christ up until the present. The task is more than the length of the book can accommodate - the treatment of each theologian tends to be sketchy at best. Augustine's view of children is summarized as "Children are sinful without God's grace"; Luther's as "Children are God's little jesters, a mix of law and Gospel." Berryman might have done better simply to revise *Godly Play*, appending the meatier chapters of *Children and the Theologians* to a new edition of the already-popular text.

The Christian approach to children is summed up under four headings: ambivalence, ambiguity, indifference, and grace. He claims that the Gospels themselves are ambivalent towards children, presenting alternately "high," "low," and "indifferent" views of children. Although in each synoptic gospel Jesus welcomes children into his presence and exhorts his listeners to become like children, there are also sayings that encourage a single-minded following of Christ, leaving behind even home and family for his sake. The high valuation placed by Christianity on celibacy and the cloistered life Berryman interprets as entailing a rejection of family life for the sake of a life lived in pursuit of holiness, and a correspondingly "low" view of children - certainly a debatable opinion. Because neither "high" nor "low" sayings of this sort are present in the Gospel of John, Berryman considers the entire Gospel to be indifferent towards children, a surprising conclusion in light of the many references Christ himself makes to his own Sonship. For John, surely, Christ is the paradigmatic "child," and although the Gospel lacks the vignettes with children that the others contain, it seems difficult to accept that the entire Gospel is indifferent towards childhood in quite the way Berryman claims.

Understanding that children can be a means of grace is Berryman's primary contribution to what he calls his "proposal" for a "doctrine of children." In particular, Berryman wants us to become more aware of the presence of children in the celebration of the sacraments, and make use of their potential contribution. However, his suggestions on this score are again rather sketchy.

From a Catholic point of view, it is disturbing that Berryman seems to attribute the lack of respect traditionally shown to children to the doctrine of original sin, thus calling the doctrine itself into question. Furthermore, he is of the opinion that a favorable understanding of children and family life entered the theological scene only when Protestant clergy married and dwelled with children. Celibacy, he thinks, was a way to avoid the messy, distracting complications of children. Historically, of course, this may be the case in many instances, but a wholesale disregard for the insights that priests and religious can provide to families and children clearly does not take into account the theology of marriage and family articulated during the pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

Another disconcerting current that runs through both books is a somewhat antagonistic approach towards parents. In the context of a narration of a typical "Godly play" classroom session, parents are mentioned only twice, and both times portrayed negatively. In one instance, when a child arrives late with his father, the assistant teacher "firmly implie[s] that he need not come into the classroom, as he seemed about to do. The community of children, and the place itself as the children's room, need to be

protected" (p. 30).

In the other instance, Berryman describes parents who have come to pick up their children as "in a hurry," "anxious," and "loud" (p. 40). The theme is further continued in the first paragraphs of *Children and the Theologians* when he relays a conversation he had with an eight-year-old. When the boy expresses his confusion regarding a particular point of the Sunday liturgy at his church, his response is to kneel down "in the midst of the swirling adults," take the boy's hands in his, and issue a sympathetic and somewhat conspiratorial comment: "sometimes grown-ups don't understand" (p. 4).

Berryman does relate one positive anecdote about an experience with his own grandmother; however there is no significant mention of any positive experience in connection with a mother or father, leading one to suspect a lack of proper regard for the family as the central force in the religious and intellectual formation of children.

Unmarried Mothers

MICHAEL LUEKEN

Kathryn and Kefalas Edin, *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage* (University of California Press, 2005).

Marriage is brought into being by the promise of the vows, and creates a home where children can be welcomed. What remains of that home if marriage is redefined as an optional luxury, or if childbearing is regarded as a necessity to be sought apart from or before marriage? What if the Church now faces a cultural situation in which the life-long promises that low-income urban women believe they can make and keep no longer have any necessary connection to marriage and home, but only with "being there" for children? And what if these children are themselves thought of not as valuable in their own right, but primarily as providing meaning for the lives of their mothers?

These are some of the unintended questions which are forced upon the reader by the authors of *Promises I Can Keep*. The authors are professors of sociology studying the lives of poor women in Philadelphia. They begin by noting that "many Americans believe a whole host of social ills can be traced to the lapse in judgment that a poor, unmarried woman shows when she bears a child she can't afford," and that the solution is for these women to "wait to have children until they are older and more economically stable, and they should get married first." The authors' goal in this book is to address this belief.

That marriage has been radically separated from childbearing among the poor is clear enough. Social science has not, they claim, so far been able to explain this "decoupling," or tell "what will make marriage more likely among single mothers." In pursuit of an explanation, the authors have focused on 162 low-income single mothers living in impoverished neighborhoods of Philadelphia. "Their stories offer a unique point of view on the troubling questions of why low-income, poorly educated young women have children they can't afford and why they don't marry." The book is aimed at readers inside and outside of academia, including policymakers. It will be of particular interest to those whose task it is to bring the Church's teaching about marriage and family to the urban poor.

Of course, both the poor and the affluent are delaying marriage. In both cases the authors believe the institution of marriage has not been rejected, but rather redefined. It has become something that can be delayed for economic reasons - a "luxury." But low-income urban women have much to gain by having children early. For these women, children are no luxury, but a "necessity, an absolutely essential part of a young woman's life, the chief source of identity and meaning." Whereas among the more affluent the "couple relationship is at the heart of family life, with children as desirable complements," the situation is different among poor women. There, it seems, "the mother-child relationship is central, with the father as a useful complement."

Thus while middle-class women generally follow a path that envisions having children after economic success and marriage, poor women tend to see a childless life as tragic. They are prepared to wait for

marriage until after economic success (giving the husband a chance to prove himself), but not to grow old waiting for children.

The stories the mothers tell reveal much about both the depravity and the greatness of the human spirit. The situation of low-income mothers is bleak, and there are no easy solutions to the poverty they face. The authors make it clear that the poor mother's aim in having children - contrary to a popular opinion among the middle classes - is not to give up control of her life but to increase it. These women "use motherhood as a way to make meaning in a void." It is an opportunity to prove one's worth, to give one's life a purpose. It is as if "a baby has the power to solve everything," offering in many cases an alternative to drug addiction, crime, and jail. The clear message of the book is that the choice to become mothers represents a regrettable yet reasonable strategy for women who, thanks to feminism, see themselves as increasingly autonomous.

But can we not say more about this tragic loss of traditional marriage, family, and home? Is the only available option to accept the changes and set policy to ensure that the new arrangements function smoothly? In order to do justice to any social phenomenon involving human beings we must go beyond sociological science. The authors stop at what they take to be the facts of the matter. But they need to ask more - not just as human beings, but as scientists. Can we use words like "meaning" without giving them content? After much talk of "self-identity" and "self-fulfillment", the conclusion that "establishing the primordial bonds of love and connection is the ultimate goal" comes as something of a surprise. Social scientists need to ponder the content of these rather vague expressions. Here the Church speaks in the name of human experience, and her wisdom is ready to hand in *Familaris Consortio* and *Letter to Families* by Pope John Paul II.

The breakdown of marriage and family depicted in *Promises I Can Keep* makes one fact startlingly clear. An understanding of the family as the basic cell of society and man as having been created in the image and likeness of God can no longer be taken for granted in our society - even among those who claim to be religious and to hold marriage in high regard. But it is significant to note that the low-income mothers in this study know that having children before marriage is not "ideal." Furthermore, they are appalled at the way marriage is treated as nothing more than a piece of paper by many more affluent couples. In other words it is often the poorer mothers who hold onto the hope of marriage in the true sense of the word. They reverence marriage, but hold back for fear of failure, of mistreatment or divorce. As they raise their children they continue to say, "I want that white picket fence dream." But they also say, "I'm gonna make sure I have my own everything before I get married." And as a result the child ends up serving the interests of the mother. The irony is fascinating, and heart rending.

The book may be useful to those doing pastoral work with the inner-city poor. It provides an intimate and sobering look inside the lives of the men and women who are having children there. The authors are to be commended for correcting the dominant view that unmarried mothers are lazy and unintelligent. In fact, it seems they are hard at work attempting to achieve an autonomous independence that produces for them a "scaled-down version of the classic American dream." Perhaps this is why both the *Wall Street Journal* and *Ms. Magazine* have their kudos on the book's back cover. Both no doubt approve of the author's policy recommendations, which aim to make the new situation work more efficiently. But the book provides much material for further anthropological and theological reflection, especially in the way it highlights how the human desire for communion - and for children - endures, even when misled and brutalized.

Toxic Childhood

JULIE E. HELDT

Sue Palmer, *Toxic Childhood: How the Modern World is Damaging Our Children and What We Can Do About It* (Orion, 2006).

With the explosion in behavioral difficulties, learning disabilities, and mental and physical health problems in children today, many concerned adults are beginning to ask whether the predominant culture of the modern world is responsible for this damage. Sue Palmer, a British writer, broadcaster, and education consultant, presents her research on how the "toxic cocktail" of contemporary society is impacting our children.

Collecting evidence from a variety of disciplines, from neuroscience and psychology to economics and marketing, and conducting interviews with scientists, parents, children, and teachers, Palmer shares with her readers the evidence of how persistent exposure to a "toxic" environment is affecting the emotional, social, and cognitive growth of our children. The key factors include an increased consumption of junk food, changes in the nature of play (fewer "free-range children" roaming the neighborhood), inadequate sleep, instability at home, poor childcare arrangements, lack of healthy adult interactions, unavailability of good role models, changes in educational standards driven by bureaucracy and politics, exposure to aggressive marketing, the omnipresence of electronic media, and the transfer of authority from parents to paid professionals.

Although her argument is somewhat underdeveloped, Palmer identifies a few underlying causes of all this. The bond between the parent and child formed in the first eighteen months of life creates the opportunity for the "dance of communication" which lies at the heart of child development. It is in the prolonged gaze between the parent and child that the parent responds to the most innate and fundamentally human questions the child silently expresses. When this "dance" occurs, neural networks open up in the child's brain, enabling more fluent communication. But this process demands the presence of a parent or steady care-giver, which no amount of money or quality programming can replace.

Another major cause is the shift in the understanding of the nature of marriage, from covenant to contract and beyond. Palmer describes the general understanding of contemporary marriage as "a contract which ends when either party has a better option." Quoting from her research, she continues, "marriage was once a sacrament, then a legal contract and is now merely an arrangement" (p. 148). She also bravely links the change in woman's assumed role from helpmate and homemaker to independent earner with decreased dependency in marriage. Easier access to divorce may suit adults who prefer democratic relationships, but the impact on children can be traumatic.

Lastly, she briefly offers a critique of modern economics as another key ingredient in the toxic elixir. Noting that if our culture is to have a future it needs "family-friendly economies, not economy-friendly families" (p. 155), she discusses the dangers to children posed by the reverence of the developed world

for money, material wealth, and the marketing and advertising industry which treats young people strictly as potential consumers.

Palmer offers an insightful, honest, and thorough argument about how the daily conditions of modern life are hurting our children. While her analysis of the sources of the toxins could use more development, her arguments are well supported by research. One of the work's greatest strengths is its insistence on the possibility of healing the damage. At the end of each chapter, she proactively offers concrete suggestions for detoxifying childhood. Holding politicians, doctors, educators, care-givers, and, above all, parents accountable, Palmer leaves her reader with a warning: "in a world where all adults - women as well as men - expect to have opportunities for self-realization and economic independence, the issue of childcare raises political, economic, social and emotional problems. To solve them, all adults - men as well as women - have to wise up to what looking after children involves" (p. 187).

The Child in Christian Thought

ELLEN RODERICK

Marcia J. Bunge, *The Child in Christian Thought* (Eerdmans, 2001).
Patrick McKinley Brennan, *The Vocation of the Child* (Eerdmans, 2008).

"Thus the couple, while giving themselves to one another, give not just themselves but also the reality of children, who are a living reflection of their love, a permanent sign of conjugal unity and a living and inseparable synthesis of their being a father and a mother." Throughout his pontificate, Blessed John Paul II wrote often of the child, for example, in this statement taken from the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, in the Wednesday Catecheses on the Theology of the Body, and in his 1994 Christmas letter addressed to children. However, Todd David Whitmore, professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame, notes that while the Church has written much on the child in light of the family, and specifically on the question of procreation (for example, the encyclical letters *Humanae Vitae* and *Evangelium Vitae*), "there is no developed Catholic teaching on children" *per se*, "although the rudiments are scattered here and there." Whitmore suggests that theologians ought to think more deeply about the theological and anthropological significance of childhood, especially in light of the predominant market anthropology of "unrestrained economic liberalism" that subtly shapes our perception of children as "consumers" and "commodities."

The Child in Christian Thought (2001) and *The Vocation of the Child* (2008) are attempts to fill this perceived lacuna in theology. In these two independent collections of essays the unique relationship between childhood and Christianity is sympathetically explored by over thirty authors from a broad range of disciplines (for example, theology, philosophy, history, and canon law). Both books are the fruit of ongoing conversations about the uniquely Christian significance of childhood occurring among predominantly American scholars originating in "The Child in Christian Thought Project" (1998-2000) at the University of Chicago, directed by Marcia J. Bunge, and a similar project at Emory University's Center of Study of Law and Religion in conjunction with the Templeton Foundation in 2005, directed by Patrick McKinley Brennan. Recognizing that the current "crisis in marriage and the family" has a particularly devastating effect on the most vulnerable members of the family, the children, McKinley Brennan observes "that our society desperately needs the Christian religion's insights into the human and spiritual phenomenon of the child-needs, more specifically, to be invited to grapple with what the child is and what the child is called to become" (p. xi). *The Child in Christian Thought* and *The Vocation of the Child* launch a timely and challenging, if broad, proposal regarding the theological and cultural significance of childhood.

While united in vision, *The Child in Christian Thought* and *The Vocation of the Child* differ in their intent and approach. Noting the current state of theological reflection on childhood, Bunge, the W.C. Dickmeyer Professor of theology at Christ College- Valparaiso University, begins with Whitmore's claim that in the Christian theological tradition "there is no well-developed social teaching on the nature of children and why we should care about and for them" (p. 4). In an effort to contribute to the development of such a teaching, she presents a series of essays that trace the development of the place

of the child in the thought of seventeen significant theologians or schools of thought in the Christian tradition. On the other hand, it is the recognition of the impoverishment of contemporary "rights talk" in addressing the child (as exemplified, for example, in the U.N. Convention of the Rights of the Child) that spurred McKinley Brennan, the John F. Scarpa Chair in Catholic Legal Studies at Villanova University, to bring together the scholars in *The Vocation of the Child*. As an alternative to the predominant language of rights, he proposes instead that we address the child through the lens of *vocation*. McKinley Brennan hopes that the shift in mentality entailed in asking what the child is "called to become and to be" will open up new fields of inquiry across all disciplines.

The Child in Christian Thought

Marcia Bunge (*The Child and the Bible*, 2008; *Children and Childhood in Word Religions: Primary Sources and Texts*, 2009) has emerged as an authority in this new area of "theology of childhood" in America. *The Child in Christian Thought* is a collection of seventeen essays covering a cornucopia of time periods and topics related to the theology of childhood. This fascinating breadth of scope brings the reader from Augustine's struggle to articulate the nature of original sin and its relation to infant baptism, through the reading of childhood as a stage of undeveloped reason in the Middle Ages, to Schleiermacher's idealization of childhood as the form of the mature Christian consciousness in the eighteenth century, and finally to Karl Rahner's proposal that the child is paradigmatically "an infinite openness to the Infinite" in the twentieth century.

The collection provides glimpses into the historical development of the Christian tradition's explicit treatment of childhood. However, the reader is not offered any reasons for this development. Why and how did the child go from being a symbol of moral depravity (Augustine) to a moral exemplar (Schleiermacher, Rahner)? Are the historical concerns in the tradition about original sin or the nature of reason and the will that cast childhood in a "negative" light simply irrelevant, in light of today's more positive notions? Or is this positive reading overly "romantic"? The reader feels the need of a more synthetic approach.

There is an important clue to such an approach in Bonnie Miller-McLemore's essay on childhood in feminist theology. Whereas the other essays in *The Child in Christian Thought* look at the explicitreferences to childhood in a particular author or time period, Miller-McLemore is forced to note that feminist theology has not often addressed the theme of the child directly, obliging us to "read between the lines." The same probing of "past theological perspectives" would help to uncover the implied views of these theologians in order to bring them into dialogue with more contemporary views. To be fair, the essays on Schleiermacher, Barth, and Rahner do attempt to engage childhood at this level. But a serious engagement with the Trinitarian and Christological implications of childhood can be discerned only in the essays on John Chrysostom and Rahner.

The Vocation of the Child

In this book, McKinley Brennan gathers together fifteen scholars from the fields of law, theology, philosophy, and history to reflect on the Christian contribution to childhood from the perspective of what the child is "called to." In this collection, vocation is generally understood as the "invulnerable, infallible call of God," and is contrasted to "fate." The book asks if children are merely at the whim of circumstances (poverty, broken families, war, etc.) or whether one can speak of a vocation that transcends these difficulties and all "worldly deprivation." The essays are divided according to four related themes: (1) the vocation of the child; (2) original sin and the freedom of the child; (3) the rights and duties of the child; and (4) the role of education in the vocation of the child. On the whole these essays are more scholarly and more reflective of the specifically Catholic theological tradition than *The*

Child in Christian Thought. Also, while each article stands alone, it is clear there has been a conversation amongst the scholars themselves (judging from their references to each other's works across disciplines and perspectives), adding a certain richness to the collection. This partly compensates for the lack of a unifying theology of vocation.

Despite the lack of a final conclusion, *The Vocation of the Child* offers many enlightening and well-argued essays. The Christian understanding of thinkers such as St Jean Baptist de la Salle (p. 357), is contrasted with that of John Dewey, and of those who seek the professionalization of education by the State (p. 352). Against the accusation that a religious education is merely "indoctrination" that does not respect the child's autonomy, Charles L. Glenn argues that education is never "neutral"; it is always an initiation into a particular way of understanding and engaging the world. To impose the ideal of individual autonomy may be itself be a form of indoctrination. Elmer John Thiessen takes this further. Showing the inadequacy of the Enlightenment notion of "autonomy," he proposes a more rounded sense of the word that "takes relationality into account." The Salesian model of education exemplifies this deeper notion of autonomy, in which the following of an "older brother" or authority figure is understood as enabling the student to become more himself.

The cluster of essays addressing Augustine and Aquinas on the notion of the child are exceptionally well researched, and of value to anyone who would like to appreciate more deeply the place of the child in medieval thought. Philip Reynolds shows that for Aquinas, childhood was understood predominantly as a stage of deficiency in cognition. The humility, simplicity, obedience, and purity of the child were the results of a deficiency, a lackof reason. This is reflected in scholastic debates as to whether children in Paradise would have been born with full adult cognition, or if there was some positive value in the period of growth itself. Reynolds concludes by suggesting a more adequate notion of cognitive development "whereby the child's mode of cognition is different in some *positive* sense rather than merely muddled or inept," thus opening up "the possibility that the distinctive features of the child's mentality are perfections, at least in relation to that phase of life (p. 185)." McKinley Brennan moves precisely in this direction with the help of Jacques Maritain, the twentieth-century Thomistic scholar. Maritain considers the child existentially, that is, in terms of "the child's embrace of existence" received from God, the "divine plenitude who does not merely give [but] gives itself" (p. 192). Addressing the child in terms of its reception of Being leads Maritain to re-consider the predominant Thomistic account of the structure of knowledge, concluding that receptivity belongs not only to the way a child comes to know but also to the very structure of knowledge itself. Maritain was not the only scholar of the twentieth century to move in this direction. Hans Urs von Balthasar, Henri de Lubac, and Maurice Nédoncelle, for example, all perceived the importance of this original receptivity in knowing.

In this light, it is surprising that both of these collections fail to engage some of the most significant theological reflections in the twentieth century on the nature of childhood, in the works of Karol Wojtyla/John Paul II and Hans Urs von Balthasar. Theological reflection on the nature of childhood would be greatly enriched by taking their work into account. Nevertheless, *The Child in Christian Thought* and *The Vocation of the Child* represent a noble beginning and indicate necessary avenues for future Christian reflection on childhood.0

Origins of Essentialism

WILLIAM R. HAMANT

Susan A. Gelman, *The Essential Child: Origins of Essentialism in Everyday Thought* (Oxford/NewYork: Oxford University Press, 2003, 382 pages.).

Susan A. Gelman's psychological study is complex and very well researched. In spite of the title, it is a book not so much about childhood as about human cognition, employing children's conceptualizations as a way of studying human reasoning at its origin.

Gelman's overarching concern is the phenomenon called "essentialism," which means, "[r]oughly... the view that categories have an underlying reality or true nature that one cannot observe directly but that gives an object its identity" (p. 3; see also 8). Essentialism, Gelman says, is universal: everyone feels that the world around us is understandable on the basis of certain categories, and moreover that these categories are "natural", in the sense that they reflect the real world, and are not invented. Second, she maintains, we believe that things are *how* they are, and *what* they are, because of "some unobservable property... the essence" (p. 7). Finally, we believe that "everyday" language (including words such as "dog" or "tree") truly corresponds to how things actually are.

Gelman's main concern is *why* we essentialize. Is essentialism innate, or learned? If it is innate, is it simply a necessary component of cognition in general, or do we essentialize because it is advantageous for various evolutionary purposes? Is it innate because it truly reflects the structure of the world? On the other hand, if essentialism is learned, at what point is the belief acquired, and how? And again: what purpose would it serve? Children's essentialist beliefs are thus the core of her study, for they allow us to discern, through the sometimes messy and comical process of coming to know the world around us, why it is that we perceive it the way that we do.

Her book is her defense of three assertions. First: "essentialism is an early cognitive bias" (p. 7). Children essentialize naturally, Gelman convincingly argues; which means that all children, and in fact all people, have this tendency regardless of cultures or time. This "cognitive bias" is, she says, the "requirement" of cognition - at least in "certain domains" of thought (p. 7). Second: because children attribute identity to non-observable causal factors, this means (contrary to the current assertions of many developmental psychologists) that knowledge does not proceed simply from the observable and concrete to the abstract and theoretical. Even young children seek to understand the world; they do not simply mimic others' understanding of it (pp. 5, 239, 248). Children are naturally developing and constantly correcting theories about the world as they encounter it more and more. The observable and the theoretical are "two distinct though interrelated levels" of human cognition (p. 292). Third: Gelman asserts that language profoundly shapes and reinforces the bias of essentialism, even though primarily essentialism has to do with reasoning (cognition) rather than expressing (language).

The Essential Child is not without its problems. For one, Gelman at times does not apply her own theory consistently. As an example of an "egregious essentialist error," she recounts an episode when her

daughter told her that "Mommies wear dresses," even though Gelman was wearing jeans at the time (p. 294). Yet, as we have seen, she has asserted that even very young children essentialize not only on the basis of surface appearances but as the result of the interaction of outward cues and theory-based reasoning. There should be no reason to think that her daughter meant to imply that "Mommies *always*wear dresses"; and any cognitively normal child knows that (for the most part) Daddies *never* wear dresses. It is hardly an "egregious" error, therefore, to postulate that an important difference between Mommies and Daddies is dress-wearing, however much it may be a childish simplification and a generalization.

A second problem is the meaning of "essence" itself, as employed by Gelman. Consistent with the modern worldview that can make neither heads nor tails of the concept of a "whole," *essence* becomes for her merely that *part* of a thing that is causally or sortally responsible for the identity we assign to it. She therefore defines "essence" as that part which remains unchanging as a living organism develops, or as an unliving object fluctuates in size or state; and we cannot help but think it would perhaps be better for this reason for her to speak of "essential parts" or "essential features" rather than "essences." If, however, the thing's essence is only a *part* of it (and generally, an inaccessible part at that), there can be little wonder why she is of the opinion that evolutionary theory proves that essentialism is a delusion.

For it is obvious that there is no such thing as essences in the sense of "parts" of things which are shared by each and every member of a kind; and certainly there is no empirically verifiable "part" of *any* thing that remains unchanging throughout the duration of its existence - except perhaps the chemical composition of elements such as gold, or the DNA of an individual (e.g., pp. 139, 298). But an individual's DNA can hardly be equated with his or her "essence," unless even "essence" is not shared with other members of my species, because the DNA of any given individual is different in some respects from every other individual's DNA (there simply is no such thing as "the" human genome). But this directly contradicts a key part of the definition of an "essence," that it be transferrable from parent to offspring (p. 306). The very notion of a species, of a nature, slips through the fingers of the one who pushes this logic to its conclusion.

"Nature" in the sense of a "whole" has been the meaning of "essence" throughout human thought, even in the modern era when young children look at the world around them and discern that it is made up of "people," "dogs," "houses," "airplanes," "water," "fire trucks," and the like. That is to say: when children, and adults, posit an "essence," they are concerned precisely with *wholes*: *this* thing is a "tree." The question is never simply about some hidden and ultimately inaccessible "part." It is, "What is *this thing* before me, as it presents itself to me in all of its aspects?" For this reason, Gelman's book fails as a study of its intended topic: the belief in essences.

Most problematic is Gelman's ambivalence on the admittedly difficult question of the relationship between human cognition and the real world. As a psychologist, Gelman is concerned - or tries to be concerned - with human cognition, not with whether essentialism is true; she wants to avoid metaphysics (pp. 7, 8). In other words, her goal is not to discuss the actual existence of essences, but the psychological question of how people perceive the world, and why. But this delimitation proves impossible to maintain in practice. She states, for instance, that I may believe that what comes out of my tap is "water"; but as a whole, I have neither "the time or resources to check out the chemical structure of what I am drinking before I name it" (p. 301). For convenience's sake, I need not pull out my electron microscope every time I fill my glass; but the belief that I "know" that I am drinking water is for this very reason mistaken. This, however, suggests that essentialism would not be illusory were I to undertake the process of verification - which suggests in turn that it makes a great deal of difference

for essentialism whether there actually is a correspondence between it and the real world, unless Gelman does not believe that there is such a thing as "water" after all.

The attempt to concern oneself only with psychology and to avoid metaphysics is shown to be doomed from the outset; Gelman proves to be more interested in the ontological implications (and foundations) of her psychology than she cares to admit. Significant in this regard is one of the opening quotes of her tenth chapter, from Douglas Medin: "Psychological essentialism is bad metaphysics,... [but] may prove to be good epistemology." But Gelman's prognosis is that essences (if they exist) remain inaccessible, and in the end, irrelevant for essentialist belief. She seems to want to assert that essentialism is a way of "knowing" the world for merely practical purposes, albeit with both advantages and dangers. But she also wants to maintain that evolutionary biology proves that essentialism does not accurately reflect the world. Were this true, essentialism would not be "knowledge"; it would be delusion. Medin's quote would then only make sense if "good epistemology" means *knowing* precisely nothing.

Gelman's study does prove, however, that the human person's first and original posture before the world is - universally! - dependent upon a metaphysics vastly different from the nominalism and atomism on the foundations of which the modern era was constructed. It is given to us by nature to perceive, and to seek to perceive ever more truly, *form*. Far from being "inaccessible" and unimportant, essence in its true sense has, in fact, *everything* to do with my interaction with the world. We could further say that, contrary to Medin's epistemology of utility, the universal epistemology of children is one of trust. A child moves about unselfconsciously in the world, never thinking to doubt his or her own unity, and curious and happy to encounter other entities whose unity the child likewise has no thought to doubt. A child's natural epistemology (and we were all children once) thus serves as a powerful testimony to the fact that, behind the promise of disillusionment made by evolutionary biology, inevitably lurks a profound self-alienation. It seems a legitimate question to ask whether a science that demands of us the loss of our selves is worth the price - and even more to the point, whether it can truly be called "science."

Evolution of Childhood

JULIANA WEBER

Melvin Konner, *The Evolution of Childhood: Relationships, Emotion, Mind* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010, 960 pages.).

Konner grounds his discussion of childhood development in evolution, allowing him to cite empirical research across the spectrum of cultures and species. His work concerns brain development, psychosocial development, language, gender differences, relationships in general and relationships between juveniles, kinds of parenting and child care, the role of playing in childhood learning (and teaching), stress, culture and enculturation, and epigenetics.

Observations gather momentum from preceding observations, laudably forming a coherent whole, despite the breadth of the undertaking. Such information, invaluable to a better understanding of the human person, is unfortunately couched in a materialist's worldview. The information remains invaluable to one who would read the data within a proper philosophical/ theological context, as the information provides powerful insights into the human person.

The author is an "environmental determinist" (p. 4), in the sense that he believes a person's genes and neural pathways continually respond and adapt to environmental conditions. There is no mention of free will and little room left for the mystery of the human person; the author refers instead to "self-organization" and tends to approach persons as puzzles to be solved, though the pieces are challenging, always adapting to the environment in which they are laid out (p. 173). "Complete explanation [of human relationships, emotion, mind] requires integration among the levels" (p. 29), these "levels" being phylogenetic constraints, ecological/demographic causes, genome, embryogenetic/ maturational processes, formative early-environmental effects, ongoing environmental effects, longer-term physiology, short-term physiology, elicitors and releasers (pp. 28-29).

How is Konner so certain that such an explanation is "complete"? In other words, why not leave room for the mere possibility of immaterial causes, such as a human soul expressing itself through DNA or neural pathways? Ironically, what may have begun as a scientist's modest, professional attempt to prescind from philosophy/ theology ends in a particular philosophical/ theological assumption, namely that of a strict materialist and atheist.

Nonetheless, Konner successfully challenges many popular notions, and proposes some original insights. Concerning parenting, for example, he shows that head-start programs and child-rearing patterns have decreasingly detectable effects as the length and rigor of studies increase (p. 611). Also, a stress-free childhood is not optimal: what he terms *good* stress creates the opportunity for growth and development (pp. 540, 747). The kind and amount of stress is what is critical: work around the farm gives children a sense of worth and competence, but school work "exploits children just as chores do, while giving many a sense of failure" and "often prepares children for jobs that do not exist" (p. 649).

He also offers a simple evolutionary explanation for "teenage rebellion." Juvenile brains may be

programmed to invent new behaviors, which are then pruned and refined by environmental rewards and punishments (analogous to the development of speech from babble), thus allowing whole communities to adapt quickly and to survive in the face of sometimes rapid environmental changes (pp. 738-9). These insights alone could calm many an over-scheduled, tension-fraught American household.

Viewed simply as a summary of research, the book makes an important contribution to an empirical understanding of human nature. Internally, it even evidences some openness to dialogue with philosophy/ theology, as when the author remarks: "there are environmental circumstances in which it is adaptive to grow up faster and begin reproducing earlier, but such arguments do not remove the need to make judgments about the kind of adolescence we want for them [our children]" (p. 531). However, other passages frustrate the possibility of dialogue, as when Konner appears happy to leap from a factual "is" to an ethical "ought" without any explanation of his philosophical method (p. 331).

Birth of Childhood

PATRICK M. FLEMING

O.M. Bakke, *When Children Became People: The Birth of Childhood in Early Christianity* (Fortress Press, 2005).

When Children Became People is an inquiry into one aspect of the cultural transformation brought about by the widespread acceptance of Christianity. As an historian, the author seeks to answer the following two questions: "What did early Christians think about children and about the nature of children?" and, "What did they say about the treatment of children, and how did they treat children *de facto*?" (p. 9).

To answer these questions, Bakke carefully accumulates a range of primary sources from the first four centuries following the birth of Christ. His conclusion can be stated as follows: "Christian theology and ethics protected children's life in a way not found in the Greco-Roman world, and in this sense we can speak of Christianity as a ‘child-friendly' religion" (p. 260). It is worth noting, however, that Bakke's reasoning is nuanced: he also emphasizes the influence on their thought of the cultural milieu in which the patristic authors were educated.

The greatest strength of the book is the frequent and sustained engagement with patristic thought itself, which leads to extensive quotations from these early Christian authors. On the other hand, one weakness of the book is that patristic sources are not placed in the context of the development of Christian doctrine. Lacking the concept of a (hierarchical) Church able to balance the divergent views or different emphases of the patristic authors, the presentation is somewhat scattered, with contradictory patristic statements left hanging in the air without deeper discussion.

The remainder of this review will be structured based upon Bakke's concluding statement - "Christianity introduced new anthropological viewpoints, a new ethical evaluation, and new ideals for upbringing" (p. 286) - which points to three areas in which the acceptance of Christianity led to profound changes in the lives of children: anthropological, ethical, and pedagogical.

The anthropological vision of childhood proposed by Christianity lay at the heart of the ethical and pedagogical transformations which were to follow. For Christians, the starting point for this anthropological vision lies in the words of Jesus himself ("unless you become like this child...") (Matt. 18:1-4). Bakke points out that here, in contrast to the Greco-Roman world, children are held up as "positive paradigms" for adults. Rather than functioning as negative examples for their "lack of reason, irrational behavioral patterns and attitudes, or childishness" (p. 54), children are treated as models for adults to emulate, thanks to certain other characteristic traits. As John Chrysostom writes, "The young child is not grieved at what we are grieved [sic.], as at loss of money and such things as that, and he doth not rejoice again at what we rejoice, namely, at these temporal things, he is not eager about the beauty of persons. Therefore He said, ‘of such is the kingdom of Heaven': that by choice we should practice these things, which young children have by nature" (p. 79).

What do the patristic authors identify as the qualities *uniquely* possessed by children? While Bakke does not find treatises devoted solely to this topic, a great deal of insight is available from texts which touch upon broader questions, such as Augustine's polemic against the Pelagians, or the discussion surrounding the proper inclusion of children in sacramental life. For example, in response to a question on infant baptism from a local bishop in the year 253, Cyprian (along with a council of 68 African bishops) writes, "What is lacking to him who has once been formed in the womb by the hands of God?... Whatever things have been made by God have been perfected by the work and majesty of God, the Maker."

By having no sin of their own (*in propria persona*), yet sharing in the destiny of Adam, children receive the grace of God "more easily," since the "greatest sinners... when afterward they believe, [are] not prevented from baptism and grace." The qualities most often associated with children by the patristic sources surveyed are therefore innocence, lack of worldly passion, and closeness to the creative fatherhood of God - though as Cyprian concludes, "God himself does not make such distinction of person or of age, since he offers himself as a Father to all" (pp. 70-71).

The novel ethical evaluation brought about by the acceptance of Christianity is best viewed through the lens of three concrete practices which radically affected the lives of children. These are abortion, exposure (abandoning unwanted infants in some remote location), and pederasty. As Bakke indicates, there is a difficulty in ascertaining, from this distance in time, the frequency with which children in antiquity were subjected to these forms of abuse. What is clear, however, is that before the widespread acceptance of Christianity these practices were commonly accepted in the Greco-Roman world. For example, it was only under Emperor Valentinian in 374 that legislation made exposure a crime. Bakke then surveys a wide range of material and finds - in contrast to the prevailing positions of the day - that abortion, exposure, and pederasty were all explicitly rejected by every patristic author encountered (p. 149). It would be difficult to overestimate the impact of this cultural shift on the lives of children in subsequent generations.

Regarding Christian education, the New Testament itself speaks of the importance of educating children well, particularly when one is a leader in the Church (Titus 1:6-9; 1 Tim. 3:4). Bakke presents patristic sources, culminating in the work of St John Chrysostom, which discuss the task of shaping and inculturating Christian children. In contrast to the practice of wealthy Romans, who often left the care of their children to wet nurses and servants, Chrysostom urges the parents in his diocese of Constantinople to "Let everything take second place to our care for our children, our bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.... ponder deeply how you can teach [your child] to think lightly of this life's passing glories; thus he will become truly renowned and glorious" (p. 163). What is at stake is the destiny of a human soul. After reviewing these sources, Bakke concludes that Christian material underscores more strongly than Greco-Roman texts the parents' responsibility to form their children to lead a virtuous life (p. 216).

Bakke acknowledges a certain tension in early Christian thought regarding the contact of children with non-Christian cultural and intellectual influences. What is a Christian parent to do? Tertullian advises parents to avoid such influences entirely: "What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?... We will have nothing to do with pagan literature and teaching, which is perverted in its best results" (p. 206). On the other hand, Clement of Alexandria finds it important to incorporate the good elements of Greek philosophy into Christian education, "for God is the cause of all good things." He goes on to write, "Philosophy, therefore, [is] a preparation, paving the way for him who is perfected in Christ" (p. 208). According to the sources which Bakke reviews, the challenge for Christian pupils in classical schools was to incorporate only what was good and useful, while rejecting everything that contradicted their

faith - a task that presupposes a solid Christian foundation at home (p. 222).

In the manner of an historian who seeks to let the patristic authors speak for themselves, Bakke presents their understanding of children as one significant manifestation of the novelty of the Christian faith. While sharing much with the Greco-Roman and Jewish world in which they lived, the early Christian authors introduced a transformation which would have fundamental consequences for the lives of children in generations to come. In proclaiming a Savior who entered the world as a child, Christianity awoke the human consciousness to the unique dignity of all children.

Economics of the Family

JOSÉ GRANADOS DCJM

Nancy Folbre, *Valuing Children: Rethinking the Economics of the Family* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2010, 235 pages.).

Nancy Folbre, a professor of economics at the University of Massachussets, deals in this book with the need to reform our economic system so as better to take children into account. Joining her voice to recent concerns, increased after the last financial crisis, that our economic paradigm is not a valid one, she attempts to shed new light on the connection between the economy and the family. In fact, given the size of the crisis, it is not enough to "fix" some aspects of the system; what is really required is a change in our whole vision of the relationship between government, market, and society.

Our current economic system is based around the adult, autonomous consumer. Children are not specifically taken into account, nor are parents as such. Parents are considered rational agents prepared to take the most efficient option in terms of cost and benefits. This book highlights the need to develop a new vision of the economy that brings children (the fact of having them or of being one of them) back into the picture.

Having a child is seen by the market as a choice one pays for in order to receive certain measurable rewards. At most, children are an investment towards the future, the rewards being measured in terms of satisfied affections or of protection for the time of retirement. Folbre helps us see some of the problems with this approach. She points out that it is simply not true that most parents see their own children merely in terms of a trade-off between the money and time they put in and the affective reward they take out.

The first part of the book examines the actual costs and time spent in rearing a child - including the costs of "family time." The book shows well what our economic indicators do not measure: the flow of "nonmarket services that are not motivated by immediate self-interest" (p. 4). The study continues by analyzing the costs of bringing up children outside the household (as, for example, in college or custody), while other chapters analyze the money spent by taxpayers and the benefits children receive from public policies.

The book reveals that the costs of children are not well measured by the system, which presumes that they cost much less than they actually do. According to Folbre, this is a system that does not value the time and effort spent at home as something important for society. The conclusion drawn from this different way of measuring the costs is a call for a family policy that takes into account this perspective.

One wonders, in the end, whether Folbre's approach is quite radical enough. It seems to share in the same presuppositions of our present economic system, by seeing children in monetary terms. For example, Folbre makes the point that children are a real investment towards the future. They do not afford immediate satisfaction, but are crucial for the economy of tomorrow. This consideration can certainly improve the way our system looks into the question of children. However, as she implies

elsewhere, the desire to get protection regarding the future is not the main reason for having a child. The child is not just a cost or an investment, but a value in itself and because of the relationships it generates. The system has no place for a generous approach to parenthood, in which father and mother do not think of being supported by the child, but simply of being a help for the child as he grows.

Folbre does nevertheless offer a valid insight regarding this question: "Generational reciprocity can be defined in two different ways: paying back and paying forward. We could, as adults, repay the older generation (both parents and nonparents) for what it spent on us. Alternatively, we could repay the gifts made by the older generation, making equivalent gifts to the next generation" (pp. 182-3).

Another example: it is fair to measure "time" devoted to children and count it as a cost in order to help families with children; but in framing the question this way, we risk including the fact of childhood into the prevalent economic prism. Is time money, as Franklin said? Or are the children the ones who, instead of consuming our time, in fact "create" it? For it is true that without children, without generation, society ends up living in the narrow present, unable to look into the future or to preserve the memories of the past: it ends up *having no time*.

The book does contain some reflections along these lines, where Folbre is not afraid of asking questions of a more fundamental nature. The last chapter deals with the question "who should pay for the kids?" as a way of reexamining the social-family contract.

> *"The social contract that we rely on, combining market competition with a democratic state, leaves many aspects of family life out of the picture. Children are neither sovereign consumers nor voters, and parents produce an important good to which our economy assigns no market value. The political coalitions shaping our institutional environment have often lacked a clear understanding of the potential gains from collaboration. The terms of intergenerational transfers have never been explicitly discussed - much less publicly debated" (p. 182).*

These questions are interesting, and Folbre's is a valid, if limited, attempt to answer them. The encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* by Pope Benedict XVI asks for a change of paradigm that could deal with the fundamental issue this book raises. The welfare system is based on a division between market and government. The former, driven by self-interest, produces wealth; the latter, moved by solidarity, distributes it. But this vision presupposes an opposition between self-interest and gift, as if both were mutually exclusive. In order to go beyond this divisive paradigm, it is important to note that gift and interest are not to be opposed, but are intrinsically related. A real gift to a friend is interested, not in an external reward, but in the very relationship that emerges from the gift and that enriches both giver and receiver. From this viewpoint it would be possible to reintroduce the question of the gift into the very core of the economy, as *Caritas in Veritate* boldly proposes. The family, congenial to this covenant between gift and interest, has a potential to help develop this different economic system.

Folbre's book is an important step towards a more balanced vision of the economy. It is a positive study because it shows the importance of developing a different logic, not one entirely centered on individual subjects who make perfect rational choices of payments and satisfactions. The author has perceived the problem with an individualistic system, even if her analysis still shares many of its presuppositions. A more complete answer would take into account the specificity of family relationships (including that

between husband and wife, absent from the author's perspective, but crucial for the essence of childhood) and the potential of a relational approach to the economy.

Hrdy’s Evolutionary Model of Family

JOHN LARACY

Sarah Blaffer Hrdy, *Mothers and Others: The Evolutionary Origins of Mutual Understanding* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2009).

A decade after he introduced the world to "sociobiology" in 1975, E.O. Wilson co-authored (with Michael Ruse) a short piece in the *New Scientist* on "The Evolution of Ethics." Sociobiology is the field that explains human social behavior in terms of evolutionary biology, and this article gave a sociobiological account of ethics. Wilson tells us, in short, that our so-called "selfish genes" actually make us altruistic so that we may protect others who share our genes. A genetically-programed ethical code ensures that one's genes will last in the Darwinian struggle for survival, even if one dies in protecting genetic relations. But if feelings of love and concern for right and wrong come from a meaningless biological mechanism, why should we act on these feelings? Wilson's sociobiology, which destroys the meaning of human love in one fell swoop, is more unfounded philosophical speculation than scientific understanding.

On the surface at least, *Mothers and Others* by socio-biologist Sarah Blaffer Hrdy appears to refrain from explaining away human love in this way. Hrdy's philosophy is more subtle than her predecessor's, perhaps because she relies more on cultural anthropology, developmental psychology, and primatology than overtly reductive genetic theory. Remaining closer to the concrete phenomenon of human life makes her sociobiology appear more credible. Hrdy's core thesis, moreover, appears to complement the salutary trend in contemporary philosophy and theology of highlighting the interdependent nature of human beings. She argues that a group-wide mode of child-rearing known as "cooperative breeding" lead to the evolution of intersubjectivity and empathy in our hominid ancestors, which in turn opened the way for the evolution of our modern intelligence. In this evolutionary model, social interdependence (in general) and shared care of vulnerable young (in particular) were the necessary conditions for our ape ancestors to develop into *Homo sapiens*.

Generally speaking, the claim that shared care and empathy are required for the evolution of humans is unproblematic. Humans today participate in shared care and are empathic by nature. It is not so unreasonable, then, to surmise that something similar to, but distinct from, human child care and empathy evolved into these distinctly human forms. And if, as Hrdy suggests, hominids were nurturing and empathic prior to developing the technical intelligence to use tools, this fact would only make it more apparent that humans are not isolated rational agents, but interdependent social animals. As a sociobiologist, however, Hrdy does not limit herself to such general claims. She attempts to explain how Darwinian natural selection caused and now sustains these human characteristics. In a word, the theory of natural selection claims that things are the way they are because some random variations were more useful for surviving than others (that's all there is to it). The problem with deeming natural selection the cause of human life is that it makes humanity a mere mode of utility. Ultimately, Hrdy's Darwinism undermines her more reasonable insights about the importance of shared childcare and empathy.

Although in her opening chapter she explicitly distinguishes her new evolutionary model from traditional views of man as a self-interested rational agent within a competitive world, her core argument focuses on the adaptive utility of shared childcare and thus makes other-centeredness a function of species survival. Sensitive babies and nurturing mothers must have been "favored" by natural selection, because better bonding equals better care and a higher survival rate. But maternal care alone could not have been adequate for the survival of notoriously dependent and slow-developing hominid babies in the fierce setting of the Pleistocene era (beginning 1.8 million years ago). Thus additional alloparental (non-parental) childcare lead to a higher survival rate for young children among our ape-like ancestors, and natural selection in turn favored adults more sensitive to the needs of children. According to Hrdy, human empathy, care, and compassion are excellent survival mechanisms for hominids, and perhaps they are. But claiming that they exist because of their utility makes them meaningless. After all, human love is willing the existence of another, not for his or her usefulness, but for his or her "useless" beauty and goodness.

Hrdy's underlying worldview, then, is not so distant from that of E.O. Wilson in "The Evolution of Ethics." Notwithstanding her sociobiological philosophy and Darwinian presuppositions, *Mothers and Others* includes an abundance of anecdotes and studies about primitive human cultures, human infants and mothers, and primates that are interesting in their own right. Moreover, Hrdy should be credited for writing to a wide audience: she gives us minimal jargon and much entertainment. Yet the impatient readers among us might appreciate more concision: her thesis is argued piecemeal throughout nine sprawling chapters.

If nothing else, *Mothers and Others* is important because it shows how Darwinism cannot support human dignity and meaning, despite even the strongest emphasis on human care and compassion.

Childness

CAITLIN DWYER

Martin E Marty, *The Mystery of the Child* (Eerdmans, 2007, 246 pages).

Anyone who has recently browsed the shelves of her local bookstore's parenting section can attest that parenting books are big business. The myriad titles promise quick solutions to every possible child-related problem from infancy through the teen years: everything from baby sleep and potty-training to behavioral issues and discipline. While these books contain some helpful information (I have gleaned a couple of gems in my own reading), they tend to create a problem of their own: the tendency to reduce the child to a set of problems to be solved.

It is this conception of the child that Martin E. Marty sets out to challenge in this compelling work, a project born out of the faculty seminar "The Child in Law, Religion, and Society" at Emory Law School. Marty, typically known for his work as an historian of American Christianity and Worldwide Fundamentalism, guides his reader through a unique philosophical, theological, and sociological reflection on the nature of the child and childhood.

The Mystery of the Child contains a clear, two-fold argument. First, Marty argues that the child is not primarily "a problem faced with a complex of problems," as she is typically conceived in modern culture, but rather a "mystery surrounded by mystery." He contends that the provision of care for children would be "radically revised and improved" and the wonder and joy of relating to children could be recaptured if this view of the child were embraced. Second, he makes the case that the mystery of childhood is not something that is eventually outgrown, but rather is a principle, which he terms "childness," to be internalized and lived out in all ages. He shuns the term "second childhood," but agrees with Karl Rahner that the later stages of life are "the true and proper childhood, the fullness of that *former* childhood, the childhood of immaturity."

The strength of the work is Marty's fascinating analysis of childhood in terms of mystery. Marty roots his reflection in Gabriel Marcel's distinction between a mystery and a problem in his work *The Mystery of Being*. Marcel wrote: "A problem is something which I meet, which I find complete before me, but which I can lay siege to and reduce," while "a mystery is something in which I myself am involved, and it can therefore only be thought of as a 'sphere where the distinction between what is in me and what is before me loses its meaning and its initial validity.'" Problems are subject to appropriate techniques, while mysteries transcend all conceivable techniques.

The modern tendency is to reduce the child to a problem which varying technicians seek to break down, control, explain, and solve through their distinct lenses of nature and nurture. But, Marty argues, the child resists such reduction. These explanations (several of which Marty explores in the book), while somewhat valuable, do little to capture the true identity of the child. The child is best understood as a child of God, as one of few whom Jesus called to himself as he uttered what George Bernanos calls "some of the most terrible [words] ever heard by human ears": "unless you change and become like

children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3).

And what are the qualities of the child that we should seek to nourish and emulate? What is the heart of the mystery that we should seek to discover and unfold? The desirable qualities of the child are her receptivity, openness to mystery, capacity for wonder and play, simplicity, responsiveness, dependence, and the fact that she is powerless. Yes, powerless: unable to control and unable to “earn” or “deserve” anything due to her status in society (which she lacked entirely in Jesus’ day), but only humbly receive from those upon whom she is dependent. The child is the one most capable of freely receiving the gift of life with sincere gratitude. It is these qualities, according to Marty, that we must cultivate in the child and as adults, be changed and replenished by, as the mystery of childhood unfolds throughout our lives

While Marty does not claim to be making an exhaustive survey of every philosopher, theologian, and social scientist who studies the child, I was somewhat surprised that he did not make reference to the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar or Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI). I believe his reflection could be deepened even further through engagement with the work of these two theologians. For the deepest meaning of childhood is revealed not primarily through Christ’s interaction with children, but in Christ himself as the eternal Child of the Father. It is Christ who fully reveals the human person’s vocation to receive herself fully from the Father and to give herself fully to him in return.

Nevertheless, *The Mystery of the Child* poses a much-needed challenge to the world of parenting advice and childcare. Parents, grandparents, caregivers, teachers, and anyone interested in the nature of the child would greatly benefit from Marty’s reflection. I know that after reading it I am compelled to resist the temptation to reduce and control in favor of beholding the beauty and mystery of the two little souls in my care.

Borderlands of Childhood

CATHERINE SIENKIEWICZ

Gavin and Knight Knight, *Called by Mind and Spirit: Crossing the Borderlands of Childhood* (Continuum, 2010).

There are people who live in a geographical borderland: a place where cultures and histories meet and produce unique tensions and fruitfulness. In *Called by Mind & Spirit*, Gavin and Joanna Knight draw upon their experience of living and ministering in the border town of Monmouth in South Wales, and bring forth from it a metaphor for understanding the unique "place" of childhood. For, as they explain in this book, which is a fusion of practical and theoretical, childhood also is a place of meeting, a place of tension which is open to newness. The authors use this borderland metaphor as both a starting and a returning point for attempting to understand in a deeper way the gifts and needs of childhood.

For, the reader is to understand, the needs of children are not being met, nor are their gifts being responded to. If childhood is a kind of place, it is a place in great jeopardy - as ironic as that may seem in first-world countries. This fact was documented in *The Good Childhood Inquiry* of 2009, sponsored by the Children's Society. This study indicted the extreme individualism which is the hallmark of today's youth, causing a host of problems for children and teens today. The authors do not take issue with the findings of the survey (indeed it said little that was altogether surprising). What they see as sadly neglected, however, is any sense of the spiritual landscape of modern childhood, its needs and gifts, and the challenges posed to it by the surrounding culture. This book is in many ways a response to this neglect; it is an attempt to reflect on how best to provide for the *spiritual needs* of children.

Contained in the book are brief reflections and anecdotes on a wide array of topics touching on childhood, the family, the church, and society. Any one of them could provide a starting point for discussion and research at greater depth. A strength of the book is the way it draws on both theology and psychology: for example, a theology of the sacraments of initiation and an understanding of the place of the child in the Church is combined with an awareness of the psychological tension (borderland metaphor again) between the child's needs for dependence as well as independence. The interweaving of theological and psychological offers a way to move past the theoretical into real-world answers to the problems that children are facing. Nevertheless, the authors leave the reader with many questions. We are invited to consider how we might make children feel more welcome in the church, for example, as well as how to make parents more welcome to bring them, but no answers are suggested.

If the book offers one significant insight, it is the borderland image which so pervades it. Modern culture has a great difficulty bearing with tension of any kind, and we try to drown it out with a cacophony of noise, entertainment, and distraction. If we really want to understand and so save the childhood of the children we love, the authors believe we must learn to live in that tension. As adults, the borderland between the has-been and the not-yet is still a part of our landscape, in the childhood that we carry with us, and in the children we still are. If we can begin to understand our own identities

as grown-up children, we will have come closer to helping our own children along that path, to a place where the struggle bears fruit.

The Unsurpassable Significance of the Child

D. C. SCHINDLER

Neil Postman, *The Disappearance of Childhood, 2nd ed.* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).
Gareth B. Matthews, *The Philosophy of Childhood* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).
Anthony Krupp, *Reason's Children: Childhood in Early Modern Philosophy* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2009).

According to Charles Péguy, all genuine beginnings possess a certain freshness, a novelty, an energy, that typically does not remain. Hence, the child has an unsurpassable significance. Péguy saw the child as revealing something fundamental about human nature, something that is not so immediately obvious in the adult (though perhaps comes to a certain expression again in the elderly, precisely because they are, for Péguy, closer to the birth into the eternal youth of the resurrection). This is not to say that Péguy was a romantic who saw adulthood simply as a fall from everything good and wholesome; instead, for him, with growth and maturity something is both lost and gained. The full meaning of human life is unfolded, as it were, gradually - childhood, maturity, old age - each stage of which is in a sense better than the others.

In 1962, a French historian named Phillipe Ariès provoked the emergence of a new field of research in the humanities that has come to be known as "childhood studies." Ariès' book, *Centuries of Childhood*, made the surprising claim that "childhood" is largely a modern invention. The evidence of the literature and art from the pre-modern world suggests, according to Ariès, that until fairly recently children were typically thought of as little more than "pre-adults," whose lives remained at the margins of the significant world of the adult until they reached the capacity to participate in that world themselves. It was not until the Renaissance that things begin to change, and only in essentially the Victorian era that childhood is taken to be a special period of life that needs to be sheltered, protected, and cultivated for its own sake, prior to one's entry into the adult sphere.

Childhood and Literacy

This thesis has always been controversial, and indeed makes a number of questionable assumptions, but the gist of it has been taken over by the well-known writer and communications theorist Neil Postman (*Amusing Ourselves to Death*, *Technopology*) as the background to a book that appeared in 1982 and was reprinted with a new preface in 1994 under the title *The Disappearance of Childhood*. Postman claims that, of all of the (many) books he has published, this particular book, which offers a thesis about the decline of this "modern" idea, has remained his favorite. It is evident why this would be so: the book gathers one of the themes that has most occupied Postman, the extensive cultural implications of modern media and technology, around the vital human question concerning the fate of

the very idea of the child. In doing so, he proposes a *reason* for Ariès' historical thesis.

According to Postman, there is a connection between childhood and literacy. This connection is confirmed, he says, by the facts: there was a "glimmer" of the notion of childhood in ancient Greece when the advent of writing transformed what had been an essentially oral culture. This glimmer was preserved by the Romans but all but snuffed out after the fall of Rome when literacy ceased to be (in Eric Havelock's terms) "socialized" and became instead a "craft," that is, something reserved for experts. Childhood returned more or less with the advent of the printing press, when reading once again became a social phenomenon, but it had its zenith in the Western world, according to Postman, essentially between 1850 and 1950, during which time literacy was a virtual given. Postman's thesis about the origins of the idea of childhood also then explain why it seems now to be disappearing: in what he calls the "Age of Television," the written word is being supplanted by the visual (and aural) image as the primary vehicle of popular culture.

Why does childhood seem to stand and fall with *literacy*? According to Postman, it is because the capacity to read is not something one is born with, but requires a period of training. To read well is an ability belonging to adults. While children can learn to speak at a fairly young age, something more is required for their being able to read. This simple fact has two implications. First, it allows a certain evident boundary to be drawn between the world of children and that of adults, and it moreover establishes a distinct period - the "school-age years" - that is set apart from infancy but is not adulthood. Because of its distinctness, childhood acquires its own ethos; it is kept apart from the world of adults and the "secrets" reserved for that world, especially the secrets of sex, though also secrets regarding the cares of adulthood, "what the world is like," the reality of death, and so forth. Shame and modesty appear for the first time as virtues, precisely because they indicate that there are certain things appropriate for children and certain things that are not.

But this boundary has implications as well for the meaning of adulthood: in laboriously acquiring the capacity to read, one learned as well to discipline one's mind, to focus one's attention, to make proper distinctions, to determine relative importance, to be alone with one's thoughts, and so forth. These are, of course, the capacities we would expect of a mature human being. But - so Postman's thesis runs - these very capacities are beginning to fade precisely because the growing importance of communications technologies are blurring the boundary that made them necessary. Postman describes television as the "total disclosure medium": it "broadcasts" everything without significant distinction and it addresses everyone indiscriminately. (Postman refers to a TV host who shouted to the audience in the rush before a commercial break: "Don't go away. We'll be back with a marvelous new diet and, then, a quick look at incest.") What we have as a result of the loss of boundaries, he observes, is the increasing phenomenon of the "adult-child," namely, the grown-up whose intellectual and emotional life is not significantly different from that of a child. The flip-side is that "childhood" also begins to lose its distinctive ethos.

Postman is at his best when describing the cultural implications of technology, and *The Disappearance of Childhood* makes some thought-provoking observations in this regard. What is less compelling is his general thesis, namely, that the invention of the printing press more or less led to the invention of childhood. Not only has the history behind this thesis been widely challenged, especially by medievalists, but one must also criticize what could be called the "sociological reductivism" this thesis implies, i.e., that it accounts for a spiritual reality in terms of what is essentially a material fact. Postman's book describes, we might say, the symptoms of a problem the significance of which cannot be overstated, but it requires one to go beyond its horizon to think through more adequately its diagnosis. It is indeed quite plausible to think that the disappearance of childhood and the immersion

in technology are both due to some more fundamental cause, determining the nature of which would belong to a more fundamental science: that of philosophy.

Childhood and Philosophy

Gareth Matthews, who passed away just recently after a long career, was a major advocate of the notion of childhood as an object of philosophical study, and devoted several books to the subject, of which we will here consider one: *The Philosophy of Childhood*, published originally in 1994 but reprinted many times. His book is not concerned, like Postman's, with the cultural phenomenon of childhood and its origins, but it is similar in that it seeks to encourage respect for childhood. The basis for that respect, however, could not be more different: while Postman makes a plea to preserve the boundaries between the adult and the child, Matthews argues that an over-emphasis on the difference between them leads to a disparagement of children.

Rather than a historical or systematic study, Matthews' book offers a series of philosophical reflections (roughly in the analytical style) on the views of children implied by various models of childhood and theories of moral and psychological development (Piaget, Kohlberg) and then on children's role in or relation to a number of areas: rights, literature, art, and the problem of mortality. He is concerned that we tend to be condescending toward children, and this happens essentially because we take a certain model of adult behavior and thinking to be normative, and then interpret the child as possessing a lack of capacity for this norm that needs to be remedied through education and other forms of socialization. Such an assumption, for example, would disincline one to introduce philosophy to young children because it entails a kind of rigorous, conceptual thinking that children are not yet capable of. But to accept this would be to overlook their ability to surprise us with genuine insights, reminiscent of some of the theories of the great ancient thinkers.

Matthews presents several different strategies for overcoming this tendency toward condescension. First, he argues that the standards we set are themselves often question-begging. All of the criteria that Piaget posits for mature rationality, for example, have been challenged in one way or another by developments in modern science. This means that the "adult" reasoning is in some ways just as naive as we take the child's reasoning to be. Second, along similar lines, Matthews points out that the child's way of doing things - whether it be in reasoning, in art, or in other areas - represents something that*ought* to belong to adult behavior and thinking, but rarely does because we have lost a sensitivity to its value. We assume that philosophy is about rigorous, conceptual thinking, and forget that it is also about asking big questions and imagining alternatives. We assume that art is about the mastery of technique and the sophistication of conception, and forget that it may also be about spontaneity and the immediacy of perception. Genuineness and naivete, indeed, are not entirely unrelated.

Third, by contrast, some of the very things we take to belong to maturity can be found already among children, as long as we are attentive and open to the possibility. Matthews argues that children often demonstrate more of the kind of empathy and other-centeredness that lies at the root of morality than we give them credit for, and they sometimes exhibit striking examples of reflectiveness and courage in complex situations. All of this leads to what may be cited as the general thesis of the book: "Children are people, fully worthy of both the moral and the intellectual respect due persons. They should be respected for what they are, as well as for what they can become" (p. 122).

A problem at the root of Matthews' argument is that he seems to operate with the general assumption that the way to assure respect for children is to show that they are not as different from adults as we think. In other words, he takes for granted that *difference* entails morally offensive inequality. He thus appears to be operating with what may be called a "liberal" notion of the person - as most essentially a

"rational chooser" - and seeks to show that children already possess the traits that characterize this notion, or at least ought to be treated as if they did. This becomes most evident in the case he makes for children's rights in relation to their parents: *rational* (as opposed to arbitrary) authority ought to be able to justify itself by proving it is adequately carrying out its responsibility, and thus a child who can demonstrate maturity should be able to call his parents to account in the courtroom. Matthews also presents arguments that children's philosophy ought to be published and children's art ought to be hung in museums, so that it receives in an institutional way the recognition that it possesses (at least to some degree) the type of importance we accord the work of adults.

Matthews would certainly accuse Postman of being paternalistic in his desire to protect children from the mass media. But this simply reinforces doubts as to the adequacy of Matthews' conception of the child. The impulse to preserve and cultivate a difference between children and adults is condescending only if we cannot conceive of difference as such as something inherently good. Matthews does wish to show how the distinctive behavior of children is valuable, but he almost always does so by comparing it to adults (the pre-Socratic thinkers in philosophy or Paul Klee in art). A more adequate discussion of childhood and philosophy would require an inquiry into the essential matters: *what is* a child, after all, and *what is* philosophy?

Childhood and Reason

Anthony Krupp begins to approach these questions in *Reason's Children: Childhood in Early Modern Philosophy*, though his book is much more constrained in scope, limiting itself to a historical study of the notion of childhood as it appears in Descartes, Locke, Leibniz, Wolff, and Baumgarten. This book is more directly scholarly than the other two, and is indeed encumbered by a lot of the ideology of the contemporary academy (it explicitly denies that it will attempt to judge the truth of any of the ideas it presents, it avoids at all costs an "essentialist" interpretation of things, it betrays a hypersensitivity to the mention of gender in the literature, and so forth). Nevertheless, the historical study reveals some of the roots of the conception that seems to lie behind Matthews' book, and perhaps gives some indication of the deeper reason for the disappearance of childhood.

Although Krupp does not argue for any particular thesis, his discussion of these figures reveals quite clearly a connection between one's view of childhood and one's view of human reason: the assumptions one makes about the nature of the rationality that defines personhood has implications for the status and dignity one accords to children. Of this list, Leibniz and Baumgarten (especially the latter) have the most "capacious" sense of reason, and they also evince the most respect for children and childhood. Leibniz understood reason as an implicit grasp of the whole, which could then discursively be made explicit. Children, then, ought to be seen as possessing reason implicitly, so that, though they may not yet be able to say "I" themselves (which is what defines personhood for Leibniz), they nevertheless *are* already implicitly an "I", and so it can be articulated for them, on their behalf.

Baumgarten is perhaps the most interesting of the lot (though for some reason the chapter devoted to him is the shortest of the book). Baumgarten, the "founder" of aesthetics as a philosophical discipline, affirmed the reality of a kind of sensuous knowing that is analogously rational though irreducibly different from the conceptual sort. As Krupp observes, Baumgarten seems to be a forerunner of the "whole person" anthropology, which was explicitly championed by Herder and became a significant part of the late modern reaction to the Enlightenment tendency to dualism. It is not a surprise, then, that he should value the particular way of knowing demonstrated by children, who so spontaneously seek to imitate the beautiful when they perceive it.

Baumgarten's perspective could not be more opposed to that of Descartes, who not only had little

regard for the beautiful, but also had no place in his philosophy for children. The crux of the matter is Descartes' absolute body-soul dualism. Given that the soul is, for him, a purely conceptual activity that operates independently of the body, Descartes faces the awkward question of why children are not perfectly rational: why should an immature body have any influence on the "thinking thing" that is the human soul? Descartes' various attempts to respond to this question are inconsistent and unconvincing, but the thrust of his thought was to develop a *method* in strict opposition to the sorts of receptivity that characterize childhood, such as memory, tradition, spontaneous trust, imagination, and so forth. Although Krupp qualifies the charge, he cites a French scholar's assessment that Descartes' philosophical method amounts to "an infanticide" (p. 25). Wolff, a rationalist like Descartes, though perhaps not as radical, similarly treated childhood as little better than a deficit to be remedied through a proper training and education. In fact, according to Krupp, Wolff compared the state of childhood to the state of inebriation: in both cases, one acts like an animal without the capacity to reason in detachment from sense experience.

Perhaps most surprising in Krupp's book is what he reveals about John Locke. One might think that Locke, as an empiricist rather than a rationalist, would have greater regard for children. And in fact Locke wrote one of the only sustained works on childhood to come out of the Enlightenment period, namely, his *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. But Locke turns out to be the most brutal toward children of all these figures. Although Krupp does not inquire into the reason for this, it seems to be due to the fact that, although Locke accepts the general Enlightenment notion that personhood is defined by rationality, his empiricism leads him to accept rationality only in those beings who actually demonstrate a capacity to exercise it. A child may be a "Man," insofar as he exhibits the physical form of a human being, but he is not yet a person until he can act like a rational chooser. But there is a further, more disturbing, implication to Locke's view: as Krupp shows, Locke not only denies personhood of what he calls "changelings" - i.e., mentally handicapped and deformed children - but he also does not classify them as human beings at all, since they do not properly exhibit the shape of man. Thus, Locke takes their murder to be morally permissible. (So much for tolerance!)

As the place of the child in the Enlightenment suggests, it does not suffice to link the notion of childhood simply to the existence of social literacy, or to defend the child by demonstrating more continuity between adolescence and adulthood. What is needed is a more profound reflection on the nature of man, one that begins, like Péguy, with the notion that being is a gift, and so one able to interpret the special qualities of the child - wonder, dependence, receptivity, naive assent, and so forth - as genuinely positive, even if they do not come as easily to adults. (For reflections of this sort, see Ferdinand Ulrich,*Der Mensch als Anfang: Zur philosophischen Anthropologie der Kindheit*, and Gustav Siewerth, *Metaphysik der Kindheit*.) In this respect, just as it falls especially to Christians, as Hans Urs von Balthasar famously observed, to be the "guardians of being in our age," for a similar reason they must also be the guardians of childhood.

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We Are Not Our Own”: Childhood and the Integrity of the Human in a Technological Age

D. L. SCHINDLER

Liberal culture's anti-child practices are bound up with a logic of childlessness most basically defined in terms of a forgetfulness of being and its Origin and expressed by the marginalization of philosophy, leisure, and liturgy as ways of being and acting. We can adequately address *either* these practices *or* this logic only by addressing *both* of them at the same time. The argument is that we will succeed in carrying out the tasks indicated here only by re-centering the culture in conception, birth, and being born: that is, in these as realized*literally in the procreation of children*, even as this literal procreation of children is *itself understood to bear an entire vision of human being and acting before God*. Absent this re-centering of the culture in conception and birth so understood, our culture is in imminent peril of an ever-increasing loss both literally of the lives of children, especially in their most innocent and defenseless beginnings, *and* of the integrity of the human in its natural givenness.

The Child

STRATFORD CALDECOTT

Welcome to the first issue of Humanum.

Children are perhaps the most vulnerable members of human society. They are subject to most of the same pressures and assaults as adults, but in addition to this, the very factors that make them children open up other areas of vulnerability. We are increasingly conscious not only of the millions of unborn children killed in the womb or in laboratories (where approximately 30 embryos are destroyed for every live birth by IVF, for instance), but of the prevalence of sexual abuse throughout our society, especially in institutions where adults have great power over children in their care and little oversight. But there are many other ways in which adults have failed their children. In the United States, bad or merely inconvenient behavior often leads to children being diagnosed as "bipolar" and calmed with antipsychotic drugs. (And as we know, other pharmaceuticals are readily available to enhance performance in the highly competitive environments of college or business.) In the UK, growing numbers of children are starting school or nursery at the age of four not knowing their own names - not even knowing they *need* a name - because their parents have been spending too much time on the internet and watching television to teach them to speak.

A further example: it was revealed to the British Parliament in July 2011 that 155 animal-human hybrid embryos have been created in laboratories since such research was legalized in 2008 (that is, before the funding ran out). The justification given – as in the case of research on embryonic stem-cells in general – was that it might help (eventually) to eliminate all kinds of diseases. This is the kind of consequentialist thinking to which the child, from conception until maturity, is particularly vulnerable. And as we can see from this example, it leads in some bizarre directions. But even if we don't allow chimeras to live, what is likely to be the psychological damage to children who discover their origin lies not in the love of their parents but in a scientific experiment or commercial transaction?

The "technological" approach to problem solving is a natural human characteristic, one that to a large extent differentiates us from the other animals, but one which boosted by the possibilities opened up by modern science can do massive harm. What we are seeing is technology on steroids, as it were, wielded by "men without chests" (to borrow C.S. Lewis's phrase from *The Abolition of Man*).

We have barely begun to count the cost of the assault on the child, in social let alone in psychological or spiritual terms. It would be easy to get depressed, and indeed depression is a common affliction among those who seek to reverse the tide by making a stand on one or other of these issues. There is a place and a time for making a stand, but there is also a place and a time for considered reflection, especially if there may be some hope of attacking the disease at its root. What *Humanum*, and the CCPR, hope to contribute to this debate, as we survey the vast field of relevant publications, is to establish such a time and a place – an oasis for considered reflection. Our reviewers have mostly been educated at the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family, where they have learned to see things as the late Pope saw them, in the light of a profound knowledge of *who man is*, and why we should care. This is what has been forgotten in the eager rush to reinvent ourselves as masters of our own fate.

We open with a systematic article, as we will in each and every issue, to lay out the vision of our particular topic, and to explain the reasons for its importance and the particular perspective we bring to bear upon it. This time the article is by the former Dean of the John Paul II Institute in Washington and Editor of *Communio*, Professor David L. Schindler, who is very much the moving spirit behind *Humanum*. This is followed by review articles and shorter reviews that survey the literature available to us on this topic. Further suggestions for books that should be reviewed are always welcome.

Readers may be interested to read another systematic article on childhood and the theology of the body, "Partners of the Absolute," by English writer Stephen Milne, a visiting lecturer at the Maryvale Institute, which is hosted on the Second Spring website.

*S.C., November 15, 2011, Oxfor*d

NEXT ISSUE: CHILDREN OF DIVORCE