

FOUNDATIONS OF PSYCHOHISTORY

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ISBN 940508-01-X

LC 81-90307

To Reuben Fine ,
to my fellow psychohistorians,
and to my wife Susan Hein.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	i
1. The Evolution of Childhood	1
2. The Independence of Psychohistory	84
3. The Formation of the American Personality Through Psychospeciation	105
4. The Psychogenic Theory of History	132
5. Jimmy Carter and American Fantasy	147
6. Historical Group-Fantasies	172
7. The Fetal Origins of History	244
Index	333

PREFACE

“It is the theory that decides
what we can observe.”

—Albert Einstein

Psychohistory is the science of historical motivation—no more, no less.

It is my hope that this book will provide the theoretical foundations for the new science of psychohistory.

It is not often recognized that psychohistory is the only new social science to be founded in the twentieth century—sociology, psychology and anthropology all having broken away from philosophy in the nineteenth century.

In beginning any new science, the first task is to formulate bold, clear, testable theories. These new theories must be internally consistent and must be able to generate predictions which can be tested against new empirical material and partially disproved. The testing and partial disproof of theory is the aim of all science, and the only basis for formulating new and hopefully better theory and predictions.

The formulation, testing, disproof and reformulation of psychohistorical theory is therefore my sole purpose in this book.

Each chapter is a new scientific experiment, in which I try to identify with the actors in the historical drama and explore my own unconscious as a way of reaching historical motivations. Only if I can accomplish this *inner* act of discovery can I move back to new historical material to test the patterns of motivation and group dynamics I think I have found. As Dilthey recognized long ago, this is the only way one can do psychohistory. Ultimately, a psyche can only explore itself to discover the motives of another. The motives of another species, insofar as they are wholly different in kind from ours, are literally unknowable. It is *only* by discovering the “Hitler in ourselves” that we can understand a Hitler. If one *denies* one has a “Hitler in ourselves,” one cannot do psychohistory. I, like Hitler, have been a beaten, frightened child and a resentful youth. I recognize him in myself, and with some courage can feel in my own guts the terrors *he* felt that helped produce the European *Götterdämmerung*.

The necessity for plunging into the depths of one's own psyche when doing psychohistorical research often leads critics to confuse introspection with hallucination. Political psychologist Lloyd Etheredge admits he can't figure out whether "deMause's work is either that of a bold, visionary genius—or is wacky enthusiasm for his own excited fantasies." Historian Lawrence Stone wonders on reading my work how "to solve the problem of how to regard so bold, so challenging, so dogmatic, so enthusiastic, so perverse, and yet so heavily documented a model." And David Stannard is afraid introspection is only regression, calling my work "well beyond the fringe of even the most generous definition of scholarship" because, he says, I do my research by spending " 'hundreds of hours' crawling under the bedclothes with a two-year-old searching for answers to the riddles of history." Introspection is clearly a dangerous task, and those who attempt it in psychohistory are likely to be accused of being the sole source of the fantasies they investigate.

Because introspection is such an important tool in investigating historical motivation the personal life of a psychohistorian must be intimately connected with his or her choice of topic. "Nothing loved or hated, nothing understood" is a truism in the psychological sciences. It should surprise no one that during the decade of my life in which I researched and wrote these chapters I lived through all its topics, writing about the evolution of childhood during my son's childhood, the origins of war during my divorce, and the fetal origins of history during my new wife's pregnancy. I could also trace the influence of my first and second psychoanalysis on these essays, or the development of our Institute for Psychohistory, or of *The Journal of Psychohistory* where these essays were first published. All are relevant to discovery. But ultimately what counts is how well the theory explains the evidence. I methodically study my own dreams to help me understand both my role in psychohistorical groups and my historical material—because history, like dreams, makes perfectly good sense when you know its laws of symbolic transformation. Yet my psychohistorical theories do not derive their truth value from my dreams, but from their power to explain the shared motives of individuals in historical groups.

The "psychogenic theory of history" which I set out in this book is simple to understand, though often difficult to believe. It can be summarized as the theory that history involves the acting-out by adults of group-fantasies which are based on motivations initially produced by the evolution of childhood.

I call this theory "psychogenic" rather than "economic" or "political" because it views man more as *homo relatens* than as *homo economicus* or *homo politicus*—that is, as searching for *relation*, for *love*, more than for money or power. The theory states that it is not "economic class" nor "social class" but "*psychoclass*"—shared childrearing modes—that is the real basis for understanding motivation in history. Thus the unofficial

slogan of our *Journal of Psychohistory*, “no childhood, no psychohistory,” however difficult of accomplishment, is meant to keep our psychogenic goal uppermost in our minds as we forge our new science.

As a division of scientific psychology, psychohistory is simply the psychology of the largest groups. It is based on psychoanalysis because this is the most meaningful depth psychology of the twentieth century—as opposed to sociological theory, which is based on eighteenth-century associationism, or its nineteenth-century variant, behaviorism. Yet, as psychohistorian Rudolph Binion constantly stresses, psychohistorical laws are *sui generis*, not derivable from clinical practice, but only from historical observation. For while they draw upon sound principles of individual psychology, they go beyond them to dynamics peculiar to large groups, and are no more reducible to clinical psychology than astronomy is to atomic physics. Thus my work envisions a full “history of the psyche,” rather than just “using psychology in history.” This means that the kind of psychohistory written by those of us associated with The Institute for Psychohistory derives less from William Langer’s famous “Next Assignment” for historians to “use psychoanalysis in history” than from Freud’s initial hope that “we may expect that one day someone will venture to embark upon a pathology of cultural communities.”

The possibility that Freud raises that whole groups can be pathological disturbs historians. British historian E.P. Hennock decries the “crassness and sheer foolishness” of my work on the basis of historical relativism:

That men in other ages might behave quite differently from us yet be no less rational and sane, has been a basic concept amongst historians for a long time now. It does not belong to deMause’s mental universe . . . the normal practices of past societies are constantly explained in terms of psychoses.

Although I have actually never applied the word “psychosis” to groups, I know what he means. It is the same historical relativism that Phillipe Ariès proposes when he says people in former times who sexually abuse children are normal because “the widespread practice of playing with children’s privy parts formed a part of a widespread tradition.” This kind of relativism used to be popular with anthropologists in the 1930s—“every culture can only be judged by its own value system”—until World War II came along and it seemed bizarre to say that “Nazis are just reflecting a culture which values burning babies in ovens.” There simply is no possibility of eliminating values from psychohistory—loving children is better than beating them in *any* culture—even though with empathy the psychohistorian *can* try to eliminate ethnocentrism. Since it is the main thrust of this book that psychological maturity is a *historical* achievement, every page of what you are about to read is necessarily infused with my value system, and you should be prepared to question my values along with my facts. So, too, of course, with every other historical theory.

The value system of every social science is embedded into its first principles. When sociology began, Comte and Durkheim thought they were only delimiting their subject matter by positing their first principle of “society as prior to the individual.” But ever since Popper showed that this was a holistic fallacy which was actually a *valuation* of the group (I would say “of the group-fantasy”) as *more important* than the individual, sociology has been drifting about without a theoretical base. Indeed, the concept “society” was *invented* to deny individual motivations in groups; Durkheim was blunt about this flight from psychology, declaring that “every time that a social phenomenon is directly explained by a psychological phenomenon, we may be sure that the explanation is false.” I therefore never use the word “society” (adopting instead the non-reified term “group”) because I consider it as one more projective device, like “God” or “Witch,” for relieving the individual of responsibility. “Society caused X” is always either a tautology or a projection, and it is my conscious intention in this book to provide a theoretical system based on methodological individualism as an alternative to the holistic sociologies of Durkheim and Marx.

Does this mean that psychohistory reduces all of its subject matter to “psychological motives?” Yes. Only a psyche can have a motive, a group cannot, a factory cannot, a gun cannot. Is psychohistory, then, “history reduced to merely personal motives?” Yes again. All motives are personal, though the “merely” is a denial of their importance. And the charge of “reductionism,” often leveled against psychohistory, is simply misplaced, since it is not a failing but a scientific goal to reduce seemingly complex and disparate processes to simpler and more basic forces and principles. All other sciences long ago learned that the universe of available “facts” is near infinite; only historians still believe they can learn something just by continuing to pile up more and more narrative “facts.”

Historians are trained in the theory of the uniqueness of every historical event. Most narrative historians are as convinced of this principle in human history as medieval men were of it in natural history. At best, contemporary historians will often narrate some political events and then some economic events and thereby assume by mere conjunction that the two narrations make a theory. But narrative history is *not* a science, nor is it meant to be. Narrative history describes sequences of historical events; psychohistory discovers laws of historical motivations. Narrative history is full of “accidents” and “mistakes”; psychohistory is only concerned with lawfulness, especially of “accidents” and “mistakes.” Narrative is period-centered, and all historians are expected to specialize in some country and period; psychohistory is comparative, and can no more specialize in one area of history than an astronomer can specialize in one area of the sky. When students hear me jump back and forth among periods in lectures they often complain that “you don’t really seem to be doing *history*.” They are right.

But what a difference this new scientific model makes to one's view of history! What you will read in this book will turn upside down almost every notion of how to view history which you have learned elsewhere. Rather than history being how public events affect private lives, you will see history more as how private fantasies are acted out on the public stage. Rather than being mainly about adult men's activities, you will see how history is first determined in families by women and children, as well as men, and only later on reflected in adult public activities. Rather than how a few leaders maintain power over masses of individuals, you will examine how groups delegate tasks to leaders, so that "power" becomes mainly a problem of group masochism instead of one of force. Rather than wars being terrible "mistakes," you will discover them to be *wishes*. Rather than our progress beyond magic and superstition being due to the accumulation of knowledge you will see it as an improvement in maturity, due to the evolution of childhood. Rather than traditional man as secure and modern man as alienated, you will see why traditional man is far more likely to be schizoid and modern man to be happy and integrated. Rather than the traditional family as a strong but now-decaying institution, you will witness the growth of the family, with its love of children and spouse, as a *modern achievement*, growing stronger all the time. Rather than civilization being the ever-greater renunciation of instinctual pleasure, you will come to view it as the ever-greater satisfaction of needs. And rather than history as a victory for Morality, for the superego, you will discover why it is actually a victory of Desire and Reason, of the id and ego, *over* the superego.

If this appears to make me an optimist, I would not want to mislead you. Evolutionists are not always optimists. Since I try not to idealize history, I lack the first qualification for being an optimist. And since the Whig interpretation of history is based on the notion of inevitable progress as the result of the accumulation of knowledge, my theory cannot be Whiggish. What I *do* believe is that whatever maturity we have gained through the slow evolution of childhood is now being threatened by our technological capacity for self-destruction, a capacity which now amounts to fifteen thousand tons of TNT for every man, woman and child on earth. If we do not understand how we have brought this all about and why we still need periodic sacrificial purges, we will surely soon act out our infantile group-fantasies of total world destruction.

If this book can be a contribution to this understanding, I will consider it a success.

July 11, 1981

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THE EVOLUTION OF CHILDHOOD

Do ye hear the children weeping,
Oh my brothers . . .

The Cry of the Children

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

The history of childhood is a nightmare from which we have only recently begun to awaken. The further back in history one goes, the lower the level of child care, and the more likely children are to be killed, abandoned, beaten, terrorized, and sexually abused. It is our task here to see how much of this childhood history can be recaptured from the evidence that remains to us.

That this pattern has not previously been noticed by historians is because serious history has long been considered a record of public not private events. Historians have concentrated so much on the noisy sandbox of history, with its fantastic castles and magnificent battles, that they have generally ignored what is going on in the homes around the playground. And where historians usually look to the sandbox battles of yesterday for the causes of those of today, we instead ask how each generation of parents and children creates those issues which are later acted out in the arena of public life.

At first glance, this lack of interest in the lives of children seems odd. Historians have been traditionally committed to explaining continuity

and change over time, and ever since Plato it has been known that childhood is a key to this understanding. The importance of parent-child relations for social change was hardly discovered by Freud; St. Augustine's cry, "Give me other mothers and I will give you another world," has been echoed by major thinkers for fifteen centuries without affecting historical writing. Since Freud, of course, our view of childhood has acquired a new dimension, and in the past half century the study of childhood has become routine for the psychologist, the sociologist, and the anthropologist. It is only beginning for the historian. Such determined avoidance requires an explanation.

Historians usually blame the paucity of the sources for the lack of serious study of childhood in the past. Peter Laslett wonders why the "crowds and crowds of little children are strangely missing from the written record. . . . There is something mysterious about the silence of all these multitudes of babes in arms, toddlers and adolescents in the statements men made at the time about their own experience. . . . We cannot say whether fathers helped in the tending of infants. . . . Nothing can as yet be said on what is called by the psychologists toilet training. . . . It is in fact an effort of mind to remember all the time that children were always present in such numbers in the traditional world, nearly half the whole community living in a condition of semi-obliteration."¹ As the family sociologist James Bossard puts it: "Unfortunately, the history of childhood has never been written, and there is some doubt whether it ever can be written [because] of the dearth of historical data bearing on childhood."²

This conviction is so strong among historians that it is not surprising that this book began not in the field of history at all but in applied psychoanalysis. Five years ago, I was engaged in writing a book on a psychoanalytic theory of historical change, and, in reviewing the results of half a century of applied psychoanalysis, it seemed to me that it had failed to become a science mainly because it had not become evolutionary. Since the repetition compulsion, by definition, cannot explain historical change, every attempt by Freud, Roheim, Kardiner, and others to develop a theory of change ultimately ended in a sterile chicken-or-egg dispute about whether child-rearing depends on cultural traits or the other way around. That child-rearing practices are the basis for adult personality was proven again and again. Where they originated stumped every psychoanalyst who raised the question.³

In a paper given in 1968 before the Association for Applied Psychoanalysis, I outlined an evolutionary theory of historical change in parent-child relations, and proposed that since historians had not as yet begun the job of writing childhood history, the Association should sponsor a team of historians who would dig back into the sources to un-

cover the major stages of child-rearing in the West since antiquity. This essay is the outcome of that project.

The "psychogenic theory of history" outlined in my project proposal began with a comprehensive theory of historical change. It posited that the central force for change in history is neither technology nor economics, but the "psychogenic" changes in personality occurring because of successive generations of parent-child interactions. This theory involved several hypotheses, each subject to proof or disproof by empirical historical evidence:

1. That the evolution of parent-child relations constitutes an independent source of historical change. The origin of this evolution lies in the ability of successive generations of parents to regress to the psychic age of their children and work through the anxieties of that age in a better manner the second time they encounter them than they did during their own childhood. The process is similar to that of psychoanalysis, which also involves regression and a second chance to face childhood anxieties.
2. That this "generational pressure" for psychic change is not only spontaneous, originating in the adult's need to regress and in the child's striving for relationship, but also occurs independent of social and technological change. It therefore can be found even in periods of social and technological stagnation.
3. That the history of childhood is a series of closer approaches between adult and child, with each closing of psychic distance producing fresh anxiety. The reduction of this adult anxiety is the main source of the child-rearing practices of each age.
4. That the obverse of the hypothesis that history involves a general improvement in child care is that the further back one goes in history, the less effective parents are in meeting the developing needs of the child. This would indicate, for instance, that if today in America there are less than a million abused children,⁴ there would be a point back in history where most children were what we would now consider abused.
5. That because psychic structure must always be passed from generation to generation through the narrow funnel of childhood, a society's child-rearing practices are not just one item in a list of cultural traits. They are the very condition for the transmission and development of all other cultural elements, and place definite limits on what can be achieved in all other spheres of history. Specific childhood experiences must occur to sustain specific cultural traits, and once these experiences no longer occur the trait disappears.

The evidence for the evolution of childhood will be examined in this essay, and the remainder of the psychogenic theory will be spelled out in the rest of this book.

PREVIOUS WORKS ON CHILDREN IN HISTORY

Although I think this essay is the first to examine seriously the history of childhood in the West, historians have undeniably been writing about children in past ages for some time.⁵ Even so, I think that the study of the history of childhood is just beginning, since most of these works so badly distort the facts of childhood in the periods they cover. Official biographers are the worst offenders; childhood is generally idealized, and very few biographers give any useful information about the subject's earliest years. The historical sociologists manage to turn out theories explaining changes in childhood without ever bothering to examine a single family, past or present.⁶ The literary historians, mistaking books for life, construct a fictional picture of childhood, as though one could know what really happened in the nineteenth-century American home by reading *Tom Sawyer*.⁷

But it is the social historian, whose job it is to dig out the reality of social conditions in the past, who defends himself most vigorously against the facts he turns up.⁸ When one social historian finds widespread infanticide, he declares it "admirable and humane."⁹ When another describes mothers who regularly beat their infants with sticks while still in the cradle, she comments, without a shred of evidence, that "if her discipline was stern, it was even and just and leavened with kindness."¹⁰ When a third finds mothers who dunk their infants into ice water each morning to "strengthen" them, and the children die from the practice, she says that "they were not intentionally cruel," but simply "had read Rousseau and Locke."¹¹ No practice in the past seems anything but benign to the social historian. When Laslett finds parents regularly sending their children, at age seven, to other homes as servants, while taking in other children to serve them, he says it was actually kindness, for it "shows that parents may have been unwilling to submit children of their own to the discipline of work at home."¹² After admitting that severe whipping of young children with various instruments "at school and at home seems to have been as common in the seventeenth century as it was later," William Sloan feels compelled to add that "children, then as later, sometimes deserved whipping."¹³ When Philippe Ariès comes up with so much evidence of open sexual molesting of children that he admits that "playing with children's privy parts formed part of a widespread tradition,"¹⁴ he goes on to describe a "traditional" scene where a stranger throws himself on a little boy while riding in a train, "his hand brutally rummaging inside the child's fly," while the father smiles, and concludes: "All that was involved was a game whose scabrous nature we should beware of exaggerating."¹⁵ Masses of evidence are hidden, distorted, softened, or ignored. The

child's early years are played down, formal educational content is endlessly examined, and emotional content is avoided by stressing child legislation and avoiding the home. And if the nature of the author's book is such that the ubiquity of unpleasant facts cannot be ignored, the theory is invented that "good parents leave no traces in the records." When, for instance, Alan Valentine examines 600 years of letters from fathers to sons, and of 126 fathers is unable to find one who isn't insensitive, moralistic, and thoroughly self-centered, he concludes: "Doubtless an infinite number of fathers have written to their sons letters that would warm and lift our hearts, if we only could find them. The happiest fathers leave no history, and it is the men who are not at their best with their children who are likely to write the heart-rending letters that survive."¹⁶ Likewise, Anna Burr, covering 250 autobiographies, notes there are no happy memories of childhood, but carefully avoids drawing any conclusions.¹⁷

Of all the books on childhood in the past, Philippe Ariès's book *Centuries of Childhood* is probably the best known; one historian notes the frequency with which it is "cited as Holy Writ."¹⁸ Ariès's central thesis is the opposite of mine: he argues that while the traditional child was happy because he was free to mix with many classes and ages, a special condition known as childhood was "invented" in the early modern period, resulting in a tyrannical concept of the family which destroyed friendship and sociability and deprived children of freedom, inflicting upon them for the first time the birch and the prison cell.

To prove this thesis, Ariès uses two main arguments. He first says that a separate concept of childhood was unknown in the early Middle Ages. "Medieval art until about the twelfth century did not know childhood or did not attempt to portray it" because artists were "unable to depict a child except as a man on a smaller scale."¹⁹ Not only does this leave the art of antiquity in limbo, but it ignores voluminous evidence that medieval artists could, indeed, paint realistic children.²⁰ His etymological argument for a separate concept of childhood being unknown is also untenable.²¹ In any case, the notion of the "invention of childhood" is so fuzzy that it is surprising that so many historians have recently picked it up.²² His second argument, that the modern family restricts the child's freedom and increases the severity of punishment, runs counter to all the evidence.

Far more reliable than Ariès is a quartet of books, only one of them written by a professional historian: George Payne's *The Child in Human Progress*, G. Rattray Taylor's *The Angel Makers*, David Hunt's *Parents and Children in History*, and J. Louise Despert's *The Emotionally Disturbed Child—Then and Now*. Payne, writing in 1916, was the first to examine the wide extent of infanticide and brutality toward children in

the past, particularly in antiquity. Taylor's book, rich in documentation, is a sophisticated psychoanalytic reading of childhood and personality in late eighteenth-century England. Hunt, like Ariès, centers mostly on the unique seventeenth-century document, Héroard's diary of the childhood of Louis XIII, but does so with great psychological sensitivity and awareness of the psychohistorical implications of his findings. And Despert's psychiatric comparison of child mistreatment in the past and present surveys the range of emotional attitudes toward children since antiquity, expressing her growing horror as she uncovers a story of unremitting "heartlessness and cruelty."²³

Yet despite these four books, the central questions of comparative childhood history remain to be asked, much less answered. In the next two sections of this chapter, I will cover some of the psychological principles that apply to adult-child relations in the past. The examples I use, while not untypical of child life in the past, are not drawn equally from all time periods, but are chosen as the clearest illustrations of the psychological principles being described. It is only in the three succeeding sections, where I provide an overview of the history of infanticide, abandonment, nursing, swaddling, beating, and sexual abuse, that I begin to examine how widespread the practice was in each period.

PSYCHOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES OF CHILDHOOD HISTORY: PROJECTIVE AND REVERSAL REACTIONS

In studying childhood over many generations, it is most important to concentrate on those moments which most affect the psyche of the next generation: primarily, this means what happens when an adult is face to face with a child who needs something. The adult has, I believe, three major reactions available: (1) He can use the child as a vehicle for projection of the contents of his own unconscious (projective reaction); (2) he can use the child as a substitute for an adult figure important in his own childhood (reversal reaction); or (3) he can empathize with the child's needs and act to satisfy them (empathic reaction).

The projective reaction is, of course, familiar to psychoanalysts under terms which range from "projection" to "projective identification," a more concrete, intrusive form of voiding feelings into others. The psychoanalyst, for instance, is thoroughly familiar with being used as a "toilet-lap"²⁴ for the massive projections of the patient. It is this condition of being used as a vehicle for projections which is usual for children in the past.

Likewise, the reversal reaction is familiar to students of battering parents.²⁵ Children exist only to satisfy parental needs, and it is always

the failure of the child-as-parent to give love which triggers the actual battering. As one battering mother put it: "I have never felt loved all my life. When the baby was born, I thought he would love me. When he cried, it meant he didn't love me. So I hit him."

The third term, empathic reaction, is used here in a more limited sense than the dictionary definition. It is the adult's ability to regress to the level of a child's need and correctly identify it without an admixture of the adult's own projections. The adult must then be able to maintain enough distance from the need to be able to satisfy it. It is an ability identical to the use of the psychoanalyst's unconscious called "free-floating attention," or, as Theodor Reik terms it, "listening with the third ear."²⁶

Projective and reversal reactions often occurred simultaneously in parents in the past, producing an effect which I call the "double image," where the child was seen as both full of the adult's projected desires, hostilities, and sexual thoughts, and at the same moment as a mother or father figure. That is, it is *both bad and loving*. Furthermore, the further back in history one goes, the more "concretization" or reification one finds of these projective and reversal reactions, producing progressively more bizarre attitudes toward children, similar to those of contemporary parents of battered and schizophrenic children.

The first illustration of these closely interlocking concepts which we will examine is in an adult-child scene from the past. The year is 1739; the boy, Nicolas, is four years old. The incident is one he remembers and has had confirmed by his mother. His grandfather, who has been rather attentive to him the past few days, decides he has to "test" him, and says, "Nicolas, my son, you have many faults, and these grieve your mother. She is my daughter and has always obliged me; obey me too, and correct these, or I will whip you like a dog which is being trained." Nicolas, angry at the betrayal "from one who has been so kind to me," throws his toys into the fire. The grandfather seems pleased.

"Nicholas . . . I said that to test you. Did you really think that a grandpapa, who had been so kind to you yesterday and the day before, could treat you like a dog today? I thought you were intelligent . . ." "I am not a beast like a dog." "No, but you are not as clever as I thought, or you would have understood that I was only teasing. It was just a joke . . . Come to me." I threw myself into his arms. "That is not all," he continued, "I want to see you friends with your mother; you have grieved, deeply grieved her . . . Nicolas, your father loves you; do you love him?" "Yes, grandpapa!" "Suppose he were in danger and to save him it was necessary to put your hand in the fire, would you do it? Would

you put it . . . there, if it was necessary?" "Yes grandpapa." "And for me?" "For you? . . . yes, yes." "And for your mother?" "For mamma? Both of them, both of them!" "We shall see if you are telling the truth, for your mother is in great need of your little help! If you love her, you must prove it." I made no answer; but, putting together all that had been said, I went to the fireplace and, while they were making signs to each other, put my right hand into the fire. The pain drew a deep sigh from me."²⁷

What makes this sort of scene so typical of adult-child interaction in the past is the existence of so many contradictory attitudes on the adult's part without the least resolution. The child is loved and hated, rewarded and punished, bad and loving, all at once. That this puts the child in a "double bind" of conflicting signals (which Bateson²⁸ and others believe underlie schizophrenia), goes without saying. But the conflicting signals themselves come from adults who are striving to demonstrate that the child is both very bad (projective reaction) and very loving (reversal reaction). It is the child's function to reduce the adult's pressing anxieties; the child acts as the adult's defense.

It is also the projective and reversal reactions which make guilt impossible in the severe beatings which we so often encounter in the past. This is because it is not the actual child who is being beaten. It is either the adult's own projections ("Look at her give you the eye! That's how she picks up men—she's a regular sexpot!" a mother says of her battered daughter of two), or it is a product of reversal ("He thinks he's the boss—all the time trying to run things—but I showed him who is in charge around here!" a father says of his nine-month-old boy whose skull he has split).²⁹ One can often catch the merging of beaten and beater and therefore lack of guilt in the historical sources. An American father (1830) tells of horsewhipping his four-year-old boy for not being able to read something. The child is tied up naked in the cellar:

With him in this condition, and myself, the wife of my bosom, and the lady of my family, all of us in distress, and with hearts sinking within us, I commenced using the rod . . . During this most unpleasant, self denying and disagreeable work, I made frequent stops, commanding and trying to persuade, silencing excuses, answering objections . . . I felt all the force of divine authority and express command that I ever felt in any case in all my life . . . But under the all controlling influence of such a degree of angry passion and obstinacy, as my son had manifested, no wonder he thought he "should beat me out," feeble and tremulous as I was; and knowing as he did that it made me almost sick to whip him. At that time he could neither pity me nor himself.³⁰

· It is this picture of the merging of father and son, with the father complaining that he himself is the one beaten and in need of pity, which we will encounter when we ask how beating could have been so widespread in the past. When a Renaissance pedagogue says you should tell the child when beating him, “you do the correction against your mind, compelled thereunto by conscience, and require them to put you no more unto such labour and pain. For if you do (say you) you must suffer part of the pain with me and therefore you shall now have experience and proof what pain it is unto both of us” we will not so easily miss the merging and mislabel it hypocrisy.³¹

Indeed, the parent sees the child as so full of portions of himself that even real accidents to the child are seen as injuries to the parent. Cotton Mather’s daughter Nanny fell into the fire and burned herself badly, and he cried out, “Alas, for my sins the just God throws my child into the fire!”³² He searched everything he himself had recently done wrong, but since he believed he was the one being punished, no guilt toward his child could be felt (say, for leaving her alone), and no corrective action could be taken. Soon two other daughters were badly burned. His reaction was to preach a sermon on “What use ought parents to make of disasters befallen their children.”

This matter of “accidents” to children is not to be taken lightly, for in it lies hidden the clue to why adults in the past were such poor parents. Leaving aside actual death wishes, which will be discussed later, accidents occurred in great numbers in the past because little children were so often left alone. Mather’s daughter Nibby would have been burned to death but for “a person accidentally then passing by the window,”³³ because there was no one there to hear her cries. A colonial Boston experience is also typical:

“After they had supped, the mother put two children to bed in the room where they themselves did lie, and they went out to visit a neighbor. When they returned . . . the mother [went] to the bed, and not finding her youngest child (a daughter about five years of age), and after much search she found it drowned in a well in her cellar . . .”³⁴

The father blames the accident on his having worked on a holy day. The point is not only that it was common to leave little children alone right up to the twentieth century. More important is that parents cannot be concerned with preventing accidents if guilt is absent because it is the adult’s own projections that they feel have been punished. Massive projectors don’t invent safety stoves, nor often can they even see to it that their children are given the simplest of care. Their projection, unfortunately, insures repetition. ✓

The use of the child as a “toilet” for adult projections is behind the whole notion of original sin, and for eighteen hundred years adults were in general agreement that, as Richard Allestree (1676) puts it, “the newborn babe is full of the stains and pollution of sin, which it inherits from our first parents through our loins . . .”³⁵ Baptism used to include actual exorcism of the Devil, and the belief that the child who cried at his christening was letting out the Devil long survived the formal omission of exorcism in the Reformation.³⁶ Even where formal religion did not stress the devil, it was there; here is a picture of a Polish Jew teaching in the nineteenth century:

He derived an intense joy from the agonies of the little victim trembling and shivering on the bench. And he used to administer the whippings coldly, slowly, deliberately . . . he asked the boy to let down his clothes, lie across the bench . . . and pitched in with the leathern thongs . . . “In every person there is a Good Spirit and an Evil Spirit. The Good Spirit has its own dwelling-place—which is the head. So has the Evil Spirit—and that is the place where you get the whipping.”³⁷

The child in the past was so charged with projections that he was often in danger of being considered a changeling if he cried too much or was otherwise too demanding. There is a large literature on changelings,³⁸ but it is not generally realized that it was not only deformed children who were killed as changelings, but also those who, as St. Augustine puts it, “suffer from a demon . . . they are under the power of the Devil . . . some infants die in this vexation . . .”³⁹ Some church fathers declared that if a baby merely cried it was committing a sin.⁴⁰ Sprenger and Krämer, in their bible of witchhunting, *Malleus Maleficarum* (1487), contend that you can recognize changelings because they “always howl most piteously and even if four or five mothers are set on to suckle them, they never grow.” Luther agrees: “That is true: they often take the children of women in childbed and lay themselves down in their place and are more obnoxious than ten children with their crapping, eating, and screaming.”⁴¹ Guibert of Nogent, writing in the twelfth century, considers his mother saintly because she put up with the crying of an infant she had adopted:

. . . the baby so harassed my mother and all her servants by the madness of its wailing and crying at night—although by day it was very good, by turns playing and sleeping—that anyone in the same little room could get scarcely any sleep. I have heard the nurses whom she hired say that night after night they could not stop shaking the child’s rattle, so naughty was he, not through his own fault, but made so by the Devil within, and that a woman’s craft

failed entirely to drive him out. The good woman was tormented by extreme pain; amid those shrill cries no contrivance relieved her aching brow. . . . Yet she never shut the child out of her house. . . .⁴²

The belief that infants were felt to be on the verge of turning into totally evil beings is one of the reasons why they were tied up, or swaddled, so long and so tightly. One feels the undertone in Bartholomaeus Anglicus (c. 1230): "And for tenderness the limbs of the child may easily and soon bow and bend and take diverse shapes. And therefore children's members and limbs are bound with lyses [bandages], and other covenable bonds, that they be not crooked nor evil shapen . . ." ⁴³ It is the infant full of the parent's dangerous, evil projections that is swaddled. The reasons given for swaddling in the past are the same as those of present-day swaddlers in Eastern Europe: the baby has to be tied up or it will tear its ears off, scratch its eyes out, break its legs, or touch its genitals.⁴⁴ As we shall see shortly in the section on swaddling and restraints, this often includes binding up children in all kinds of corsets, stays, backboards, and puppet-strings, and even extends to tying them up in chairs to prevent them from crawling on the floor "like an animal."

Now if adults project all their own unacceptable feelings into the child, it is obvious that severe measures must be taken to keep this dangerous "toilet-child" under control once swaddling bands are outgrown. I shall later examine various methods of control used by parents down through the centuries, but here I want to illustrate only one control device—frightening the child with ghosts—in order to discuss its projective character.

The number of ghost-like figures used to frighten children throughout history is legion, and their regular use by adults was common until quite recently. The ancients had their Lamia and Striga, who, like their Hebrew prototype Lilith, ate children raw, and who, along with Mormo, Canida, Poine, Sybaris, Acco, Empusa, Gorgon, and Ephialtes, were "invented for a child's benefit to make it less rash and ungovernable," according to Dio Chrysostom.⁴⁵ Most ancients agreed that it was good to have the images of these witches constantly before children, to let them feel the terror of waiting up at night for ghosts to steal them away, eat them, tear them to pieces, and suck their blood or their bone marrow. By medieval times, of course, witches and devils took front stage, with an occasional Jew thrown in as a cutter of babies' throats, along with hoards of other monsters and bogies "such as those [with] which nurses love to terrify them."⁴⁶ After the Reformation, God himself, who "holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect, over the fire,"⁴⁷ was the major bogeyman used to terrify children, and tracts were written in baby talk describing the tortures God had in store for children in Hell: "The little child is in this

red-hot oven. Hear how it screams to come out . . . It stamps its little feet on the floor . . .”⁴⁸

When religion was no longer the focus of the terrorizing campaign, figures closer to home were used: the werewolf will gulp you down, Blue Beard will chop you up, Boney (Bonaparte) will eat your flesh, the black man or the chimney sweep will steal you away at night.⁴⁹ These practices came under attack only in the nineteenth century. One English parent said in 1810 that “the custom once prevalent of terrifying young minds with stories of ghosts, is now universally reprobated, in consequence of the increasing stock of national good sense. But many yet living can place fears of supernatural agency, and of darkness, among the real miseries of childhood. . . .”⁵⁰ Yet even today, in many villages of Europe, children continue to be threatened by parents with the *loup-garou* (werewolf), the *barbu* (bearded man), or the *ramoneur* (chimney sweep), or told they will be put in the basement to let the rats gnaw on them.⁵¹

This need to personify punitive figures was so powerful that, following the principle of “concretization,” adults actually dressed up Katchina-like dummies to use in frightening children. One English writer, in 1748, while explaining how terror originated with nurses who frightened infants with stories of “raw-head and bloody-bones,” said:

The nurse takes a fancy to quiet the peevish child, and with this intent, dresses up an uncouth figure, makes it come in, and roar and scream at the child in ugly disagreeable notes, which grate upon the tender organs of the ear, and at the same time, by its gesture and near approach, makes as if it would swallow the infant up.⁵²

These fearful figures were also the favorites of nurses who wanted to keep children in bed while they went off at night. Susan Sibbald remembered ghosts as a real part of her eighteenth-century childhood:

Ghosts making their appearance were a very common occurrence . . . I remember perfectly when both the nursery maids at Fowey wished to leave the nursery one evening . . . we were silenced by hearing the most dismal groanings and scratchings outside the partition next the stairs. The door was thrown open, and oh! horrors, there came in a figure, tall and dressed in white, with fire coming out of its eyes, nose and mouth it seemed. We were almost thrown into convulsions, and were not well for days, but dared not tell.⁵³

The terrorized children were not always as old as Susan and Betsey. One American mother in 1882 told of a friend’s two-year-old girl whose nurse, wanting to enjoy herself for the evening with the other servants while the parents were out, assured herself she wouldn’t be disturbed by telling the little girl that a

horrible Black Man . . . was hidden in the room to catch her the moment she left her bed or made the slightest noise . . . to make double sure that she should not be interrupted during the evening's enjoyment. She made a huge figure of a black man with frightful staring eyes and an enormous mouth, and placed it at the foot of the bed where the little innocent child was fast asleep. As soon as the evening was over in the servant's hall, the nurse went back to her charge. Opening the door quietly, she beheld the little girl sitting up in her bed, staring in an agony of terror at the fearful monster before her, and both hands convulsively grasping her fair hair. *She was stone dead!*⁵⁴

There is some evidence that this use of masked figures to frighten children goes back to antiquity.⁵⁵ The subject of children being frightened by masks is a favorite of artists from the Roman frescos to the prints of Jacques Stella (1657), but since these early traumatic events

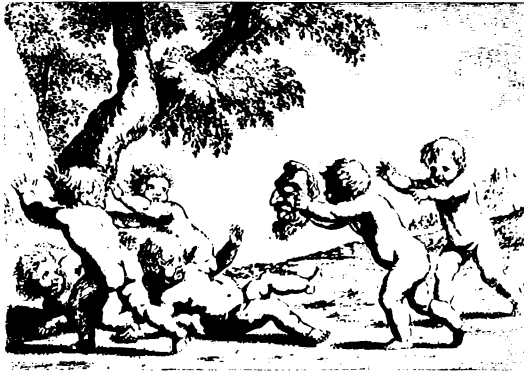


Illustration 1 — Children Playing With Terror-Mask. (*Jacques Stella, 1657.*)

were subject to the deepest repression, I have not yet been able to establish their precise ancient forms. It was said by Dio Chrysostom that “terrifying images deter children when they want food or play or anything else unseasonable” and theories were discussed on their most effective use: “I believe each youngster fears some bogey peculiar to himself and is wont to be terrified by this—of course, lads who are naturally timid cry out no matter what you produce to scare them . . .”⁵⁶

Now when infants are terrorized with masked figures when they merely cry, want food, or want to play, the amount of projection, and the adult's need to control it, has reached massive proportions only found in overtly psychotic adults today. The exact frequency of use

of such concrete figures in the past cannot as yet be determined, although they were often spoken of as common. Many forms, however, can be shown to be customary. For instance, in Germany until recently there would appear in shops before Christmas time stacks of stick brooms, tied in the middle, and making a stiff brush at both ends. These were used to beat children; during the first week in December, adults would dress up in terrifying costumes and pretend to be a messenger of Christ, called the *Pelz-nickel*, who would punish children and tell them if they would get Christmas presents or not.⁵⁷

It is only when one sees the struggle which parents go through to give up this practice of concretizing frightening images that the strength of their need to do so is revealed. One of the earliest defenders of childhood in nineteenth-century Germany was Jean Paul Richter. In his popular book *Levanna*, he condemned parents who kept children in order "by images of terror," claiming medical evidence that they "frequently fall victims to insanity." Yet his own compulsion to repeat the traumas of his own childhood was so great that he was forced to invent lesser versions for his own son:

As a person can be terrified only once by the same thing, I think it possible to spare children the reality by sportive representations of alarming circumstances. For instance: I go with my little nine-year-old Paul to walk in the thick wood. Suddenly three blackened and armed ruffians rush out and fall upon us, because I had hired them for the adventure with a small thieves' premium the day before. We two are only provided with sticks, but the band of robbers are armed with swords and a pistol without bullets . . . I turn away the pistol, so that it may miss me, and strike the dagger out of one of the thieves' hand with my stick . . . But (I add in this second edition) all such games are of doubtful advantage . . . although similar cloak and dagger pieces . . . might be tried advantageously in the night, in order to bring the fancies, inspired by a belief in ghosts, to common everyday light.⁵⁸

Another whole area of concretization of this need to terrorize children involves the use of corpses. Many are familiar with the scenes in Mrs. Sherwood's novel, *History of the Fairchild Family*,⁵⁹ in which the children are taken on visits to the gibbet to inspect rotting corpses hanging there, while being told moral stories. What is not often realized is that these scenes are taken from real life and formed an important part of childhood in the past. Classes used to be taken out of school to hangings, and parents would often take their children to hangings and then whip them when they returned home to make them remember what they had seen.⁶⁰ Even a humanist educator such as Maffio Vegio, who wrote books to protest the beating of children, had to admit that

“to let them witness a public execution is sometimes not at all a bad thing.”⁶¹

The effect on the children of this continuous corpse-viewing was of course massive. One little girl, after her mother showed her the fresh corpse of her nine-year-old friend as an example, went around saying “They will put daughter in the deep hole, and what will mother do?”⁶² Another boy woke at night screaming after seeing hangings, and “practiced hanging his own cat.”⁶³ Eleven-year-old Harriet Spencer recorded in her diary seeing dead bodies everywhere on gibbets and broken on the wheel. Her father took her to see hundreds of corpses which had been dug up to make room for more.

... Papa says it is foolish and superstitious to be afraid of seeing dead bodies, so I followed him down a dark narrow steep staircase that wound round and round a long way, till they opened a door into a great cavern. It was lit by a lamp hanging down in the middle, and the friar carried a torch in his hand. At first I could not see, and when I could I hardly dared look, for on every side there were horrid black ghastly figures, some grinning, some pointing at us, or seeming in pain, in all sorts of postures, and so horrid I could hardly help screaming, and I thought they all moved. When Papa saw how uncomfortable I was, he was not angry but very kind, and said I must conquer it and go and touch one of them, which was very shocking. Their skin was all dark brown and quite dried up on the bones, and quite hard and felt like marble.⁶⁴

This picture of the kindly father helping his daughter overcome her fear of corpses is an example of what I term “projective care,” to distinguish it from true empathic care which is the result of the empathic reaction. Projective care always requires the first step of projection of the adult’s own unconscious into the child, and can be distinguished from empathic care by being either inappropriate or insufficient to the child’s actual needs. The mother who responds to her child’s every discomfort by nursing it, the mother who gives great attention to her infant’s clothes as she sends it away to the wet-nurse, and the mother who takes a full hour to tie up a child properly in swaddling clothes are all examples of projective care.

Projective care is, however, sufficient to raise children to adulthood. Indeed, it is what is often called “good care” by anthropologists studying primitive childhood, and it is not until a psychoanalytically-trained anthropologist re-studies the same tribe that one can see that projection and not true empathy is being measured. For example, studies of the Apache⁶⁵ always give them the highest ratings on the “oral satisfaction”

scale so important for the development of feelings of security. The Apache, like many primitive tribes, feeds on demand for two years, and this is what the rating was based upon. But only when psychoanalytic anthropologist L. Bryce Boyer visited them was the true projective basis of this care revealed:

The care afforded infants by Apache mothers nowadays is startlingly inconsistent. They are usually very tender and considerate in the physical relationships with their babies. There is much bodily contact. Nursing times are generally determined by the baby's cry, and every distress is greeted first by the nipple of a breast or a bottle. At the same time, mothers have a very limited sense of responsibility so far as child care is concerned, and the impression gained is that the mother's tenderness for her baby is based upon her bestowing upon the infant care she herself desires as an adult. A great many mothers abandon or give away children—babies they had been nursing lovingly only a week before. Apaches very accurately name this practice "throwing the baby away." Not only do they feel scant conscious guilt for this behavior, but at times they are overtly delighted to have been able to rid themselves of the burden. In some instances, mothers who have given children away, "forget" they ever had them. The usual Apache mother believes physical care is all an infant requires. She has little or no compunction about leaving her baby with just anyone at all while she impulsively leaves to gossip, shop, gamble or drink and "fool around." Ideally, the mother entrusts her baby to a sister or older female relative. In aboriginal times, such an arrangement was almost always possible.⁶⁶

Even such a simple act as empathizing with children who were beaten was difficult for adults in the past. Those few educators who, prior to modern times, advised that children should not be beaten generally argued that it would have bad consequences rather than that it would hurt the child. Yet without this element of empathy, the advice had no effect whatsoever, and children continued to be beaten as before. Mothers who sent their infants to wet-nurses for three years were genuinely distressed that their children then didn't want to return to them, yet they had no capacity to locate the reason. A hundred generations of mothers tied up their infants in swaddling bands and impassively watched them scream in protest because they lacked the psychic mechanism necessary to empathize with them. Only when the slow historical process of parent-child evolution finally established this faculty through successive generations of parent-child interaction did it become obvious that swaddling was totally unnecessary. Here is Richard Steele in *The Tatler* in 1706 describing how he thought an infant felt after being born:

I lay very quiet; but the witch, for no manner of reason or provocation in the world, takes me and binds my head as hard as she possibly could; then ties up both my legs and makes me swallow down an horrid mixture. I thought it an harsh entrance into life, to begin with taking physic. When I was thus dressed, I was carried to a bedside where a fine young lady (my mother, I wot) had like to have me hugged to death . . . and threw me into a girl's arms that was taken in to tend me. The girl was very proud of the womanly employment of a nurse, and took upon her to strip and dress me anew, because I made a noise, to see what ailed me; she did so and stuck a pin in every joint about. I still cried, upon which, she lays me on my face in her lap; and, to quiet me, fell to nailing in all the pins, by clapping me on the back and screaming a lullaby. . . .⁶⁷

I have not found a description with this degree of empathy in any century prior to the eighteenth. It was not long thereafter that two thousand years of swaddling came to an end.

One imagines that there would be all kinds of places to look to find this missing empathic faculty in the past. The first place to look, of course, is the Bible; certainly here one should find empathy toward children's needs, for isn't Jesus always pictured holding little children? Yet when one actually reads each of the over two thousand references to children listed in the *Complete Concordance to the Bible*, these gentle images are missing. You find lots on child sacrifice, on stoning children, on beating them, on their strict obedience, on their love for their parents, and on their role as carriers of the family name, but not a single one that reveals any empathy with their needs. Even the well-known saying, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me" turns out to be the customary Near Eastern practice of exorcising by laying on of hands, which many holy men did to remove the evil inherent in children: "Then there were brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray . . . he laid his hands on them, and departed thence." (Mat. 19.13.)

All of this is not to say that parents didn't love their children in the past, for they did. Even contemporary child-beaters are not sadists; they love their children, at times, and in their own way, and are sometimes capable of expressing tender feelings, particularly when the children are non-demanding. The same was true for the parent in the past; expressions of tenderness toward children occur most often when the child is non-demanding, especially when the child is either asleep or dead. Homer's "as a mother drives away a fly from her child when it lies in sweet sleep" can be paired with Martial's epitaph:

Let not the sod too stiffly stretch its girth
 Above those tender limbs, erstwhile so free;
 Press lightly on her form, dear mother Earth,
 Her little footsteps lightly fell on thee.⁶⁸

It is only at the moment of death that the parent, unable to empathize before, cries out to himself, with Morelli (1400): “You loved him but never used your love to make him happy; you treated him more like a stranger than a son; you never gave him an hour of rest . . . You never kissed him when he wanted it; you wore him out at school and with many harsh blows.”⁶⁹

It is, of course, not love which the parent of the past lacked, but rather the emotional maturity needed to see the child as a person separate from himself. It is difficult to estimate what proportion of today’s parents achieve with any consistency the empathic level. Once I took an informal poll of a dozen psychotherapists and asked them how many of their patients at the beginning of analysis were able to sustain images of their children as individuals separate from their own projected needs; they all said that very few had that ability. As one, Amos Gunsberg, put it: “This doesn’t occur until some way along in their analysis, always at a specific moment—when they arrive at an image of themselves as separate from their own all-enveloping mother.”

Running parallel to the projective reaction is the reversal reaction, with the parent and child reversing roles, often producing quite bizarre results. Reversal begins long before the child is born—it is the source of the very powerful desire for children one sees in the past, which is always expressed in terms of what children can give the parent, and never what the parent can give them. Medea’s complaint before committing infanticide is that by killing her children she won’t have anyone to look after *her*:

What was the purpose, children, for which I reared you?
 For all my travail, and wearing myself away?
 They were sterile, those pains I had in the bearing of you.
 Oh surely once the hopes I had, poor me,
 Were high ones; you would look after me in old age,
 And when I died would deck me well with your own hands;
 A thing which all would have done. Oh but it is gone,
 That lovely thought.⁷⁰

Once born, the child becomes the mother’s and father’s own parent, in either positive or negative aspect, totally out of keeping with the child’s actual age. The child, regardless of sex, is often dressed in the style of clothes similar to that worn by the *parent’s mother*, that is, not only in a long dress, but in one out of date by at least a generation.⁷¹

The mother is literally reborn in the child; children are not just dressed as "minature adults" but quite clearly as miniature *women*, often complete with décolleté.

The idea that the grandparent is actually reborn in the baby is a common one in antiquity,⁷² and the closeness between the word "baby" and the various words for grandmother (baba, Babe) hints at similar beliefs.⁷³ But evidence exists for more concrete reversals in the past, ones that are virtually hallucinatory. For instance, the breasts of little infants were often kissed or sucked on by adults. Little Louis XIII often had both his penis and nipples kissed by people around him. Even though Héroard, his diarist, always made him the active one (at thirteen months "he makes M. de Souvré, M. de Termes, M. de Liancourt, and M. Zamet kiss his cock")⁷⁴, it later becomes evident that he was being passively manipulated: "He never wants to let the Marquise touch his nipples, his nurse had said to him: 'Sir, do not let anyone touch your nipples or your cock; they'll cut them off.'" ⁷⁵ Yet the adults still couldn't keep their hands and lips off his penis and nipples. Both were the mother's breast returned.

Another instance of the "infant as mother" was the common belief that infants had milk in their breasts which had to be expelled. The fourteenth-century Italian *balia* (wet-nurse) was instructed to "be sure and press his breasts often—to get out any milk there because it bothers him."⁷⁶ There actually is a slight rationalization for this belief, since a newborn will on rare occasions show a drop of milky fluid on its breasts as a result of a carryover of female hormone from the mother. Yet there was a difference between this and "the unnatural but common practice of forcibly squeezing the delicate breasts of a newborn infant, by rough hand of the nurse, which is the most general cause of inflammation in these parts," as the American pediatrician Alexander Hamilton still had to write in 1793.⁷⁷

Kissing, sucking, and squeezing the breast are but a few of the uses to which the "child as breast" is put; one finds a variety of practices such as the one this pediatrician warned of at the beginning of the nineteenth century:

But a practice of the most injurious and disgusting nature, is that of many nursery maids, aunts and grandmothers, who suffer the child to suck their lips. I had an opportunity of observing the decay of a blooming infant, in consequence of having sucked the lips of its sickly grandmother for upwards of half a year.⁷⁸

I have even found several references to parents "licking children." This, for instance, may be what George du Maurier was speaking of when he said of his newborn: "The Nurse brings her to me every morn-

ing in bed, that I may lick it with ‘the basting tongue’—I enjoy the operation so much that I shall perservere till it reaches the age of discretion.”⁷⁹

One receives the impression that the perfect child would be one who literally breast-feeds the parent, and the ancients would agree. Whenever children were discussed, the story of Valerius Maximus was certain to come up, describing a “perfect” child. As Pliny tells it:

Of filial affection there have, it is true, been unlimited instances all over the world, but one at Rome with which the whole of the rest could not compare. A plebeian woman of low position who had just given birth to a child, had permission to visit her mother who had been shut up in prison as a punishment, and was always searched in advance by the doorkeeper to prevent her carrying in any food. She was detected giving her mother sustenance from her own breasts. In consequence of this marvel the daughter’s pious affection was rewarded by the mother’s release and both were awarded maintenance for life; and the place where it occurred was consecrated to the Goddess concerned, a temple dedicated to Filial Affection . . .⁸⁰

The story was repeated throughout the ages as an object lesson. Peter Charron (1593) called it “turning the stream back again up to the fountainhead,”⁸¹ and the theme was the topic of paintings by Rubens, Vermeer, and others.

Often the need to act out the image of “the child as mother” becomes overpowering; here, in a typical incident, is a “joke” played on a six-year-old girl in 1656 by Cardinal Mazarin and other adults:

One day as he made sport with her about some gallant that she said she had; at last he began to chide her, for being with child . . . They straightened her clothes from time to time, and made her believe that she was growing big. This continued as long as it was thought necessary to persuade her to the likelihood of her being with child . . . The time of her lying-in came, she found betwixt her sheets in the morning a child newborn. You cannot imagine the astonishment and grief she was in at this sight. “Such a thing,” said she, “never happened to any but to the Virgin Mary and myself, for I never felt any kind of pain.” The queen came to console her, and offered to be Godmother; many came to gossip with her, as newly brought to bed.⁸²

Children have always taken care of adults in very concrete ways. Ever since Roman times, boys and girls waited on their parents at table, and in the Middle Ages all children except royalty acted as servants,



Illustration 2 — Elizabethan Family at Dinner. *Note smallest child stands to eat, older child serves family.*

either at home or for others, often running home from school at noon to wait on their parents.⁸³ I will not discuss here the whole topic of children's work, but it should be remembered that children did much of the work of the world long before child labor became such an issue in the nineteenth century, generally from the age of four or five.

The reversal reaction is shown most clearly, however, in the emotional interaction between child and adult. Present day social workers who visit "battering" mothers are often astonished at how responsive little children are to the needs of their parents:

I remember watching an eighteen month old soothe her mother, who was in a high state of anxiety and tears. First she put down the bottle she was sucking. Then she moved about in such a way that she could approach, then touch, and eventually calm her mother down (something I had not been able to begin to do). When she sensed her mother was comfortable again, she walked across the floor, lay down, picked up her bottle, and started sucking it again.⁸⁴

This role was frequently assumed by children in the past. One child was "never known to cry or be restless . . . frequently, when a babe in her mother's arms, at these seasons, would reach up her little hand and wipe the tears from her mother's cheek . . ."⁸⁵ Doctors used to try to entice mothers into nursing their infants themselves instead of sending

them out to wet-nurse by promising that “in recompence whereof, he endeavors to show her a thousand delights . . . he kisses her, strokes her



Illustration 3 — The Child As Mother’s Lover. *The usually stiff medieval mother-child portraits alternate with a few like these which show the wish that the child be a lover who would passionately embrace the mother.*

hair, nose and ears, he flatters her . . .”⁸⁶ Along the same theme, I have catalogued over five hundred paintings of mothers and children from every country, and found that the paintings showed the child looking at, smiling at and caressing the mother at a date prior to the ones showing the mother looking at, smiling at and caressing the child, rare actions for a mother in any painting.

The child’s facility in mothering adults was often its salvation. Mme. de Sévigné, in 1670, decided not to take her eighteen-month-old granddaughter along with her on a trip which could have proven fatal to the child.

Mme. du Puy-du-Fou does not want me to take my grandchild. She says it would be exposing her to danger, and at last I surrender; I should not like to imperil the little lady—I am very fond of her. . . she does a hundred and one little things—she talks, fondles people, hits them, crosses herself, asks forgiveness, curtsies, kisses your hand, shrugs her shoulders, dances, coaxes, chucks you under the chin: in short, she is altogether lovely, I amuse myself with her for hours at a time. I do not want her to die.⁸⁷

The need of the parent for mothering placed an enormous burden on the growing child. It was sometimes even the cause of its death. One of the more frequent reasons given for infant death was "overlying," or suffocation in bed, and although this was often just an excuse for infanticide, pediatricians admitted that when it was genuine it was due to the mother's refusal to put the child in a separate bed when she went to sleep; "not wanting to let go of the child, [she] holds him even tighter as she sleeps. Her breast closes off the nose of the child."⁸⁸ It was this reversal image of the child-as-security-blanket that was the reality behind the common medieval warning that parents must be careful not to coddle their children "like the ivy that certainly kills the tree encircled by it, or the ape that hugs her whelps to death with mere fondness."⁸⁹

PSYCHOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE: THE DOUBLE IMAGE

The continuous shift between projection and reversal, between the child as devil and as adult, produces a "double image" that is responsible for much of the bizarre quality of childhood in the past. We have already seen how this shift from the adult image to the projected image is a precondition for battering. But we can see a richer picture of the double image by examining in some detail an actual childhood in the past. The most complete record of childhood prior to modern times is the diary of Héroard, doctor of Louis XIII, with almost daily entries about what he saw the child and those around him do and say. The diary often allows us to glimpse the shifting double image as it occurs in Héroard's own mind, as his picture of the baby shifts between projective and reversal images.

The diary opens with the dauphin's birth in 1601. Immediately, his adult qualities appear. He came out of the womb holding his umbilical cord "with such force that she had trouble getting it back from him." He was described as "strongly muscled," and his cry was so loud that "he didn't sound at all like a child." His penis was carefully examined, and he was declared "well provided for."⁹⁰ Since he was a dauphin, one skips over these first projections of adult qualities as simple pride in a new king, but soon the images begin piling up, and the double image of his being both an adult and a voracious child grows.

The day after his birth . . . his cries in general sound not at all like an infant's cries and they never did, and when he sucks at the

breast it was with such mouthfuls, and he opens his jaws so wide, that he takes at one time as much as others do in three. Consequently, his nurse was almost always dry . . . He was never satisfied.⁹¹

The image of the week-old dauphin as alternately an infant Hercules, who strangled the snakes, and a Gargantua, who needed 17,913 cows to nurse him, is totally at odds with the actual sickly, weak, swaddled infant who emerges from Héroard's record. Despite the dozens of people who were assigned to care for him, no one was able to provide for his simplest needs for food and rest. There were constant unnecessary changes in wet-nurses and continuous outings and long trips.⁹² By the time the dauphin was two months old he was close to death. Héroard's anxiety increased, and as a defense against the anxiety his reversal reaction became more pronounced:

Being asked by the wet-nurse, "Who is that man?" responds in his jargon and with pleasure, "Erouad!" [Héroard] One can see that his body is no longer developing or being nourished. The muscles in his chest are totally consumed, and the large fold that he had had before on his neck was now nothing but skin."⁹³

When the dauphin was almost ten months old, leading-strings were tied to his robe. Leading-strings were supposed to be used to teach the infant to walk, but they were more often used to manipulate and control the child like a puppet. This, combined with Héroard's projective reactions, makes it difficult to understand what was actually happening, and what is being manipulated by those around little Louis. For instance, when he was eleven months old he was said to enjoy fencing with Héroard, and liked it so much that "he pursues me laughing through the whole chamber." But a month later Héroard reported that he "begins to move along with sturdiness, held under the arms."⁹⁴ It is obvious he was being carried or swung along on leading-strings earlier when he was said to "pursue" Héroard. Indeed, since he could not speak sentences until much later, Héroard was actually hallucinating when he reports that someone came to see the fourteen-month-old dauphin, who "turns around and looks at all those who are lined up at the balustrade, goes to choose him and holds out his hand to him, which the prince then kisses. M. d'Haucourt enters and says he has come to kiss the robe of the dauphin; he turns around and says to him it isn't necessary to do that."⁹⁵

During this same time he was pictured as being extremely active sexually. The projective basis of ascribing adult sexual behavior to the child is apparent in Héroard's descriptions: "the dauphin [at twelve months] calls the page back and with a 'Ho!' lifts up his shirt to show him his cock . . . he makes everyone kiss his cock . . . in the company of

that he is completely beside himself."⁹⁶ And it is only when one remembers that the following is really a fifteen-month-old baby who is probably being manipulated by leading strings, that this scene can be untangled from Héroard's massive projections:

The dauphin goes after Mlle. Mercier, who screams because M. de Montglat hit her on her buttocks with his hand; the dauphin screamed too. She fled to the bedside; M. de Montglat followed her, and wanted to smack her rear, she cries out very loudly; the dauphin hears it, takes to screaming loudly too; enjoys this and shakes his feet and his whole body with joy . . . they make his women come; he makes them dance, plays with the little Marguerite, kisses her, embraces her; throws her down, casts himself on her with quivering body and grinding teeth . . . nine o'clock . . . He strives to hit her on the buttocks with a birch rod. Mlle. Béliér asks him: "Monsieur, what did M. de Montglat do to Mercier?" He began suddenly to clap his hands together with a sweet smile, and warm himself in such a way that he was transported with joy, having been a good half-to-quarter hour laughing and clapping his hands, and throwing himself headlong on her, like a person who had understood the joke.⁹⁷

Only rarely did Héroard reveal that the dauphin was actually passive in these sexual manipulations: "The marquise often puts her hand under his jacket; he has himself put into his bed by the nurse where she plays with him, often putting her hand under his coat."⁹⁸ More often, he was simply depicted as being stripped, taken to bed with the King, the Queen, or both, or with various servants, and involved in sexual manipulations from the time he was an infant until he was at least seven years old.

Another example of the double image was in circumcision. As is well known, Jews, Egyptians, Arabs, and others circumcised the foreskin of boys. The reasons given for this are manifold, but all of them can be covered by the double image of projection and reversal. To begin with, such mutilations of children by adults always involve projection and punishment to control projected passions. As Philo put it in the first century, circumcision was for "the excision of passions, which bind the mind. For since among all passions that of intercourse between man and woman is greatest, the lawgivers have commended that that instrument, which serves this intercourse, be mutilated, pointing out, that these powerful passions must be bridled, and thinking not only this, but all passions would be controlled through this one."⁹⁹ Moses Maimonides agrees:

I believe one of the reasons for circumcision was the diminution of sexual intercourse and the weakening of the sexual organs; its purpose was to restrict the activities of this organ and to leave it at rest as much as possible. The true purpose of circumcision was to give the sexual organ that kind of physical pain as not to impair its natural function or the potency of the individual, but to lessen the power of passion and of too great desire.¹⁰⁰

The reversal element in circumcision can be seen in the glans-as-nipple theme embedded in the details of one version of the ritual. The infant's penis is rubbed to make it erect, and the foreskin is split, either by the mohel's fingernail or with a knife, and then torn all around the glans. Then the mohel sucks the blood off the glans.¹⁰¹ This is done for the same reason that everyone kissed little Louis's penis—because the penis, and more particularly the glans, is the mother's nipple returned, and the blood is her milk.¹⁰² The idea of the child's blood as having magic-milk qualities is an old one, and underlies many sacrificial acts, but rather than examine this complex problem here I would like to concentrate on the main idea of circumcision as the coming-out of the glans-as-nipple. It is not generally known that the exposure of the glans was a problem for more than just the circumcising nations. To the Greeks and Romans, the glans was considered sacred; the sight of it "struck terror and wonder in the heart of man,"¹⁰³ and so they either tied up the prepuce with a string, which was called *kynodesme*, or else pinned it closed with a *fibula*, a clasp, which was called infibulation.¹⁰⁴ Evidence of infibulation, both for "modesty" and "to restrain lust," can also be found in the Renaissance and modern times.¹⁰⁵

When the foreskin wasn't sufficiently long to cover the glans, an operation was sometimes performed whereby the skin was cut around the base of the penis and the skin drawn forward.¹⁰⁶ In ancient art, the glans was usually shown covered, either with the penis coming to a point, or else clearly showing the tied foreskin, even when erect. I have only found two cases where the glans showed: either when it was meant to inspire awe, as in the representations of the phallus which were used to hang in doorways, or when the penis was shown being used in fellatio.¹⁰⁷ Thus, to Jew and Roman alike, the image of reversal was imbedded in their attitude toward the glans-as-nipple.

INFANTICIDE AND DEATH WISHES TOWARD CHILDREN

In a pair of books rich in clinical documentation, the psychoanalyst Joseph Rheingold examined the death wishes of mothers¹⁰⁸ toward their

children, and found that they are not only far more widespread than is commonly realized, but also that they stem from a powerful attempt to "undo" motherhood in order to escape the punishment they imagine their own mothers will wreak upon them. Rheingold shows us mothers giving birth and begging their own mothers not to kill them, and traces the origin of both infanticidal wishes and post-partum depression states as not due to hostility toward the child itself, but rather to the need to sacrifice the child to propitiate their own mothers. Hospital staffs are well aware of these widespread infanticidal wishes, and often allow no contact between the mother and child for some time. Rheingold's findings, seconded by Block, Zilboorg, and others,¹⁰⁹ are complex and have far-reaching implications; here we can only point out that filicidal impulses of contemporary mothers are enormously widespread, with fantasies of stabbing, mutilation, abuse, decapitation, and strangulation common in mothers in psychoanalysis. I believe that the further back in history one goes, the more filicidal impulses are acted out by parents.

The history of infanticide in the West has yet to be written, and I shall not attempt it here. But enough is already known to establish that, contrary to the usual assumption that it is an Eastern rather than a Western problem, infanticide of both legitimate and illegitimate children was a regular practice of antiquity, that the killing of legitimate children was only slowly reduced during the Middle Ages, and that illegitimate children continued regularly to be killed right up into the nineteenth century.¹¹⁰

Infanticide during antiquity has usually been played down despite literally hundreds of clear references by ancient writers that it was an accepted, everyday occurrence. Children were thrown into rivers, flung into dung-heaps and cess trenches, "potted" in jars to starve to death, and exposed on every hill and roadside, "a prey for birds, food for wild beasts to rend" (Euripides, *Ion*, 504). To begin with, any child that was not perfect in shape and size, or cried too little or too much, or was otherwise than is described in the gynecological writings on "How to Recognize the Newborn That is Worth Rearing,"¹¹¹ was generally killed. Beyond this, the first-born was usually allowed to live,¹¹² especially if it was a boy. Girls were, of course, valued little, and the instructions of Hilarion to his wife Alis (1 B.C.) are typical of the open way these things were discussed: "If, as may well happen, you give birth to a child, if it is a boy let it live; if it is a girl, expose it."¹¹³ The result was a large imbalance of males over females which was typical of the West until well into the Middle Ages, when the killing of legitimate children was probably much reduced. (The killing of illegitimate children does not affect the sex ratio, since both sexes are generally killed.) Available statistics for antiquity show large surpluses of boys over girls; for in-

stance, out of 79 families who gained Milesian citizenship about 228-220 B.C., there were 118 sons and 28 daughters; 32 families had one child, 31 had two. As Jack Lindsay puts it:

Two sons are not uncommon, three occur now and then, but more than one daughter was practically never reared. Poseidippos stated, "even a rich man always exposes a daughter" . . . Of 600 families from second-century inscriptions at Delphi, one per cent raised two daughters.¹¹⁴

The killing of legitimate children even by wealthy parents was so common that Polybius blamed it for the depopulation of Greece:

In our own time the whole of Greece has been subject to a low birth-rate and a general decrease of the population, owing to which cities have become deserted and the land has ceased to yield fruit, although there have neither been continuous wars nor epidemics . . . as men had fallen into such a state of pretentiousness, avarice and indolence that they did not wish to marry, or if they married to rear the children born to them, or at most as a rule but one or two of them . . .¹¹⁵

Until the fourth century A.D., neither law nor public opinion found infanticide wrong in either Greece or Rome. The great philosophers agreed. Those few passages which classicists consider as a condemnation of infanticide seem to me to indicate just the opposite, such as Aristotle's "As to exposing or rearing the children born, let there be a law that no deformed child shall be reared; but on the ground of number of children, if the regular customs hinder any of those born being exposed, there must be a limit fixed to the procreation of offspring." Similarly, Musonius Rufus, sometimes called "The Roman Socrates," is often quoted as opposing infanticide, but his piece "Should Every Child That Is Born Be Raised?" quite clearly only says that since brothers are very useful they should not be killed.¹¹⁶ But more ancient writers openly approved of infanticide, saying, like Aristippus, that a man could do what he wants with his children, for "do we not cast away from us our spittle, lice and such like, as things unprofitable, which nevertheless are engendered and bred even out of our own selves."¹¹⁷ Or like Seneca, they pretend only sickly infants are involved:

Mad dogs we knock on the head; the fierce and savage ox we slay; sickly sheep we put to the knife to keep them from infecting the flock; unnatural progeny we destroy; we drown even children who at birth are weakly and abnormal. Yet it is not anger, but reason that separates the harmful from the sound.¹¹⁸

The theme of exposure loomed large in myth, tragedy, and the New Comedy, which is often built around the subject of how funny infanticide is. In Menander's *Girl from Samos*, much fun is made of a man trying to chop up and roast a baby. In his comedy *The Arbitrants*, a shepherd picks up an exposed infant, considers raising it, then changes his mind, saying, "What have I to do with the rearing of children and the trouble." He gives it to another man, but has a fight over who got the baby's necklace.¹¹⁹

It must be noted, however, that infanticide was probably common since prehistoric times. Henri Vallois, who tabulated all the prehistoric fossils dug up from the Pithecanthropines to the Mesolithic peoples, found a sex ratio of 148 to 100 in favor of men.¹²⁰ The Greeks and Romans were actually an island of enlightenment in a sea of nations still in an earlier stage of sacrificing children to gods, a practice which the Romans tried in vain to stop. The best documented is Carthaginian child sacrifice, which Plutarch describes:

... with full knowledge and understanding they themselves offered up their own children, and those who had no children would buy little ones from poor people and cut their throats as if they were so many lambs or young birds; meanwhile the mother stood by without a tear or moan; but should she utter a single moan or let fall a single tear, she had to forfeit the money, and her child was sacrificed nevertheless; and the whole area before the statue was filled with a loud noise of flutes and drums so that the cries of wailing should not reach the ears of the people.¹²¹

Child sacrifice is, of course, the most concrete acting out of Rheingold's thesis of filicide as sacrifice to the mother of the parents. It was practiced by the Irish Celts, the Gauls, the Scandinavians, the Egyptians, the Phoenicians, the Moabites, the Ammonites, and, in certain periods, the Israelites.¹²² Thousands of bones of sacrificed children have been dug up by archeologists, often with inscriptions identifying the victims as first-born sons of noble families, reaching in time all the way back to the Jericho of 7,000 B.C.¹²³ Sealing children in walls, foundations of buildings, and bridges to strengthen the structure was also common from the building of the wall of Jericho to as late as 1843 in Germany.¹²⁴ To this day, when children play "London Bridge is Falling Down," they are acting out a sacrifice to a river goddess when they catch the child at the end of the game.¹²⁵

Even in Rome, sacrifice of children led an underground existence. Dio said Julianus "killed many boys as a magic rite;" Suetonius said because of a portent the Senate "decreed that no male born that year should be reared;" and Pliny the Elder spoke of men who "seek to secure the leg-marrow and the brain of infants."¹²⁶ More frequent was the

practice of killing your enemy's children, often in great numbers,¹²⁷ so that noble children not only witnessed infanticide in the streets but were themselves under continual threat of death depending on the political fortunes of their fathers.

Philo was the first person I have found who spoke out clearly against the horrors of infanticide:

Some of them do the deed with their own hands; with monstrous cruelty and barbarity they stifle and throttle the first breath which the infants draw or throw them into a river or into the depths of the sea, after attaching some heavy substance to make them sink more quickly under its weight. Others take them to be exposed in some desert place, hoping, they themselves say, that they may be saved, but leaving them in actual truth to suffer the most distressing fate. For all the beasts that feed in human flesh visit the spot and feast unhindered on the infants, a fine banquet provided by their sole guardians, those who above all others should keep them safe, their fathers and mothers. Carnivorous birds, too, come flying down and gobble up the fragments . . .¹²⁸

Although in the two centuries after Augustus, some attempts were made to pay parents to keep children alive in order to replenish the dwindling Roman population,¹²⁹ it was not until the fourth century that real change was apparent. The law began to consider killing an infant murder only in 374 A.D.¹³⁰ Yet even the opposition to infanticide by the Church Fathers often seemed to be based more on their concern for the parent's soul than with the child's life. This attitude can be seen in Saint Justin Martyr's statement that the reason a Christian shouldn't expose his children is to avoid later meeting them in a brothel: "Lest we molest anyone or commit sin ourselves, we have been taught that it is wicked to expose even newly-born children, first because we see that almost all those who are exposed (not only girls, but boys) are raised in prostitution."¹³¹ When the Christians themselves were accused of killing babies in secret rites, however, they were quick enough to reply: "How many, do you suppose, of those here present who stand panting for the blood of Christians—how many, even, of you magistrates who are so righteous against us—want me to touch their consciences for putting their own offspring to death?"¹³²

After the Council of Vaison (442 A.D.), the finding of abandoned children was supposed to be announced in church, and by 787 A.D., Dateo of Milan founded the first asylum solely for abandoned infants.¹³³ Other countries followed much the same pattern of evolution.¹³⁴ Despite much literary evidence, however, the continued existence of wide-

spread infanticide in the Middle Ages is usually denied by medievalists, since it is not evident in church records and other quantitative sources. But if sex ratios of 156 to 100 (c. 801 A.D.) and 172 to 100 (1391 A.D.) are any indication of the extent of the killing of legitimate girls,¹³⁵ and if illegitimates were usually killed regardless of sex, the real rate of infanticide could have been substantial in the Middle Ages. Certainly, when Innocent III began the hospital of the Santo Spirito in Rome at the end of the twelfth century he was fully aware of the number of women throwing their babies into the Tiber. As late as 1527, one priest admitted that “the latrines resound with the cries of children who have been plunged into them.”¹³⁶ Detailed studies are just beginning, but it is possible that infanticide may have been only sporadically punished prior to the sixteenth century.¹³⁷ Certainly when Vincent of Beauvais wrote in the thirteenth century that a father was always worrying about his daughter “suffocating her offspring,” when doctors complained of all the children “found in the frost or in the streets, cast away by a wicked mother,” and when we find that in Anglo-Saxon



Illustration 4 — Children Being Cooked. *Parental infanticidal acts were usually projected onto Jews or witches, as here in Guazzo's Compendium Malificarum.*

England the legal presumption was that infants who died had been murdered if not proved otherwise, we should take these clues as a signal for the most vigorous sort of research into medieval infanticide.¹³⁸ And just because formal records show few illegitimate births, we certainly shouldn't be satisfied with assuming that “in traditional society people remained continent until marriage,” since many girls managed to hide

their pregnancies from their own mothers who slept beside them,¹³⁹ and they certainly can be suspected of hiding them from the church.

What is certain is that when our material becomes far fuller, by the eighteenth century,¹⁴⁰ there is no question that there was high incidence of infanticide in every country in Europe. As more foundling homes were opened in each country, babies poured in from all over, and the homes quickly ran out of room. Even though Thomas Coram opened his Foundling Hospital in 1741 because he couldn't bear to see the dying babies lying in the gutters and rotting on the dung-heaps of London, by the 1890s dead babies were still a common sight in London streets.¹⁴¹ Late in the nineteenth century Louis Adamic described being brought up in an Eastern European village of "killing nurses," where mothers sent their infants to be done away with "by exposing them to cold air after a hot bath; feeding them something that caused convulsions in their stomachs and intestines; mixing gypsum in their milk, which literally plastered up their insides; suddenly stuffing them with food after not giving them anything to eat for two days . . ." Adamic was to have been killed as well, but for some reason his nurse spared him. His account of how he watched her do away with the other babies she received provides a picture of the emotional reality behind all those centuries of infanticide we have been reviewing.

In her own strange, helpless way, she loved them all . . . but when the luckless infants' parents or the latter's relatives could not or did not pay the customary small sum for their keep . . . she disposed of them. . . . One day she returned from the city with an elongated little bundle . . . a horrible suspicion seized me. The baby in the cradle was going to die! . . . when the baby cried, I heard her get up, and she nursed it in the dark, mumbling, "Poor, poor little one!" I have tried many times since to imagine how she must have felt holding to her breast a child she knew was fated to die by her hand . . . "You poor, poor little one!" She purposely spoke clearly so I would be sure to hear. ". . . fruit of sin through no fault of your own, but sinless in yourself . . . soon you will go, soon, soon, my poor one . . . and, going now, you will not go to hell as you would if you lived and grew up and became a sinner." . . . The next morning the child was dead . . .¹⁴²

Once the infant in the past was born, he was regularly surrounded by the aura of death and counter-measures against death. Since ancient times, exorcisms, purifications, and magic amulets have been thought necessary to rout the host of death-dealing powers felt to lurk about the child, and cold water, fire, blood, wine, salt, and urine were used on the baby and its surroundings.¹⁴³ Isolated Greek villages even today retain this atmosphere of warding off death:

The new-born child sleeps tightly swaddled in a wooden rocking cradle which is enveloped from end to end in a blanket, so that he lies in a kind of dark airless tent. Mothers are fearful of the effects of cold air and evil spirits . . . the hut or house after dark is like a city under siege, with windows boarded, the door barred, and salt and incense at strategic points such as the threshold to repel any invasion of the Devil.¹⁴⁴

Old women, symbols, according to Rheingold, of the grandmother whose death wishes were warded off, were thought to have an "evil eye," under whose gaze the child would die. Amulets, generally in the form of a penis or of phallus-shaped coral, are given the infant to ward off these death wishes.¹⁴⁵ As the child grew up, death wishes toward it kept breaking through. Epictetus said, "What harm is there if you whisper to yourself, at the very moment you are kissing your child, and say 'Tomorrow you will die?'"¹⁴⁶ An Italian during the Renaissance would say, when a child does something clever, "that child is not meant to live."¹⁴⁷ Fathers of every age tell their sons, with Luther, "I would rather have a dead son than a disobedient one."¹⁴⁸ Fenelon says to ask a child questions such as, "Would you let your head be cut off in order to get into heaven?"¹⁴⁹ Walter Scott said his mother confessed she was "under a strong temptation of the Devil, to cut my throat with her scissors, and bury me in the moss."¹⁵⁰ Leopardi said of his mother, "When she saw the death of one of her infants approaching, she experienced a deep happiness, which she attempted to conceal only from those who were likely to blame her."¹⁵¹ The sources are full of similar examples.

Urges to mutilate, burn, freeze, drown, shake, and throw the infant violently about were continuously acted out in the past. The Huns used to cut the cheeks of newborn males. Robert Pemell tells how in Italy and other countries during the Renaissance parents would "burn in the neck with a hot iron, or else drop a burning wax candle" on newborn babies to prevent "falling sickness."¹⁵² In early modern times, the string underneath the newborn's tongue was usually cut, often with the midwife's fingernail, a sort of miniature circumcision.¹⁵³ The mutilation of children throughout the ages has excited pity and laughter in adults, and was the basis for the widespread practice in every age of mutilating children for begging,¹⁵⁴ going back to Seneca's "Controversy," which concludes that mutilating exposed children was not wrong:

Look on the blind wandering about the streets leaning on their sticks, and those with crushed feet, and still again look on those with broken limbs. This one is without arms, that one has had his shoulders pulled down out of shape in order that his grotesqueries

may excite laughter . . . Let us go to the origin of all those ills—a laboratory for the manufacture of human wrecks—a cavern filled with the limbs torn from living children . . . What wrong has been done to the Republic? On the contrary, have not these children been done a service inasmuch as their parents had cast them out?¹⁵⁵

Throwing the swaddled child about was sometimes practiced. A brother of Henri IV, while being passed for amusement from one window to another, was dropped and killed.¹⁵⁶ The same thing happened to the little Comte de Marle: “One of the gentlemen-in-waiting and the nurse who was taking care of him amused themselves by tossing him back and forth across the sill of an open window . . . Sometimes they would pretend not to catch him . . . the little Comte de Marle fell and hit a stone step below.”¹⁵⁷ Doctors complained of parents who break the bones of their children in the “customary” tossing of infants.¹⁵⁸ Nurses often said that the stays children were encased in were necessary because otherwise they could not “be tossed about without them. And I remember an eminent surgeon say a child was brought to him with several of its ribs crushed inward by the hand of the person who had been tossing it about without its stays.”¹⁵⁹ Doctors also denounced the customary violent rocking of infants, “which puts the babe into a dazed condition, in order that he may not trouble those that have the care of him.”¹⁶⁰ This was the reason that cradles began to be attacked in the eighteenth century; Buchan said he was against cradles because of the common “ill-tempered nurse, who, instead of soothing the accidental uneasiness or indisposition to sleep of her baby, when laid down to rest, is often worked up to the highest pitch of rage; and, in the excess of her folly and brutality, endeavors, by loud, harsh threats, and the impetuous rattle of the cradle, to drown the infant’s cries, and to force him into slumber.”¹⁶¹

Infants were also sometimes nearly frozen through a variety of customs, ranging from baptism by lengthy dipping in ice-water and rolling in the snow, to the practice of the plunge-bath, which involved regular plunging of the infant over and over again in ice cold water over its head “with its mouth open and gasping for breath.”¹⁶² Elizabeth Grant remembers in the early nineteenth century that a “large, long tub stood in the kitchen court, the ice on the top of which often had to be broken before our horrid plunge into it . . . How I screamed, begged, prayed, entreated to be saved . . . Nearly senseless I have been taken to the housekeeper’s room . . .”¹⁶³ Going back to the ancient custom of the Germans, Scythians, Celts, and Spartans (though not Athenians, who used other hardening methods),¹⁶⁴ dipping in cold rivers used to be common, and cold water dipping has since Roman times been considered

therapeutic for children.¹⁶⁵ Even the putting of children to bed wrapped in cold wet towels was sometimes used both to harden and as therapy.¹⁶⁶ It is not surprising that the great eighteenth-century pediatrician William Buchan said "almost one half of the human species perish in infancy by improper management or neglect."¹⁶⁷

ABANDONMENT, NURSING AND SWADDLING

Although there were many exceptions to the general pattern, up to about the eighteenth century, the average child of wealthy parents spent his earliest years in the home of a wet-nurse, returned home to the care of other servants, and was sent out to service, apprenticeship, or school by age seven, so that the amount of time parents of means actually spent raising their children was minimal. The effects of these and other institutionalized abandonments by parents on the child have rarely been discussed.

The most extreme and oldest form of abandonment is the outright sale of children. Child sale was legal in Babylonian times, and may have been quite common among many nations in antiquity.¹⁶⁸ Although Solon tried to restrict the right of child sale by parents in Athens, it is unclear how effective the law was.¹⁶⁹ Herodas showed a beating scene where a boy was told "you're a bad boy, Kottalos, so bad that none could find a good word for you even were he selling you."¹⁷⁰ The church tried for centuries to stamp out child sale. Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury in the seventh century, ruled a man might not sell his son into slavery after the age of 7. If Giraldus Cambrensis is to be believed, in the twelfth century the English had been selling their children to the Irish for slaves, and the Norman invasion was a punishment from God for this slave traffic.¹⁷¹ In many areas, child sale continued sporadically into modern times, not being outlawed in Russia, for instance, until the nineteenth century.¹⁷²

Another abandonment practice was the use of children as political hostages and security for debts, which also went back to Babylonian times.¹⁷³ Sidney Painter describes its medieval version, in which it was "quite customary to give young children as hostages to guarantee an agreement, and equally so to make them suffer for their parents' bad faith. When Eustace de Breteuil, the husband of a natural daughter of Henry I, put out the eyes of the son of one of his vassals, the king allowed the enraged father to mutilate in the same way Eustace's daughter whom Henry held as hostage."¹⁷⁴ Similarly, John Marshall gave up his son William to King Stephen, saying he "cared little if William were hanged, for he had the anvils and hammers with which to forge still better sons," and Francis I, when taken prisoner by Charles V, exchanged

his young sons for his own freedom, then promptly broke the bargain so that they were thrown in jail.¹⁷⁵ Indeed, it was often hard to distinguish the practice of sending one's children to serve as pages or servants in another noble household from the use of children as hostages.

Similar abandonment motives were behind the custom of fosterage, which was common among all classes of Welsh, Anglo-Saxons, and Scandinavians, wherein an infant was sent to another family to be reared to age 17, and then returned to the parents. This continued in Ireland until the seventeenth century, and the English often sent their children to be fostered by the Irish in medieval times.¹⁷⁶ Actually, this was just an extreme version of the medieval practice of sending noble children



Illustration 5 — Bad Parents Giving Their Children To The Devil. Durer's fifteenth-century *Ritter von Turn* and sixteenth-century woodcut from *Agnes Sampson trial* illustrate widespread theme of parents who give the Devil the children they promised to him.

at the age of seven or earlier into the homes of others or to monasteries as servants, pages, ladies-in-waiting, oblates, or clerks, practices still common in early modern times.¹⁷⁷ As with the equivalent lower class practice of apprenticeship,¹⁷⁸ the whole subject of the child as laborer in the homes of others is so vast and so poorly studied that it unfortunately cannot be much examined here, despite its obvious importance in the lives of children in the past.

Besides institutionalized abandonment practices, the informal abandoning of young children to other people by their parents occurred

quite often right up to the nineteenth century. The parents gave every kind of rationalization for giving their children away: "to learn to speak" (Disraeli), "to cure timidness" (Clara Barton), for "health" (Edmund Burke, Mrs. Sherwood's daughter), or as payment for medical services rendered (patients of Jerome Cardan and William Douglas). Sometimes they admitted it was simply because they were not wanted (Richard Baxter, Johannes Butzbach, Richard Savage, Swift, Yeats, Augustus Hare, and so on). Mrs. Hare's mother expresses the general casualness of these abandonments: "Yes, certainly, the baby shall be sent as soon as it is weaned; and, if anyone else would like one, would you kindly recollect that we have others."¹⁷⁹ Boys were of course preferred; one eighteenth-century woman wrote her brother asking for his next child: "If it is a boy, I claim it; if a girl, I will be content to stay for the next."¹⁸⁰

However, it was the sending of children to wet-nurse which was the form of institutionalized abandonment most prevalent in the past. The wet-nurse is a familiar figure in the Bible, the Code of Hammurabi, the Egyptian papyri, and Greek and Roman literature, and they have been well organized ever since Roman wet-nurses gathered in the Colonna Lactaria to sell their services.¹⁸¹ Doctors and moralists since Galen and Plutarch have denounced mothers for sending their children out to be wet-nursed rather than nursing them themselves. Their advice had little effect, however, for until the eighteenth century most parents who could afford it, and many who couldn't, sent their children to wet-nurse immediately after birth. Even poor mothers who could not afford sending their children out to nurse often refused to breast-feed them, and gave them pap instead. Contrary to the assumptions of most historians, the custom of not breast-feeding infants at all reaches back in many areas of Europe at least as far as the fifteenth century. One mother, who had moved from an area in northern Germany where nursing infants was more common, was considered "swinish and filthy" by Bavarian women for nursing her child, and her husband threatened he would not eat if she did not give up this "disgusting habit."¹⁸²

As for the rich, who actually abandoned their children for a period of years, even those experts who thought the practice bad usually did not use empathic terms in their treatises, but rather thought wet-nursing bad because "the dignity of a newborn human being [is] corrupted by the foreign and degenerate nourishment of another's milk."¹⁸³ That is, the blood of the lower-class wet-nurse entered the body of the upper-class baby, milk being thought to be blood frothed white.¹⁸⁴ Occasionally the moralists, all men of course, betrayed their own repressed resentment against their mothers for having sent them out to wet-nurse.

Aulus Gellius complained: “When a child is given to another and removed from its mother’s sight, the strength of maternal ardour is gradually and little by little extinguished . . . and it is almost as completely forgotten as if it had been lost by death.”¹⁸⁵ But usually repression won and the parent was praised. More important, repetition was assured. Though it was well known that infants died at a far higher rate while at wet-nurse than at home, parents continued to mourn their children’s death, and then helplessly handed over their next infant as though the wet-nurse were a latter-day avenging goddess who required yet another



Illustration 6 — Nursing Children: Fantasy and Reality. *The two typical Renaissance nursing scenes on the left show the fantasy — of mothers nursing their own children — and the one on the right shows the reality — the baby sucks from the wetnurse while the mother’s breasts are reserved for the viewer (the father). Note in the two pictures on the left the artist seems uncertain where to place the mother’s breasts, since he never actually nursed from them.*

sacrifice.¹⁸⁶ Sir Simonds D’Ewes had already lost several sons at wet-nurse, yet he sent his next baby for two years to “a poor woman who had been much misused and almost starved by a wicked husband, being herself also naturally of a proud, fretting and wayward disposition; which together in the issue conduced to the final ruin and destruction of our most sweet and tender infant . . .”¹⁸⁷

Except in those cases where the wet-nurse was brought in to live, children who were given to the wet-nurse were generally left there from 2 to 5 years. The conditions were similar in every country. Jacques Guillimeau described how the child at nurse might be “stifled, overlaid, be let fall, and so come to an untimely death; or else may be devoured, spoiled, or disfigured by some wild beast, wolf or dog, and then the nurse fearing to be punished for her negligence, may take another child into the place of it.”¹⁸⁸ Robert Pemell reported the rector in his parish told him it was, when he first came to it, “filled with suckling in-

fants from London and yet, in the space of one year, he buried them all except two."¹⁸⁹ Yet the practice continued inexorably until the eighteenth century in England and America, the nineteenth century in France, and into the twentieth century in Germany.¹⁹⁰ England was, in fact, so far in advance of the continent in nursing matters that quite wealthy mothers were often nursing their children as early as the seventeenth century.¹⁹¹ Nor was it simply a matter of the amorality of the rich; Robert Pemell complained in 1653 of the practice of "both high and low ladies of farming out their babies to irresponsible women in the country," and as late as 1780 the police chief of Paris estimated that of the 21,000 children born each year in his city, 17,000 were sent into the country to be wet-nursed, 2,000 or 3,000 were placed in nursery homes, 700 were wet-nursed at home and only 700 were nursed by their mothers.¹⁹²

The actual length of nursing varied widely in every age and region. Table 1 lists the references I have been able to locate so far.

If this chart is any indication of general trends, it is possible that by early modern times, perhaps as a result of a reduction of projective care, very long nursing was becoming less common. It is also true that statements about weaning became more accurate as children were less often relegated to the wet-nurse; Roesslin, for example, says: "Avicen advices to give the child suck two years/how be it among us most commonly they suck but one year . . ."¹⁹⁴ Surely Alice Ryerson's statement that the "age of weaning was drastically reduced in actual practice in the period just preceding 1750" is too sweeping.¹⁹⁵ Although wet-nurses were expected to refrain from intercourse while nursing, they rarely did so, and weaning usually preceded the birth of the next child. Therefore, nursing for as much as two years might always have been exceptional in the West.

TABLE 1
AGE IN MONTHS AT FULL WEANING

<i>Source</i> ¹⁹³	<i>Months at Weaning</i>	<i>Approx. Date</i>	<i>Nationality</i>
Wet-nurse Contract	24	367 B.C.	Greek
Soranus	12-24	100 A.D.	Roman
Macrobius	35	400	Roman
Barberino	24	1314	Italian
Metlinger	10-24	1497	German
Jane Grey	18	1538	English
John Greene	9	1540	English
E. Roesslin	12	1540	German
Sabine Johnson	34	1540	English
John Dee	8-14	1550	English

<i>Source</i>	<i>Months at Weaning</i>	<i>Approx. Date</i>	<i>Nationality</i>
H. Mercurialis	15-30	1552	Italian
John Jones	7-36	1579	English
Louis XIII	25	1603	French
John Evelyn	14	1620	English
Ralph Joesslin	12-19	1643-79	English
John Pechey	10-12	1697	English
James Nelson	3-4	1753	English
Nicholas Culpepper	12-48	1762	English
William Cadogan	4	1770	English
H. W. Tytler	6	1797	English
S. T. Coleridge	15	1807	English
Eliza Warren	12	1810	English
Caleb Tickner	10-12	1839	English
Mary Mallard	15	1859	American
German Statistical Study	1-6	1878-82	German

Feeding vessels of all kinds have been known since 2,000 B.C.; cows' and goats' milk were used when available, and often the infant would be put right to the teat of the animal to suck.¹⁹⁶ Pap, generally made of bread or meal mixed with water or milk, supplemented or replaced nursing from the earliest weeks, and sometimes was crammed down the child's throat until it vomited.¹⁹⁷ Any other food was first chewed by the wet-nurse, then given to the infant.¹⁹⁸ Opium and liquor were regularly given to infants throughout the ages to stop them from crying. The Ebers Papyrus says of the effectiveness for children of a mixture of poppy-seeds and fly-dung: "It acts at once!" Dr. Hume complained in 1799 of thousands of infants killed every year by nurses "forever pouring Godfrey's Cordial down their little throats, which is a strong opiate and in the end as fatal as arsenic. This they pretend they do to quiet the child—thus indeed many are forever quieted . . ." And daily doses of liquor were often "poured down the throat of a little being who is incapable of declining the portion, but who exhibit an abhorence by struggling efforts and wry faces . . ."¹⁹⁹

There are many indications in the sources that children as a general practice were given insufficient food. Children of the poor, of course, have often been hungry, but even children of the rich, especially girls, were supposed to be given very meager allowances of food, and little or no meat. Plutarch's description of the "starvation diet" of Spartan youth is well known, but from the number of references to scanty food, nursing babies only two or three times a day, fasts for children, and deprivation of food as discipline, one suspects that, like parents of con-

temporary child abusers, parents in the past found it hard to see to it that their children were adequately fed.²⁰⁰ Autobiographies from Augustine to Baxter have confessed to the sin of gluttony for stealing fruit as a child; no one has ever thought to ask if they did so because they were hungry.²⁰¹

Tying the child up in various restraint devices was a near-universal practice. Swaddling was the central fact of the infant's earliest years. As we have noted, restraints were thought necessary because the child was so full of dangerous adult projections that if it were left free it would scratch its eyes out, tear its ears off, break its legs, distort its bones, be terrified by the sight of its own limbs, and even crawl about on all fours like an animal.²⁰² Traditional swaddling is much the same in every country and age; it "consists in entirely depriving the child of the use of its limbs, by enveloping them in an endless length bandage, so as to not unaptly resemble billets of wood; and by which, the skin is sometimes excoriated; the flesh compressed, almost to gangrene; the circulation nearly arrested; and the child without the slightest power of motion. Its little waist is surrounded by stays . . . Its head is compressed into the form the fancy of the midwife might suggest; and its shape maintained by properly adjusted pressure . . ."²⁰³

Swaddling was often so complicated it took up to two hours to dress an infant.²⁰⁴ Its convenience to adults was enormous—they rarely had to



Illustration 7 — Swaddling The Child. *English* (1633).

pay any attention to infants once they were tied up. As a recent medical study of swaddling has shown, swaddled infants are extremely passive, their hearts slow down, they cry less, they sleep far more, and in general they are so withdrawn and inert that the doctors who did the study

wondered if swaddling shouldn't be tried again.²⁰⁵ The historical sources confirm this picture; doctors since antiquity agreed that "wakefulness does not happen to children naturally nor from habit, i.e., customarily, for they always sleep," and children were described as being laid for hours behind the hot oven, hung on pegs on the wall, placed in tubs, and in general, "left, like a parcel, in every convenient corner."²⁰⁶ Almost all nations swaddled. Even in ancient Egypt, where it is claimed children were not swaddled because paintings showed them naked, swaddling may have been practiced, for Hippocrates said the Egyptians swaddle, and occasional figurines showed swaddling clothes.²⁰⁷ Those few areas where swaddling was not used, such as in ancient Sparta and in the Scottish highlands, were also areas of the most severe hardening practices, as though the only possible choice were between tight swaddling or being carried about naked and made to run in the snow without clothes.²⁰⁸ Swaddling was so taken for granted that the evidence for length of swaddling is quite spotty prior to early modern times. Soranus says the Romans unswaddled at from 40 to 60 days; hopefully, this is more accurate than Plato's "two years."²⁰⁹ Tight swaddling, often including strapping to carrying-boards, continued throughout the Middle Ages, but I have not yet been able to find out for how many months.²¹⁰ The few source references in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, plus a study of the art of the period, suggest a pattern of total swaddling



Illustration 8 — Swaddled Children. *Illustrates slow progress in removing swaddling bands. (Greek 5th c. B.C., Italian 15th c., English 16th c.)*

in those centuries for between one to four months; then the arms were left free and the body and legs remained swaddled for between six to nine months.²¹¹ The English led the way in ending swaddling, as they did in ending outside wet-nursing. Swaddling in England and America was on its way out by the end of the eighteenth century, and in France and Germany by the nineteenth century.²¹²



Illustration 9 — Swaddled Medieval Child. *The swaddled child looks to be over a year old* (Reuner Musterbuch, 1210 A.D.)

Once the infant was released from its swaddling bands, physical restraints of all kinds continued, varying by country and period. Children were sometimes tied to chairs to prevent their crawling. Right into the nineteenth century leading strings were tied to the child's clothes to control it and swing it about. Corsets and stays made of bone, wood, or iron were often used for both sexes. Children were sometimes strapped into backboards and their feet put in stocks while they studied, and iron collars and other devices were used to "improve posture," like the one Francis Kemble described: "a hideous engine of torture of the backboard species, made of steel covered with red morocco, which consisted of a flat piece placed on my back, and strapped down to my waist with a belt and secured at the top by two epaulets strapped over my shoulders. From the middle of this there rose a steel rod or spine,

with a steel collar which encircled my throat and fastened behind.”²¹³ These devices seemed to be more commonly used in the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries than in medieval times, but this could be due to the

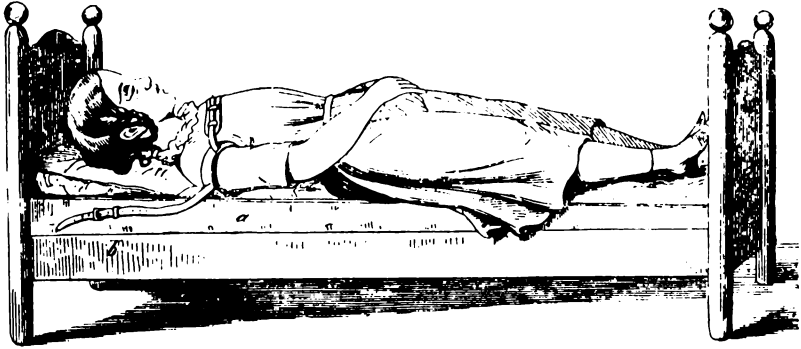


Illustration 10 — Child’s Sleeping-Belt. *Used to assure body remains straight while sleeping, one of dozens of restraint devices invented by 19th-century German pedagogue D.G.M. Schreber.*

paucity of earlier sources. Two practices, however, were probably common to every country since antiquity. The first is the general scantiness of dress for “hardening” purposes; the second is the use of stool-like devices which were supposed to assist walking, but in fact were used to prevent crawling, which was considered animal-like. Felix Würtz (1563) describes the use of one version:



Illustration 11 — Standing-Cage and Cradle With Straps. (*Jacques Stella, 1657.*)

... there are stools for children to stand in, in which they can turn around any way, when mothers or nurses see them in it, then they care no more for the child, let it alone, go about their own business, supposing the child to be well provided, but they little think on the pain and misery the poor child is in ... the poor child ... must stand maybe many hours, whereas half an hour standing is too long ... I wish that all such standing stools were burned ... ²¹⁴

TOILET TRAINING, DISCIPLINE, AND SEX

Although chairs with chamber pots underneath have existed since antiquity, there is no evidence for toilet training in the earliest months of the infant's life prior to the eighteenth century. Although parents often complained, like Luther, of their children's "befouling the corners," and although doctors prescribed remedies, including whipping, for "pissing in the bed" (children generally slept with adults), the struggle between parent and child for control in infancy of urine and feces is an eighteenth-century invention, the product of a late psychogenic stage. ²¹⁵

Children, of course, have always been identified with their excrements; newborn infants were called *écrême*, and the Latin *merda*, excrement, was the source of the French *merdeux*, little child. ²¹⁶ But it was the enema and the purge, not the potty, which were the central devices for relating to the inside of the child's body prior to the eighteenth century. Children were given suppositories, enemas, and oral purges in sickness and in health. One seventeenth-century authority said infants should be purged before each nursing so the milk wouldn't get mixed up with the feces. ²¹⁷ Héroard's diary of Louis XIII is filled with minute



Illustration 12 — Enema Scene.
Typical 18th-century German portrait of baby being given regular enema.

descriptions of what goes into and comes out of Louis's body, and he was given literally thousands of purges, suppositories, and enemas during his childhood. The urine and feces of infants were often examined in order to determine the inner state of the child. David Hunt's description of this process clearly reveals the projective origin for what I have termed the "toilet-child":

The bowels of children were thought to harbor matter which spoke to the adult world insolently, threateningly, with malice and insubordination. The fact that the child's excrement looked and smelled unpleasant meant that the child himself was somewhere deep down inside badly disposed. No matter how placid and cooperative he might appear, the excrement which was regularly washed out of him was regarded as the insulting message of an inner demon, indicating the "bad humors" which lurked within.²¹⁸

It was not until the eighteenth century that the main focus moved from the enema to the potty. Not only was toilet training begun at an earlier age, partly as a result of diminished use of swaddling bands, but the whole process of having the child control its body products was invested with an emotional importance previously unknown. Wrestling with an infant's will in his first few months was a measure of the strength of involvement by parents with their children, and represented a psychological advance over the reign of the enema.²¹⁹ By the nineteenth century, parents generally began toilet training in earnest in the earliest months of life, and their demands for cleanliness became so severe by the end of the century that the ideal child was described as one "who cannot bear to have any dirt on his body or dress or in his surrounding for even the briefest time."²²⁰ Even today, most English and German parents begin toilet training prior to six months; the average in America is more like nine months, and the range is greater.²²¹

The evidence which I have collected on methods of disciplining children leads me to believe that a very large percentage of the children born prior to the eighteenth century were what would today be termed "battered children." Of over two hundred statements of advice on child-rearing prior to the eighteenth century which I have examined, most approved of beating children severely, and all allowed beating in varying circumstances except three, Plutarch, Palmieri, and Sadoletto, and these were addressed to fathers and teachers, and did not mention mothers.²²² Of the seventy children prior to the eighteenth century whose lives I have found, all were beaten except one: Montaigne's daughter. Unfortunately, Montaigne's essays on children are so full of inconsistencies that one is uncertain whether to believe even this one

statement. He is most famous for his claim that his father was so kind to him that he hired a musician to play an instrument every morning to awaken him so that his delicate brain wouldn't be startled. If true, this unusual home life could only have lasted two or three years, however, for he was actually sent at birth to a wet-nurse in another village, and kept there for several years, and was sent to school in another town from age 6 to 13 because his father found him "sluggish, slow and unresponsive." When he made the statement that his daughter was "over six years old now, and has never been guided or punished for her childish faults . . . by anything but words . . .," she was, in fact, 11 years old. He elsewhere admitted of his children, "I have not willingly suffered them to be brought up near me."²²³ So perhaps we ought to reserve judgment on this, our one unbeaten child. (Peiper's extensive survey of the literature on beating reaches similar conclusions to mine.)²²⁴

Beating instruments included whips of all kinds, including the cat-o'-nine-tails, shovels, canes, iron and wooden rods, bundles of sticks, the *discipline* (a whip made of small chains), and special school instruments like the flapper, which had a pear-shaped end and a round hole to raise blisters. Their comparative frequency of use may be indicated by the categories of the German schoolmaster who reckoned he had given 911,527 strokes with the stick, 124,000 lashes with the whip, 136,715 slaps with the hand, and 1,115,800 boxes on the ear.²²⁵ The beatings described in the sources were generally severe, involved bruising and bloodying of the body, began early, and were a regular part of the child's life.

Century after century of battered children grew up and in turn battered their own children. Public protest was rare. Even humanists and teachers who had a reputation for great gentleness, like Petrarch, Ascham, Comenius, and Pestalozzi, approved of beating children.²²⁶ Milton's wife complained she hated to hear the cries of his nephews when he was beating them, and Beethoven whipped his pupils with a knitting needle and sometimes bit them.²²⁷ Even royalty was not exempt from battering, as the childhood of Louis XIII confirms. A whip was at his father's side at table, and as early as 17 months of age, the dauphin knew enough not to cry when threatened with the whip. At 25 months regular whippings began, often on his bare skin. He had frequent nightmares about his whippings, which were administered in the morning when he awakened. When he was king he still awoke at night in terror, in expectation of his morning whipping. The day of his coronation, when he was eight, he was whipped, and said, "I would rather do without so much obeisance and honor if they wouldn't have me whipped."²²⁸

Since infants who were not swaddled were in particular subjected to hardening practices, perhaps one function of swaddling was to reduce the parent's propensity for child abuse. I have not yet found an adult who beat a swaddled infant. However, the beating of the smallest of infants out of swaddling clothes occurred quite often, a sure sign of the "battering" syndrome. Susannah Wesley said of her babies: "When turned a year old (and some before), they were taught to fear the rod, and to cry softly." Giovanni Dominici said to give babies "frequent, yet not severe whippings. . . ." Rousseau said that babies in their earliest days were often beaten to keep them quiet. One mother wrote of her first battle with her 4-month-old infant: "I whipped him til he was actually black and blue, and until I *could not* whip him any more, and he never gave up one single inch." The examples could easily be extended.²²⁹

One curious method of punishment, which was inflicted on the early medieval ecclesiastic Alcuin when he was an infant, was to cut or prick the soles of the feet with an instrument which resembled a cobbler's



Illustration 13 — "Horsing" A Student. *These Roman (Herculaneum) and Medieval (1140 A.D.) school scenes illustrate one popular position for beating schoolchildren, called "horsing" in 19th-century English schools.*

knife. This reminds one of the Bishop of Ely's habit of pricking his young servants with a goad which he always held in one hand. When Jane Grey complained of her parents giving her "nips and bobs," and

Thomas Tusser complained of "touzéd ears, like baited bears,/ what bobbed lips, what jerks, what nips" it may have been the goad which was used. Should further research show that the goad was also used on children in antiquity, it would put a different light on Oedipus's killing of Laius on that lonely road, for he was literally "goaded" into it—Laius having struck him "full on the head with his two-pointed goad."²³⁰

Although the earliest sources are quite sketchy on the precise severity of discipline, there seems to be evidence of visible improvement in every period in the West. Antiquity is full of devices and practices unknown to later times, including shackles for the feet, handcuffs, gags, three months in "the block," and the bloody Spartan flagellation contests, which often involved whipping youths to death.²³¹ One Anglo-Saxon custom suggests the level of thought about children in earliest times. Thrupp says: "It was customary when it was wished to retain legal testimony of any ceremony, to have it witnessed by children, who then and there were flogged with unusual severity; which it was supposed would give additional weight to any evidence of the proceedings . . ."²³²

References to detailed modes of discipline are even harder to find in the Middle Ages. One thirteenth-century law brought child-beating into the public domain: "If one beats a child until it bleeds, then it will remember, but if one beats it to death, the law applies."²³³ Most medieval descriptions of beating were quite severe, although St. Anselm, as in so many things, was far in advance of his time by telling an abbot to beat children gently, for "Are they not human? Are they not flesh and blood like you?"²³⁴ But it is only in the Renaissance that advice to temper childhood beatings began in earnest, although even then it was generally accompanied by approval for beatings judiciously applied. As Bartholomew Batty said, parents must "keep the golden mean," which is to say they should not "strike and buffet their children about the face and head, and to lace upon them like malt sacks with cudgels, staves, fork or fire shovel," for then they might die of the blows. The correct way was to "hit him upon the sides . . . with the rod, he shall not die thereof."²³⁵

Some attempts were made in the seventeenth century to limit the beating of children, but it was the eighteenth century which saw the biggest decrease. The earliest lives I have found of children who may not have been beaten at all date from 1690 to 1750.²³⁶ It was not until the nineteenth century that the old-fashioned whipping began to go out of style in most of Europe and America, continuing longest in Germany, where 80% of German parents still admit to beating their children, a full 35% with canes.²³⁷

As beatings began to decrease, substitutes had to be found. For instance, shutting children up in the dark became quite popular in the

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Children were put in “dark closets, where they were sometimes forgotten for hours.” One mother shut her 3-year-old boy up in a drawer. Another house was “a sort of little Bastille, in every closet of which was to be found a culprit—some were sobbing and repeating verbs, others eating their bread and water . . .” Children were sometimes left locked in rooms for days. One 5-year-old French boy, in looking at a new apartment with his mother, told her, “Oh no, mama, . . . it’s impossible; there’s no dark closet! Where could you put me when I’m naughty.”²³⁸

The history of sex in childhood presents even more difficulty than usual in getting at the facts, for added to the reticence and repression of our sources is the unavailability of most of the books, manuscripts, and artifacts which form the basis for our research. Victorian attitudes towards sex still reign supreme among most librarians, and the bulk of works which relate to sex in history remain under lock and key in library storerooms and museum basements all over Europe, unavailable even to the historian. Even so, there is evidence enough in the sources so far available to us to indicate that the sexual abuse of children was far more common in the past than today, and that the severe punishment of children for their sexual desires in the last two hundred years was the product of a late psychogenic stage, in which the adult used the child to restrain, rather than act out, his own sexual fantasies. In sexual abuse, as in physical abuse, the child was only an incidental victim, a measure of the part it played in the defense system of the adult.

The child in antiquity lived his earliest years in an atmosphere of sexual abuse. Growing up in Greece and Rome often included being used sexually by older men. The exact form and frequency of the abuse



Illustration 14 — Greek Man Playing With Boy’s Penis.

varied by area and date. In Crete and Boeotia, pederastic marriages and honeymoons were common. Abuse was less frequent among aristocratic boys in Rome, but sexual use of children was everywhere evident in some form.²³⁹ Boy brothels flourished in every city, and one could even contract for the use of a rent-a-boy service in Athens. Even where homosexuality with free boys was discouraged by law, men kept slave boys to abuse, so that even free-born children saw their fathers sleeping with boys. Children were sometimes sold into concubinage; Musonius Rufus wondered whether such a boy would be justified in resisting being abused: "I knew a father so depraved that, having a son conspicuous for youthful beauty, he sold him into a life of shame. If, now, that lad who was sold and sent into such a life by his father had refused and would not go, should we say that he was disobedient . . ."²⁴⁰ Aristotle's main objection to Plato's idea that children should be held in common was that when men had sex with boys they wouldn't know if they were their own sons, which Aristotle says would be "most unseemly."²⁴¹ Plutarch said the reason why freeborn Roman boys wore a gold ball around their necks when they were very young was so men could tell which boys it was not proper to use sexually when they found a group in the nude.²⁴²

Plutarch's statement was only one among many which indicate that the sexual abuse of boys was not limited to those over 11 or 12 years of age, as most scholars assume. Sexual abuse by pedagogues and teachers of smaller children may have been common throughout antiquity. Although all sorts of laws were passed to try to limit sexual attacks on school children by adults, the long heavy sticks carried by pedagogues and teachers were often used to threaten them. Quintillian, after many years of teaching in Rome, warned parents against the frequency of sexual abuse by teachers, and made this the basis of his disapproval of beating in schools:

When children are beaten, pain or fear frequently have results of which it is not pleasant to speak and which are likely to be a source of shame, a shame which unnerves and depresses the mind and leads the child to shun and loathe the light. Further, if inadequate care is taken in the choices of respectable governors and instructors, I blush to mention the shameful abuse which scoundrels sometimes make of their right to administer corporal punishment or the opportunity not infrequently offered to others by the fear thus caused in the victims. I will not linger on this subject; it is more than enough if I have made my meaning clear.²⁴³

Aeschines quotes some of the Athenian laws which attempted to limit sexual attacks on schoolchildren:

. . . consider the case of the teachers . . . it is plain that the law-giver distrusts them . . . He forbids the teacher to open the school-room, or the gymnastics trainer the wrestling school, before sunrise, and he commands them to close the doors before sunset; for he is exceeding suspicious of their being alone with a boy, or in the dark with him.²⁴⁴

Aeschines, when prosecuting Timarchus for having hired himself out as a boy prostitute, put several men on the stand who admitted having paid to sodomize Timarchus. Aeschines admitted that many, including himself, were used sexually when they were children, but not for pay, which would have made it illegal.²⁴⁵

The evidence from literature and art confirms this picture of the sexual abuse of smaller children. Petronius loves depicting adults feeling the “immature little tool” of boys, and his description of the rape of a seven-year-old girl, with women clapping in a long line around the bed, suggests that women were not exempt from playing a role in the process.²⁴⁶ Aristotle said homosexuality often becomes habitual in “those who are abused from childhood.” It has been assumed that the small nude children seen on vases waiting on adults in erotic scenes are servants, but in view of the usual role of noble children as waiters, we



Illustration 15 — Children Waiting on Adults During Orgy. *Greek drawing of symposium feast.*

should consider the possibility that they may be children of the house. For, as Quintillian said about noble Roman children: “We rejoice if they say something over-free, and words which we should not tolerate from the lips even of an Alexandrian page are greeted with laughter and a kiss . . . they hear us use such words, they see our mistresses and

minions; every dinner party is loud with foul songs, and things are presented to their eyes of which we should blush to speak."²⁴⁷

Even the Jews, who tried to stamp out adult homosexuality with severe punishments, were more lenient in the case of young boys. Despite Moses's injunction against corrupting children, the penalty for sodomy with children over 9 years of age was death by stoning, but copulation with younger children was not considered a sexual act, and was punishable only by a whipping, "as a matter of public discipline."²⁴⁸

It must be remembered that widespread sexual abuse of children can only occur with at least the unconscious complicity of the child's parents. Children in the past were under the fullest control of their parents, who had to agree to give them over to their abusers. Plutarch muses on how important this decision was for fathers:

I am loathe to introduce the subject, loathe too to turn away from it . . . whether we should permit the suitors of our boys to associate with them and pass their time with them, or whether the opposite policy of excluding them and shooing them away from intimacy with our boys is correct. Whenever I look at blunt-spoken fathers of the austere and astringent type who regard intimacy with lovers as an intolerable outrage upon their sons, I am circumspect about showing myself a sponsor and advocate of the practice. [Yet Plato] declares that men who have proven their worth should be permitted to caress any fair lad they please. Lovers who lust only for physical beauty, then, it is right to drive away; but free access should be granted to lovers of the soul.²⁴⁹

Like the adults we have previously seen around little Louis XIII, the Greeks and Romans couldn't keep their hands off children. I have only turned up one piece of evidence that this practice extended, like Louis's abuse, back into infancy. Suetonius condemned Tiberius because he "taught children of the most tender years, whom he called his *little fishes*, to play between his legs while he was in his bath. Those which had not yet been weaned, but were strong and hearty, he set at fellatio . . ." Suetonius may or may not have made up the story, yet he obviously had reason to think his readers would believe him. So, apparently, did Tacitus, who told the same story.²⁵⁰

The favorite sexual use of children, however, was not fellatio, but anal intercourse. Martial said one should, while bugging a boy, "refrain from stirring the groin with poking hand . . . Nature has separated the male: one part has been produced for girls, one for men. Use your own part." This, he said, was because the masturbating of boys would "hasten manhood," an observation Aristotle made some time before him. Whenever a pre-pubertal boy was shown being used sexually on erotic vases, the penis was never shown erect.²⁵¹ For men of antiquity

were not really homosexuals as we know them today, but a much lower psychic mode, which I think should be termed “ambisexual” (they themselves used the term “ambidextrous”). While the homosexual runs to men as a retreat from women, as a defense against the oedipal conflict, the ambisexual has never really reached the oedipal level, and uses boys and women almost without distinction.²⁵² In fact, as psychoanalyst Joan McDougall observes, the main purpose of this kind of perversion is to demonstrate that “there is no difference between the sexes.” She says that it is an attempt to control childhood sexual traumata by reversal, with the adult now putting another child in the helpless position, and also an attempt to handle castration anxiety by proving that “castration does not hurt and in fact is the very condition of erotic arousal.”²⁵³ This well describes the man of antiquity. Intercourse with castrated children was often spoken of as being especially arousing, castrated boys were favorite “voluptates” in imperial Rome, and infants were castrated “in the cradle” to be used in brothels by men who liked bugging young castrated boys. When Domitian passed a law prohibiting castration of infants for brothels, Martial praised him: “Boys loved thee before . . . but now infants, too, love thee, Caesar.”²⁵⁴ Paulus Aegineta described the standard method used in castrating small boys:

Since we are sometimes compelled against our will by persons of high rank to perform the operation . . . by compression [it] is thus performed; children, still of a tender age, are placed in a vessel of hot water, and then when the parts are softened in the bath, the testicles are to be squeezed with the fingers until they disappear.

The alternative, he said, was to put them on a bench and cut their testicles out. Many doctors in antiquity mentioned the operation, and Juvenal said they were often called upon to perform it.²⁵⁵

Signs of castration surrounded the child in antiquity. In every field and garden he saw a Priapus, with a large erect penis and a sickle, which was supposed to symbolize castration. His pedagogue and his teacher might be castrated, castrated prisoners were everywhere, and his parents' servants would often be castrated. St. Jerome wrote that some people had wondered whether letting young girls bathe with eunuchs was a wise practice. And although Constantine passed a law against castrators, the practice grew so rapidly under his successors that soon even noble parents mutilated their sons to further their political advancement. Boys were also castrated as a “cure” for various diseases and Ambroise Paré complained how many unscrupulous “Gelders,” greedy to get children's testicles for magical purposes, persuaded parents to let them castrate their children.²⁵⁶

Christianity introduced a new concept into the discussion—childhood innocence. As Clement of Alexandria said, when Christ advised people to “become as little children” in order to enter into Heaven, one should “not foolishly mistake his meaning. We are not little ones in the sense that we roll on the floor or crawl on the ground as snakes do.” What Christ means was that people should become as “uncontaminated” as children, pure, without sexual knowledge.²⁵⁷ Christians throughout the Middle Ages began to stress the idea that children were totally innocent of all notions of pleasure and pain. A child “has not tasted sensual pleasures, and has no conception of the impulses of manhood . . . one becomes as a child in respect of anger; and is as the child in relation to his grief, so that sometimes he laughs and plays at the very time that his father or mother or brother is dead . . .”²⁵⁸ Unfortunately, the idea that children are innocent and cannot be corrupted is a common defense by child molesters against admitting that their abuse is harming the child, so the medieval fiction that the child is innocent only makes our sources less revealing, and proves nothing about what really went on. Abbot Guibert of Nogent said children were blessed to be without sexual thoughts or capacities; one wonders what he then was referring to when he confessed to “the wickedness I did in childhood. . . .”²⁵⁹ Mostly, servants are blamed for abusing children; even a washerwoman could “work wickedness.” Servants often “show lewd tricks . . . in the presence of children [and] corrupt the chief parts of infants.” Nurses should not be young girls, “for many such have aroused the fire of passion prematurely as true accounts relate and, I venture to say, experience proves.”²⁶⁰

Giovanni Dominici, writing in 1405, tried to set some limits to the convenient “innocence” of childhood; he said children after the age of three years shouldn’t be allowed to see nude adults. For in a child “granted that there will not take place any thought or natural movement before the age of five, yet, without precaution, growing up in such acts he becomes accustomed to that act of which later he is not ashamed . . .” That parents themselves are often doing the molesting can be seen in the language he used:

He should sleep clothed with a night shirt reaching below the knee, taking care as much as possible that he may not remain uncovered. Let not the mother nor the father, much less any other person, touch him. Not to be tedious in writing so fully of this, I simply mention the history of the ancients who made full use of this doctrine to bring up children well, not slaves of the flesh.²⁶¹

That some change in the sexual use of children was going on in the Renaissance can be seen not only in the rising number of moralists who

warned against it (Jean Gerson, like Louis XIII's nurse, said it was the *child's* duty to prevent others from molesting him), but also in the art of the time. Not only were Renaissance paintings full of nude *putti*, or cupids taking off blindfolds in front of nude women, but in addition real children were shown more and more often chucking the chin of the mother, or slinging one of their legs over hers, both conventional iconographic signs for sexual love, and the mother was often painted with her hand very near the genital area of the child.²⁶²

The campaign against the sexual use of children continued through the seventeenth century, but in the eighteenth century it took an entirely new twist: punishing the little boy or girl for touching its own genitals. That this, like early toilet-training, was a late psychogenic stage is suggested by the fact that prohibitions against childhood masturbation are found in none of the primitive societies surveyed by Whiting and Child.²⁶³ The attitude of most people toward childhood masturbation prior to the eighteenth century can be seen in Fallopius's counsel for parents to "be zealous in infancy to enlarge the penis of the boy."²⁶⁴



Illustration 16 — Christ's Grandmother Playing With His Penis. As Hans Baldung Grien's 1511 picture of Anna selbdritt shows, grandmothers were expected to masturbate their grandchildren.

Although masturbation in adults was a minor sin, medieval penitentials rarely extended the prohibition to childhood; adult homosexuality, not masturbation, was the main obsession of pre-modern sexual regulation.

As late as the fifteenth century Gerson complains how adults tell him they never heard that masturbation was sinful, and he instructs confessors to ask adults directly: "Friend, do you touch or do you rub your rod *as children have the habit of doing?*"²⁶⁵

But it was not until the beginning of the eighteenth century, as a climax of the effort to bring child abuse under control, that parents began severely punishing their children for masturbation, and doctors began to spread the myth that it would cause insanity, epilepsy, blindness, and death. By the nineteenth century, this campaign reached an unbelievable frenzy. Doctors and parents sometimes appeared before the child armed with knives and scissors, threatening to cut off the child's genitals; circumcision, clitoridectomy, and infibulation were sometimes used as punishment; and all sorts of restraint devices, including plaster casts and cages with spikes, were prescribed. Circumcision became especially widespread; as one American child psychologist put it, when a child of two rubs his nose and can't be still for a moment,

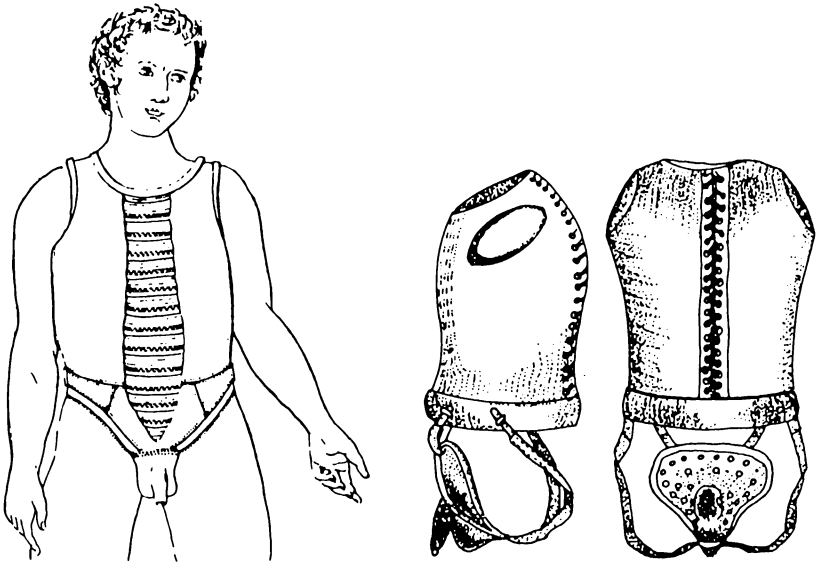


Illustration 17 — Metal Anti-Masturbation Devices. French (G. Jalade-Lafond, 1818) and German (W. Scheinlein, 1831.)

only circumcision works. Another doctor, whose book was the bible of many an American nineteenth-century home, recommended that little boys be closely watched for signs of masturbation, and brought in to

him for circumcision without anaesthetic, which invariably cured them. Spitz's graphs on different advice given for masturbation, based on 559 volumes surveyed, show a peak in surgical intervention in 1850-1879,

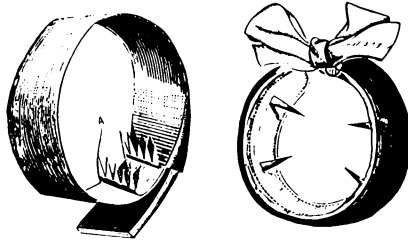


Illustration 18 — Penis-Rings. *Put on boys at night in bed to prevent erections while sleeping.*

and in restraint devices in 1880-1904. By 1925, these methods had almost completely died out, after two centuries of brutal and totally unnecessary assault on children's genitals.²⁶⁶

Meanwhile, sexual use of children after the eighteenth century was far more widespread among servants and other adults and adolescents than among parents, although when one reads of the number of parents who continued to let their children sleep with servants after previous servants had been found abusing them sexually, it is obvious that the conditions for child abuse still remained within the control of the parents. Cardinal Bernis, remembering being sexually molested as a child, warned parents that "nothing is so dangerous for morals and perhaps for health as to leave children too long under the care of chambermaids, or even of young ladies brought up in the châteaux. I will add that the best among them are not always the least dangerous. They dare with a child that which they would be ashamed to risk with a young man."²⁶⁷ A German doctor said nursemaids and servants carried out "all sorts of sexual acts" on children "for fun." Even Freud said he was seduced by his nurse when he was two, and Ferenczi and other analysts since his time have thought unwise Freud's decision in 1897 to consider most reports by patients of early sexual seductions as only fantasy. As psychoanalyst Robert Fleiss puts it, "No one is ever made sick by his fantasies," and a large number of patients in analysis even today report using children sexually although only Fleiss builds this fact into his psychoanalytic theory. When one learns that as late as 1900 there were still people who believed venereal disease could be cured "by means of sexual intercourse with children," one begins to recognize the dimensions of the problem more fully.²⁶⁸

It goes without saying that the effects on the child in the past of such severe physical and sexual abuse as I have described were immense. I would here like to indicate only two effects on the growing child, one psychological and one physical. The first is the enormous number of nightmares and hallucinations by children which I have found in the sources. Although written records by adults which indicate anything at all about a child's emotional life are rare at best, whenever discovered they usually reveal recurring nightmares and even outright hallucinations. Since antiquity, pediatric literature regularly had sections on how to cure children's "terrible dreams," and children were sometimes beaten for having nightmares. Children lay awake nights terrorized by imaginary ghosts, demons, "a witch on the pillow," "a large black dog under the bed," or "a crooked finger crawling across the room".²⁶⁹ In addition, the history of witchcraft in the West is filled with reports of children's convulsive fits, loss of hearing or speech, loss of memory, hallucination of devils, confession of intercourse with devils, and accusations of



Illustration 19 — Girl Being Exorcised. *The frequent hysterical fits of children could often be cured by exorcising the Devil out of them, as in this 1520 painting by Grunewald.*

witchcraft against adults, including their parents. And finally, even further back in the Middle Ages, we encounter children's dancing mania, children's crusades and child-pilgrimages, subjects which are simply too vast to discuss here.²⁷⁰

A final point I wish only to touch upon is the possibility that children in the past were actually retarded physically as a result of their poor care. Although swaddling by itself usually does not affect the physical development of primitive children, the combination of tight swaddling, neglect, and general abuse of children in the past seemed often to have produced what we would now regard as retarded children. One index of this retardation is that while most children today begin to walk by 10-12 months, children in the past generally walked later. The ages of first walking in Table 2 are all those I have found in the sources so far.

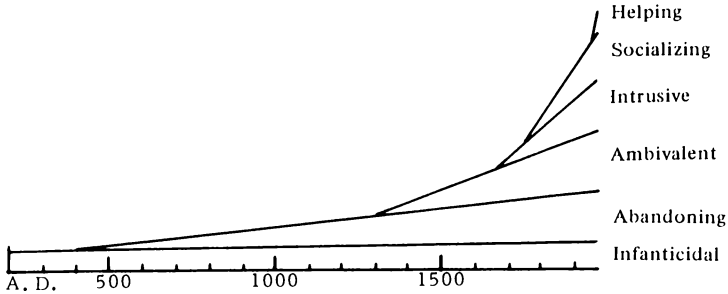
TABLE 2
AGE OF FIRST WALKING

<i>Reference</i> ²⁷¹	<i>Age of First Walking in Months</i>	<i>Approx. Date</i>	<i>Nationality</i>
Macrobius	28	400 A.D.	Roman
Federico d'Este	14	1501	Italian
James VI	60	1571	Scottish
Anne of Denmark	108	1575	Danish
Anne Clifford's child	34	1617	English
John Hamilton	14	1793	American
Augustus Hare	17	1834	English
Marianne Gaskell	22	1836	English
H. Taine's son	16	1860	French
Tricksy du Maurier	12	1865	English
W. Preyer's son	15	1880	German
Franklin Roosevelt	15	1884	American
G. Dearborn's daughter	15	1900	American
Amer. Inst. Child Life	12-17	1913	American
Univ. of Minn.—23 babies	15	1931	American

PERIODIZATION OF MODES OF PARENT-CHILD RELATIONS

Since some people still kill, beat, and sexually abuse children, any attempt to periodize modes of child rearing must first admit that psychogenic evolution proceeds at different rates in different family lines, and

that many parents appear to be “stuck” in earlier historical modes. There are also class and area differences which are important, especially since modern times, when the upper classes stopped sending their infants to wet-nurses and began bringing them up themselves. The periodization below should be thought of as a designation of the modes of parent-child relations which were exhibited by the psychogenically most advanced part of the population in the most advanced countries, and the dates given are the first in which I found examples of that mode in the sources. The series of six modes represents a continuous sequence of closer approaches between parent and child as generation after generation of parents slowly overcame their anxieties and began to develop the capacity to identify and satisfy the needs of their children. I also believe the series provides a meaningful taxonomy of contemporary child-rearing modes.



1. *Infanticidal Mode (Antiquity to Fourth Century A.D.):* The image of Medea hovers over childhood in antiquity, for myth here only reflects reality. Some facts are more important than others, and when parents routinely resolved their anxieties about taking care of children by killing them, it affected the surviving children profoundly. For those who were allowed to grow up, the projective reaction was paramount, and the concreteness of reversal was evident in the widespread sodomizing of the child.

2. *Abandoning Mode (Fourth to Thirteenth Century A.D.):* Once parents began to accept the child as having a soul, the only way they could escape the dangers of their own projections was by abandonment, whether to the wet nurse, to the monastery or nunnery, to foster families, to the homes of other nobles as servants or hostages, or by severe emotional abandonment at home. The symbol of this mode might be Griselda, who so willingly abandoned her children to prove her love for

her husband. Or perhaps it would be any of those pictures so popular up to the thirteenth century of a rigid Mary stiffly holding the infant Jesus. Projection continued to be massive, since the child was still full of evil and needed always to be beaten, but as the reduction in child sodomizing shows, reversal diminished considerably.

3. *Ambivalent Mode (Fourteenth to Seventeenth Centuries)*: Because the child, when it was allowed to enter into the parents' emotional life, was still a container for dangerous projections, it was their task to mold it into shape. From Dominici to Locke there was no image more popular than that of the physical molding of children, who were seen as soft wax, plaster, or clay to be beaten into shape. Enormous ambivalence marks this mode. The beginning of the period is approximately the fourteenth century, which shows an increase in the number of child instruction manuals, the expansion of the cults of Mary and the infant Jesus, and the proliferation in art of the "close-mother image."

4. *Intrusive Mode (Eighteenth Century)*: A tremendous reduction in projection and the virtual disappearance of reversal was the accomplishment of the great transition for parent-child relations which appeared in the eighteenth century. The child was no longer so full of dangerous projections, and rather than just examine its insides with an enema, the parents approached even closer and attempted to conquer its mind, in order to control its insides, its anger, its needs, its masturbation, its very will. The child raised by intrusive parents was nursed by the mother, not swaddled, not given regular enemas, toilet trained early, prayed with but not played with, hit but not regularly whipped, punished for masturbation, and made to obey promptly with threats and guilt as often as with other methods of punishment. The child was so much less threatening that true empathy was possible, and pediatrics was born, which along with the general improvement in level of care by parents reduced infant mortality and provided the basis for the demographic transition of the eighteenth century.

5. *Socializing Mode (Nineteenth to Mid-twentieth Centuries)*: As projections continued to diminish, the raising of a child became less a process of conquering its will than of training it, guiding it into proper paths, teaching it to conform, socializing it. The socializing mode is still thought of by most people as the only model within which discussion of child care can proceed, and it has been the source of all twentieth-century psychological models, from Freud's "channeling of impulses" to Skinner's behaviorism. It is most particularly the model of sociological functionalism. Also, in the nineteenth century, the father for the first time begins to take more than an occasional interest in the child, training it, and sometimes even relieving the mother of child-care chores.

6. *Helping Mode (Begins Mid-twentieth Century)*: The helping mode involves the proposition that the child knows better than the parent what it needs at each stage of its life, and fully involves both parents in the child's life as they work to empathize with and fulfill its expanding and particular needs. There is no attempt at all to discipline or form "habits." Children are neither struck nor scolded, and are apologized to if yelled at under stress. The helping mode involves an enormous amount of time, energy, and discussion on the part of both parents, especially in the first six years, for helping a young child reach its daily goals means continually responding to it, playing with it, tolerating its regressions, being its servant rather than the other way around, interpreting its emotional conflicts, and providing the objects specific to its evolving interests. Few parents have yet consistently attempted this kind of child care. From the books which describe children brought up according to the helping mode,²⁷² it is evident that it results in a child who is gentle, sincere, never depressed, never imitative or group-oriented, strong-willed, and unintimidated by authority.

PSYCHOGENIC THEORY: A NEW PARADIGM FOR HISTORY

Psychogenic theory can, I think, provide a genuinely new paradigm for the study of history.²⁷³ It reverses the usual "*mind as tabula rasa*," and instead considers the "*world as tabula rasa*," with each generation born into a world of meaningless objects which are invested with meaning only if the child receives a certain kind of care.²⁷⁴ As soon as the mode of care changes for enough children, all the books and artifacts in the world are brushed aside as irrelevant to the purposes of the new generation, and society begins to move in unpredictable directions. How historical change is connected with changing child-care modes we have yet to spell out.

' If the measure of a theory's vitality is its ability to generate interesting problems, childhood history and psychogenic theory should have an exciting future. There is still a lot to learn about what growing up in the past was really like. One of our first tasks will be to investigate why childhood evolution proceeds at different rates in different countries and different class and family lines. Yet we already know enough to be able for the first time to answer some major questions on value and behavior change in Western history. First to benefit from the theory will be the history of witchcraft, magic, religious movements, and other irrational mass phenomena. Beyond this, psychogenic theory should eventually contribute to our understanding of why social organization, political form, and technology change in specific times and directions and not in others. Perhaps the addition of the childhood parameter to his-

tory may even end the historian's century-long Durkheimian flight from psychology, and encourage us to resume the task of constructing a scientific history of human nature which was envisioned so long ago by John Stuart Mill as a "theory of the causes which determine the type of character belonging to a people or to an age."²⁷⁵

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